Gothic Modernism: Revising and Representing the Narratives of History and Romance

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Valerie and Graham, for their unwavering support and love, and to the memory of my Grandfather, Denys, who is missed everyday.

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ABSTRACT

Gothic Modernism: Revising and Representing the Narratives of History and Romance analyzes the surprising frequency of the tones, tropes, language, and conventions of the classic Gothic that oppose the realist impulses of Modernism. In a letter F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about *The Great Gatsby*, he explains that he "selected the stuff to fit a given mood or 'hauntedness'" (*Letters* 551). This "stuff" constitutes the "subtler means" that Virginia Woolf wrote about when she observed that the conventions of the classic Gothic no longer evoked fear: "The skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified us now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servants' hall. In our day we flatter ourselves the effect is produced by subtler means" ("Gothic Romance" 133). This project, therefore, identifies a "Gothic Modernism"—a strain of Modernism that makes use of the well-established language and conventions of the Gothic terms in order to express recognizably Modernist concerns about the nature of subjectivity, temporality, language, and knowledge. But, I argue, though these texts call upon and refer to the language and conventions of the classic Gothic, they also find ways of transforming and adapting them for a new historical era.

In chapters covering ghosts and hauntings, and other revised conventions of the classic Gothic, I continue the work begun by John Paul Riquelme's *Gothic and Modernism* that begins to reveal how "history, as part of the condition of modernity, [has] become Gothic" (1). This project analyzes the gothicization of two narratives through which humans are expected to make sense of their lives—history and romance. Despite more than a century separating the classic Gothic from Modernism, the Gothic continues

to be so useful to Modernist writers because, while these genres' authors represent the nature of their anxieties as a result of specific socio-historical circumstances, there is a striking continuity between the types of anxieties expressed. Thus, this project contributes to Modernist Studies by expanding the boundaries of our conventional understanding of the genre's thematic concerns and stylistic commitments, and the way in which it frames key narratives.

PREFACE

The skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified us now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servants' hall. In our day we flatter ourselves the effect is produced by subtler means. It is at the ghosts within us that we shudder, and not at the decaying bodies of barons or the subterranean activities of ghouls.

Virginia Woolf, "Gothic Romance"

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INTRODUCTON

"The Subtler Means": The Evolution of Gothic Conventions and Language

> *The skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified us now gibber in some dark cupboard of the servants' hall. In our day we flatter ourselves the effect is produced by subtler means. It is at the ghosts within us that we shudder, and not at the decaying bodies of barons or the subterranean activities of ghouls*
>
> —Virginia Woolf, "Gothic Romance"

This project takes its cue from Virginia Woolf's review, in 1928, of Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (1917), and several short essays she wrote about Henry James's ghost stories ("Henry James's Ghost Stories" in 1921) and supernatural fiction ("The Supernatural in Fiction" in 1918). Allusions and direct references to the Gothic and its effects litter the non-fiction writings of other Modernist writers. For example, in a letter F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, in which he discusses *The Great Gatsby*, he explains that he "selected the stuff to fit a given mood or 'hauntedness'" (*Letters* 551). This "stuff" that Fitzgerald writes about constitutes the "subtler means" that Virginia Woolf discussed in her review of Birkhead's book.

Thus, even though Modernism has been traditionally understood as forward-looking and violently breaking with its literary ancestors—'make it new,' as Pound's battle cry demands—the tones, tropes, language, and conventions of the Gothic appear with surprising frequency in modernist texts. These Gothic conventions and language include ghosts and haunted houses, vampires, succubi, incubi, monsters, witches, curses, nightmares, necrophilia, necromancy, possession, confinement, doppelgängers,

somnambulists, the uncanny and much more. With the aid of Woolf's observations, this project identifies a "Gothic Modernism"—a strain of Modernism that makes use of the well-established conventions, tones, and language of the classic Gothic, in order to express recognizably Modernist concerns about the nature of subjectivity, temporality, language, and knowledge. The texts discussed in this project do not therefore represent works that would be immediately or primarily identified as Gothic, but, instead, these texts contain, to varying degrees, a Gothic shade or atmosphere, rather than overt or overwhelming Gothicness. Thus, though these texts call upon and refer to the language and conventions of the classic Gothic, they also find ways of transforming and adapting them for a new historical era, creating subtler means through which to re-present anxieties.

Despite more than a century separating the classic Gothic period—whose borders I generously locate as occurring between the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), reaching the height of its popularity with the publication of Ann Radcliffe's novels in the seventeen-nineties, and through to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)—and Modernism, the Gothic continues to be so useful to Modernist writers because, while these genres' authors represent the nature of their anxieties as a result of specific socio-historical circumstances, there is a striking continuity between the types of anxieties expressed.[1] Furthermore, I explore both the thematic and structural manifestations and effects of the

[1] While I begin my chronology of the classic Gothic with Walpole's novel, this is not to say that Gothic characteristics cannot be located prior to 1764. For example, see Linda Charnes's "Shakespeare and the Gothic Strain" and David Salter's '"This Demon in the Garb of a Monk': Shakespeare, the Gothic and the Discourse of Anti-Catholicism."

Gothic because, while the presence of Gothic conventions reveals striking thematic connections between the classic Gothic and Gothic Modernism, how these conventions and its language affect the structure of Modernist literature is vital to our understanding of the genre's form.

While, in recent years, an increasing number of isolated studies have been published on the relationship between aspects of the Gothic and Modernism, as it manifests in regard to small groups of authors and texts, particularly in the emerging field of Sothern Gothic Studies, only recently have critics begun to consider and attempt to define the term Gothic Modernism. In his 2009 study *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett* that focuses on the relationship between the Gothic and Irish Modernism, Jim Hansen argues that the conventions and language of the Gothic became a vehicle through which writers, such as Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett, made sense of their relationship to England and their status as a colony of the former Empire. Hansen's thesis argues that "Each of these writers yokes together the unlikely combination of masculinity and domesticity, and each portrays this combination as not only isolating and dehumanizing but also as the social and structural cause for terror and violence" (6). Hansen analyzes the ways in which the female Gothic tradition with its emphasis on confinement narratives was transformed by Irish Modernist writers in order to depict feminized male protagonists who were similarly affected by their colonial status. Thus, Hansen reveals how Irish history, as part of the conditions of modernity, was conceived of in Gothic terms.

In a 2000 special edition for *Modern Fiction Studies*, John Paul Riquelme observed that the connections between the Gothic and modernist literature had yet to be

"explore[d] extensively" but that "the lineaments of a yet-to-be-written history of the modern Gothic begin to emerge" in the collection (587). With the collection's second edition, *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity*, published in 2008, Riquelme had more clearly brought into focus his attempt to develop a theory of Gothic Modernism by posing the question "how has history, as part of the condition of modernity, become Gothic?" (1). Riquelme argues that this question begins to be answered in the final two chapters that were added to the second edition. In these chapters, Theodora Gross and John Paul Riquelme, and Paul K. Saint-Amour argue that, to use the latter's words, argue that "according to modernism, supernatural premises were no longer the necessary engine of perpetual suspense because history itself was becoming Gothic" (209).[2] In other words, the nature of modernist issues—for example, the effects of mechanized time, technological developments, the emergence of psychoanalytic theory—and the conditions of modernity took on a decidedly Gothic quality; the anxiety-producing nature of these modernist issues lent themselves to representation in revised Gothic terms.

In their 2011 collection, *Gothic Modernisms*, Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace concur with Riquelme that "the connections between modernism and the Gothic have largely been overlooked in Studies of the Gothic and in modernist scholarship" because of Modernism's association with high culture and the elite versus the Gothic's association with low art (1). However, Smith and Wallace similarly view modernity in "Gothic

[2] In "From Superhuman to Posthuman: The Gothic Technological Imaginary in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*," Gross and Riquelme explore the character of technology and its effect on a wide range of issues from the novels' dystopian and utopian visions, and their considerations of hybrids, gender and the family, and postcolonialism.

dimensions" through Modernism's focus on the "everyday" (1). The collection represents a rich array of texts and Gothic approaches, and, as Smith and Wallace note, this diversity "bear[s] testimony to the complexities involved in examining the Gothic presence in modernist texts" (10).

Woolf's catalogue ("The skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters who once froze and terrified") of Gothic conventions draws one's attention to a central problem of early Gothic studies: defining and categorizing the Gothic. As Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* argue, definitions of the Gothic have often devolved into a shopping or laundry list. Critics have often been invested in these lists so as to create rigid boundaries around the genre and thereby to justify which texts should be *included* within the category and which should be *excluded*. One also runs into the problem of which features and themes take precedence over others in order to determine what a Gothic text absolutely must feature in order to be considered "Gothic." While an awareness of the general characteristics and themes are useful for identifying what some of the classic conventions are and thus for recognizing potentially Gothic texts, such an inventory does not adequately answer the question of what the Gothic is and what functions these texts serve. Furthermore, too strong an emphasis on inventories risks allowing one to define almost any piece of literature that contains a Gothic convention as Gothic and, thus, to render the term meaningless. Instead, we should ask why an author would chose to include Gothic conventions or language, and the role the Gothic plays in relation to the text's message, theme, and purpose.

According to Eugenia C. Delamotte, since the 1960s, criticism has moved away from inventory approaches to consider texts' thematic commitments. Critics, instead, attempt to solve "the Gothic myth" (Delamotte 5), to ask "why are these conventions found *together* in the Gothic novel?" (Sedgwick 11). Such critical moves account for the vast number of studies on, for example, the female gothic, such as Dianna Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (1998) and Donna Heiland's *Gothic & Gender* (2004), as well as queer studies approaches to the Gothic, such as *Queer Gothic* by George E. Haggerty (2006). The move toward going beyond producing gothic inventories refocuses questions about the genre to interrogate the purpose and function of its convention and language.

For the purposes of this project, both the inventory and thematic approaches to understanding the gothic are mutually beneficial. Inventories establish useful taxonomies that help readers to identify the presence of Gothic conventions in texts outside the classically defined Gothic period of 1764-1820, and create new and provocative relationships between texts that were not previously considered. As this project takes its cue from Woolf's idea that these conventions have been revised, I will also pay attention to the character of these revised conventions and what such revisions indicate. Thematic approaches, in turn, push one to ask questions about why these texts employ elements of the Gothic and what purpose the Gothic serves for authors.

Further compounding the problem of exploring the topic of Gothic Modernism is the definitional debate that has repeatedly preoccupied Modernist studies. Did Modernism begin, as Woolf famously claimed, in or about 1910? Or did Modernism begin when Nora Helmer walks out of the door at the end of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in

1879? With the advent of the new Modernist studies in the last ten to fifteen years, there has been a radical expansion and revision of definitions of modernism. As Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz write in their introduction to *Bad Modernisms* (2006), new modernist studies has gone beyond the great divide to include popular texts, questioned the man-of-genius category to include women writers, explored beyond the borders of England and America, and welcomed writers of the Harlem Renaissance and other minority writers. I favor such an inclusive definition of modernism that, like my definition of the Gothic, extends beyond rigid geographical, racial, gendered, evaluative, and chronological borders. Therefore, my own broad definition of Modernism takes the view that Modernism includes all those texts which document and work through the historical anxiety and traumas of modernity.

Subsequently, of particular interest to this project are the popular fictions of modernism such as the romance novel and detective fiction. Although Huyssen sees, in modernism proper, a great "anxiety of contamination" (vii), I join many critics who have followed Huyssen in emphasizing the way "the boundaries between high art and mass culture have become increasingly blurred" (ix). However, though popular modernism continues to be considered under the headings of pulp fiction or genre fiction, these forms share the same compulsive relationship the Gothic.

In order to do justice to the array of modernist texts that include revised Gothic language and conventions, I draw upon the texts of transatlantic Modernism, and consider both canonical and popular Modernism. Many of these texts were chosen because they have not thus far been discussed in terms of their relationship to the Gothic. As mentioned above, however, defining Gothic Modernism is not an easy task. The

diversity of texts covered in the various chapters suggests that part of the problem lies within the pervasiveness of Gothic language and conventions across an extremely broad range of texts produced during modernity. Moreover, these conventions and language are so pervasive that they almost become generic; however, this does not mean that they do not have a very specific function in Modernist literature.

Before moving on, I want to note the significance and importance of Sigmund Freud's body of work to this project, especially his theories on trauma, repression, mourning and melancholia, and the uncanny. While retroactive Freudian readings of the classic gothic are in abundance, I want to emphasize Freud as a contemporary of many of the modernist writers discussed in this project. Freud's own writings contain Gothic language and features and helped to shape the revisions of classic Gothic conventions and language. For example, Freud's theories on the unconscious reflect and, no doubt influenced, the shift away from the exterior spaces and sublime experiences of the traditional Gothic to the interior spaces and uncanny experiences of Gothic Modernism. Furthermore, his theories are crucial to understanding the obsessive, melancholic, and repetitive nature of Gothic Modernism.

Seeking to provide some continuity to the study of Gothic Modernism, this project explores the ways in which history and romance, as narratives through which humans make sense of their lives and experience, were conceived of in Gothic terms. Mary Paniccia Carden, in "Making Love, Making History," highlights the connection between the narratives of romance and history, arguing that "Romance and history both purport to teach us where we come from and how we might envision our ideal futures. Historical narratives work to impose pattern and hierarchy over the vast and

unpredictable field of human events, and the heterosexual romance plot does the same for individual lives" (4). The Gothic genre comprises these two key narratives via which humans make sense of their lives. These narratives, despite the many years separating the classic Gothic from Modernism, remain crucial during modernity, albeit revealing that these narratives' generate anxiety for different reasons than they did during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Therefore, while studying the ways in which modernist writers revised the language and conventions of the classic Gothic, I simultaneously explore how these features re-vision and re-represent the narratives of history and romance. Furthermore, I ask what these re-visions and re-representions reveal about the nature of history and romance as Gothic narrative during modernity.

In the epigraph opening this chapter, Woolf recognizes that Modernism contains both a realist and non-realist impulse. However, despite the continued presence of the Gothic conventions, she observes the way in which the explicit language and overt conventions of the classic Gothic are replaced by "subtler" conventions and language, because, in Modernism, those traditional Gothic monsters and supernatural figures are now hidden away "in some dark cupboard," rapidly talking nonsense, which suggests they are now afraid themselves of what has replaced them in evoking anxiety. Revised Gothic conventions that take a subtler form avoid the classic Gothic's supernatural impulses and instead resituate revised conventions within the experiences of everyday modernity. These revised yet recognizable forms generate anxiety for readers but refrain from attributing their causes and origins to the supernatural. Instead, the fear Woolf attributes to those monsters of the classic Gothic derives from, as she explains in "Henry

James's Ghost Stories," the specific conditions of modernity, which have led its inhabitants to "breakfast upon a richer feast of horror than served [their] ancestors" (288).

This "richer feast of horror" constitutes the "shock" that Walter Benjamin identifies in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (165). For Charles Baudelaire and Benjamin, modernity breeds a kind of trauma. The city's landscape, with its fleeting social interactions, myriad images and stimuli, and mechanization of time arouse shock for its inhabitants. Because of these conditions, modernity itself becomes Gothic. Consciousness contains these overwhelming stimuli by assigning them to a specific moment in time—to time on the clock (165). "The sensation of fright" occurs when consciousness fails to defend the individual from this shock (165). Gothic Modernism thus mirrors the defense mechanisms of consciousness by utilizing subtler means that avoid a direct and explicit confrontation with the explicit conventions and language of the classic Gothic. While these classic Gothic conventions and language often metaphorically function as specific socio-historical anxieties, Gothic Modernism relies more heavily upon concealing these anxieties beneath the subtler means of metaphor, because of the "richer feast of horrors" than those inhabiting modernity must defend themselves against. This subtlety generates its own anxiety because the cause of this anxiety cannot be easily discerned or identified. As Paul K. Saint-Amour argues in "Gothic Temporality and Total War," the classic Gothic quest to identify the cause of anxiety is a particularly prevalent convention in Gothic Modernism: '"what *is* this threat?"' and '"what *is* that?"'(209-10). Thus, Gothic Modernism contains an absent presence that is absented through metaphor and the "subtler means" that Woolf identifies and, yet, is paradoxically and strikingly present.

In *The Poetics of Prose*, Tzvetan Todorov argues that

> The Jamesian narrative is always based on *the quest for an absolute and absent cause*….But the cause is absence and must be sought: it is not only absent but for the most part unknown….Thus the secret of Jamesian narrative is precisely the existence of an essential secret, of something not named, of an absent and superpowerful force. (145)

James himself stated, "It is not my fault if I am so put together as often to find more life in situations obscure and subject to interpretation than in the gross rattle of the foreground" (qtd. in Todorov 150). Todorov argues that the reader finds herself in a dilemma, then,

> obliged to choose between two solutions: either to reduce this phenomenon to known causes, to the natural order, describing the unwonted events as imaginary, or else to admit the existence of the supernatural and thereby effect a modification in all the representations which form his image of the world. The fantastic lasts as long as this uncertainty lasts; once the reader opts for one solution or the other, he is in the realm of the uncanny or of the marvelous. (179)

Keeping readers held between these two positions, in a liminal space between the uncanny and the marvelous, generates the dilemma and anxiety of Gothic Modernism: to believe or not to believe in the supernatural. The conditions of modernity dictate that one should no longer believe in the marvelous and yet these characteristics litter modernism and help writers to make sense of the conditions of modernity. Choosing to reject the marvelous, however, produces the uncanny—a defamiliarization of the self—because then one must attribute the "unwonted events" to the effects of one's imagination. Thus

an ambiguity of meaning arises in Gothic Modernism because of its authors' refusal to provide the answers to readers' questions; instead, they draw upon these Gothic conventions that readers are familiar with and can recognize the anxiety they generate but do not expect to see in Modernist texts. Joseph Conrad reveals a proclivity for this ambiguity when, in a letter to his friend Barrett H. Clark in May 1918, he wrote, "I wish to put before you a general proposition: that a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion" (*Collected Letters* 210-11).

The following questions arise, then: what is Gothic Modernism; what forms does it take, and what function does it serve for a collection of writers who are traditionally understood as participating in a violent rupture with their literary ancestors? The difficulty of defining Gothic Modernism results from its authors' desire to capture a mood that suited modernity, rather than employ a series of explicit conventions or themes. As Woolf's quote suggests, a tonal shift occurred from the classic Gothic texts of the mid-eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century through to its presence in Modernist texts. As F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about *The Great Gatsby*, "I selected the stuff to fit a given mood or 'hauntedness'" (*Letters* 551). The once excessive and stagy Gothic genre with its emphasis on a specific set of now-familiar settings—decaying and dilapidated castles, ancestral homes, abbeys, and monasteries, with secret passageways and evidence of sordid family histories—and a recurring cast of characters—literally monstrous or monster-like with their overtly nefarious intentions—are now configured by the "subtler means" which have replaced them. Although, it is important to note that these excessive conventions were not entirely abandoned and occasionally erupt in

Gothic Modernist texts; for the most part, however, subtler means were favored in order to evoke a gothic atmosphere and tone rather than to confront readers with excessive conventions and language. Such revisions were undertaken because, as Woolf argues in "Henry James's Ghost Stories," readers "ha[d] become fundamentally skeptical" of Radcliffean Gothic trappings. Woolf partly blames the effects of modernization, suggesting that a mass-produced news industry that took less time to reach its readership demystified many of the geopolitical themes of classic Gothic (187-8). Furthermore, these "subtler means" accommodated the less superstitious belief systems of Modernity and were designed to conflict less overtly with discourses of modern enlightenment—science and technology—that replaced belief in the supernatural.

Classic Gothic monsters and supernatural figures, therefore, are now repressed and take the form of ghosts and "the ghosts within," as Sigmund Freud and others began to explore the recesses of the internal landscapes of the psyche. Thus, Woolf describes both a subtlety and a movement inward, away from the external monstrous characters that inhabit the classic Gothic, toward the internal that are envisioned as more terrifying than the "skull-headed lady, the vampire gentleman, the whole troop of monks and monsters" who only make the less superstitious inhabitants of modernity "laugh" (228). Modernism therefore uses subtler means because it conceives of the monster *within*—within the self, within society—rather than "*outside* society," as Franco Moretti argues in the case of the classic Gothic figures of Frankenstein's monster and the Vampire (84). These are not constructed or created monsters, but they are part of the very fabric of modernity, of human nature, and completely beyond one's control—which is why they are not deconstructed or eradicated as they frequently are in the classic Gothic. Gothic figures

are no longer a means to an end—in other words, used to draw attention to, interrogate, and, ultimately, eradicate a particular anxiety—but are part of the very foundation of daily experience. While the conventions of the classic Gothic have served to otherize and represent this alterity safely within the confines of otherness—foreign landscapes, distant temporal moments, and other characteristics and techniques for generating escapism—Gothic Modernism locates the Gothic within the domestic sphere and within the self. As Stephen Dedalus says in *Ulysses*, "'History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake"' (28). The very pervasiveness but simultaneous and paradoxical subtlety emphasize that one cannot awaken from the "nightmare."

Woolf finds fault with James's *The Great Good Place* and regards this story as a failure, in comparison to *The Turn of the Screw*, specifically because it evokes laughter ("Henry James's Ghost Stories" 228). The role of laughter and the comic in the Gothic was recently taken up by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik in *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2005). They develop Gothic studies by linking Gothic manifestations to what they identify as a comic turn, and, in choosing to "identify texts that either have fallen into obscurity or have not yet been considered as suitable subjects for Gothic criticism," they focus primarily on middlebrow Modernism, which may explain why they so readily find examples of their comic turn. In other words, as I discuss in chapter two, "Gothic Stagings: Surfaces and Subtexts in the Popular Modernism of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot Series," the presence of devices, such as humor, can function to disguise the darker impulses contained within subtext and create the illusion of escapism. There is value for such authors in passing off their texts as unGothic (or including an anti-Gothic gesture).

Horner and Zlosnik claim that Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* "makes us laugh," but it is unclear how this laughter is not the result of hysteria, which they dismiss in the introduction as limiting studies of the comic in the Gothic (*Comic Turn* 93). Their reservations about hysteria locate the origin of this pathology within a need for "comic relief" rather than, as I would contend, a strategic use of the comic to draw attention to and intensify contrasting moments of horror and the type of nihilism one encounters in Modernist literature's use of the Gothic (3). Laughter generates further anxiety through the shame or guilt experienced when one laughs inappropriately in order to alleviate the anxiety; and, furthermore, the inappropriateness of this laughter again draws one's attention to the horror and nihilistic impulses contained within Gothic Modernism. While Horner and Zlosnik acknowledge these nihilistic impulses in their analysis of *Nightwood* as anticipating Samuel Beckett (15 and 85), they confusingly later argue that the laughter the novel "evokes promises the accommodation of alternative ways of being rather than the terror of disorientation" (93).

In a desire to capture a mood that avoids the excessiveness of the classic Gothic, which can often result in "laugh[ter]," Gothic Modernism favors an aesthetics of absence, which was mentioned briefly above ("Henry James" 228). Modernist authors thereby take advantage of their readers' familiarity with the classic Gothic genre's conventions and language—and its relationship to fear, anxiety, and even horror—while striving to avoid the comical effects and response of laughter, which would ensue from using the stagy and excessive features of the classic Gothic, which a less superstitious audience had

become skeptical of. An aesthetics of absence, as defined by Andrew Lloyd-Smith,[3] represents a space of "almost-meaning" (123). What scares one is the suggestion of the presence of something supernatural that remains outside of or just on the periphery of our vision. While one might catch a glimpse or suggestion of something supernatural, its simultaneous absence and presence is what really terrifies the modern reader. A sense of something ominous and impending results, and the reader remains in a state of suspense. A refusal to disclose the identity (or form) of the supernatural figure or to provide concrete evidence of its existence also ensures that fear extends beyond the parameters of the text. Woolf makes a similar claim in her assessment of the success of James' *The Turn of the Screw* over his other ghost stories—she contends that "something remains unaccounted for" in his novel and its readers therefore remain "afraid of the dark" (292).

What characterizes this aesthetic of absence? I will begin with this classic example of the ghost story, Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, to illustrate this aesthetics of absence, before moving on to look at how this term derives from Freudian theory. I have chosen James' story, not only because the publication of the story at the fin de siècle (in 1989) situates the text on the cusp or just within the parameters of standard definitions of Modernism, but also because critical debates about this text unconsciously derive from the text's use of an aesthetics of absence. Furthermore, this text acts an example of a transition between the overtly Gothic texts of the fin de siècle

[3] Lloyd-Smith's discussion of the provocative term "aesthetics of absence" unfortunately only spans a few pages in his *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (123-125). Using Fredric Jameson's discussion from *The Political Unconscious* on Modernists' "search for secular equivalents" to "older magical content," Lloyd-Smith develops an argument about these "moments of almost-meaning" (123). Science and the magical world are presented as in tension, and the presence of one paradoxically highlights the absence of the other (124).

and the texts that the following chapters discuss as examples of Gothic Modernism characterized by an aesthetics of absence.[4]

Since Edmund Wilson's canonical essay "The Ambiguity of Henry James" (1938), critics have debated the existence of ghosts within the text, forming the apparitionists versus the non-apparitionists camps within the debate.[5] The apparitionists affirm the existence of the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss. Jessel, whereas the non-apparitionists, using Freudian theory, dismiss the ghosts as manifestations of the governess's troubled pathology. The debate over the presence (or absence) of the ghosts derives from James' skillful use of ambiguity that creates suspense within the text. The following extended quote from the famous first encounter effectively illustrates the ambiguity regarding the existence of the "ghosts" in the text:

> I had come out for my stroll. One of the thoughts that, as I don't in the least shrink now from noting, used to be with me in these wanderings was that it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone. Someone would appear there at the turn of a path and would stand before me and smile and approve. I didn't ask more than that -- I only asked that he should *know* and the only way to be sure he knew would be to see it, and the kind light of it, in his handsome face. That was exactly present to me -- by which I mean the face was -- when, on the first of these occasions, at the end of a long June day, I stopped short on

[4] For a discussion of the shifts occurring within the Gothic fiction of the fin-de-siècle texts, see Stephen Arata's *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*, and Linda Dryden's *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*.

[5] The Norton Critical Edition of *The Turn of the Screw* offers a useful overview of the debate surrounding the question of whether the ghosts exist, consisting of excerpts from the most famous essays.

> emerging from one of the plantations and coming into view of the house. What arrested me on the spot -- and with a shock much greater than any vision had allowed for -- was the sense that my imagination had, in a flash, turned real. He did stand there!...An unknown man in a lonely place is a permitted object of fear to a young woman privately bred; and the figure that faced me was -- a few more seconds assured me -- as little anyone else I knew as it was the image that had been in my mind. I had not seen it in Harley Street -- I had not seen it anywhere….The great question, or one of these, is, afterward, I know, with regard to certain matters, the question of how long they have lasted. Well, this matter of mine, think what you will of it, lasted while I caught at a dozen possibilities, none of which made a difference for the better, that I could see, in there having been in the house -- and for how long, above all? -- a person of whom I was in ignorance….Yes, I had the sharpest sense that during this transit he never took his eyes from me. (16)

Because the Governess reveals herself to have an active imagination here, in which she imagines meeting someone, James creates suspicion about the authenticity of her vision.[6] This ambiguity is intensified by the vagueness of the Governess's statement that "he should *know*"—the reader remains unsure about the nature of this knowledge that may be important to understanding the Governess's pathology. That the Governess momentarily

[6] The Governess's inclination for fancy reminds one of Jane Austen's protagonist Catherine Morland from *Northanger Abbey* (1817) who, being an avid reader of Gothic fiction—particularly Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*—imagines all manner of horrors have been perpetrated by General Tilney. This is further suggested by the Governess's references to *Jane Eyre* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (17).

mistakes the man for the Master has, of course, been used to support the contention that the Governess's vision is indeed a hallucination spurred by her desire for the Master. Upon realizing that it is not the Master whom she sees on the tower, the Governess feels anger, believing that the staff have failed to notify her of the presence of another inhabitant at Bly. This mysterious man is later identified as Quint by Mrs. Grose and thus the mysterious man on the tower becomes the ghost of the Master's former valet. The appearance of the ghosts, Quint and Miss Jessel, and the fact that only the Governess sees these ghosts further complicate our ability to determine effectively whether they are real or not. Closing the above quote, the Governess notes, "I had the sharpest sense that during this transit he never took his eyes from me"; indeed, he may have been watching her before she notices his presence. This sense of being observed, particularly when one is unaware of being observed, intensifies the Governess's fear in the moment.

James's text is distinct from the texts that this project will discuss, however, because there is still the possibility that the ghosts may actually exist—for the Governess, these ghosts are very real, regardless of whether they are symptoms of her pathology or actual supernatural beings, whereas in Gothic Modernism these ghosts are merely recognizable anxiety-producing conventions that are used to address things that the ghost represents, such as alternative histories. The literary debate over the presence (or absence) of these ghosts draws our attention toward the connection between the supernatural and internal psychic spaces. In other words, James's ambiguity opens up the possibility of these ghosts as manifestations, as products of the Governess's ghosts within, and therefore this text functions as a transition between those Gothic texts that feature actual supernatural beings and those of Gothic Modernism that employ

supernatural beings as metaphors in order to discuss psychic spaces. Linda Dryden's *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde, and Wells* discusses the fear of degeneration and atavism at the turn of the century, that humanity may only be a "superficial veneer, beneath which lurks an essential, enduring animal self" (32). She emphasizes the shift from the foreign landscapes of the classic Gothic to the home front of Gothic Modernism with her focus on the heart of home-front, in the "labyrinthine metropolis" of modernity, a "Gothicized space" that is represented via the Gothic theme of duality in Stevenson, Wilde, and Wells (19-20).[7] The ghosts encountered in Gothic Modernism are metaphorical; spectral metaphors are used to address the fear that arises about the presence of "ghosts within." Furthermore, these "ghosts" erupt into the everyday routine of the household. The reader's fear is intensified because he or she is unsure when and where these "ghosts" will appear.

For the reader, it is the unconfirmed presence of these "ghosts" that makes the text frightening. Writing on suspense in *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, Nöel Carroll argues that one tactic for building suspense is to defer "[t]he confirmation of the existence of the monster" (128). Indeed, who has not felt disappointment at having a supernatural disturbance revealed in a novel or movie? To reveal the supernatural disturbance for modern readers and viewers of the Gothic and horror genres releases the suspense because, as Woolf suggests in "Gothic Romance," they are less inclined to believe in or fear the supernatural when there is so much terror in

[7] Particularly interesting about Dryden's book is the way she situates her reading not only in the literature of the era but in the historical contexts of the fin de siècle by, for example, using newspaper clippings on the Jack the Ripper murders.

the non-supernatural world to fear. As Woolf points out, readers during modernity are afraid of the ghosts that "have their origin within us" (291). She repeatedly returns to this idea of the "ghosts within"—as well as discussing this idea of the ghosts within in "Gothic Fiction" and "Henry James's Ghost Stories," Woolf argues (in "Supernatural in Fiction") that "the author must change his direction; he must seek to terrify us not by the ghosts of the dead, but by those ghosts which are living *within* ourselves" (my emphasis 294).

Woolf's idea therefore registers a spatial movement from the exterior ghosts that haunted the dilapidated castles and decaying ancestral homes of the classic Gothic to the Freudian inflected "ghosts within" the territories of the mind found in Modernism. While subtle, these revised Gothic conventions and language are pervasive and threaten to erupt into the quotidian world of modernity. In this way, then, the revised Gothic creates a mood of imminent danger. Paul K. Saint-Amour discusses this idea of imminence in his discussion of "Gothic Temporality and Total War." Saint-Amour concludes that "according to modernism, supernatural premises were no longer the necessary engine of perpetual suspense, because history itself was becoming Gothic" (*Gothic and Modernism* 209). In other words, while the conventions of the classic Gothic litter Modernism in revised forms, the presence of a Gothic convention—for example, a ghost—does not refer to the literal spectral figure but rather what this figure represents and the anxiety it produces. For example, readers during modernity must be reminded or made aware of their "own ghostliness," and therefore Modernist authors employ spectral metaphors to represent the ghostliness of the self, thereby avoiding the more literal ghosts of classic Gothic that would evoke laughter (294).

In *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, Dorothy Scarborough provides a thorough cultural and literary history of the modern Gothic, paying particular attention to the figure of the "Modern Ghost." While Woolf criticizes Scarborough's failure to recognize that these explicitly supernatural ghosts are gone from Modernism, no doubt finding Scarborough's claim that "We'd rather see than be [a ghost]" (81), Scarborough's thorough exploration of the ghost reveals a set of useful characteristics. She identifies three types of modern ghosts: mistaken apparitions, subjective specters, and objective ghosts (82). These mistaken ghosts constitute the ghosts of Ann Radcliffe, which generate anxiety and introduce characters who possess vital information and bear a yet-unknown significant relationship to the protagonist—for example, the character—Laurentini di Udolpho, in Ann Radcliff's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* whose servants mistakenly report seeing the ghost of for she is actually alive. The subjective ghost constitutes those mental apparitions that "become realities to those beholding them" (84). Or, in other words, these are the "ghosts within" that Woolf identifies. The objective ghost appears to both an individual and a group. Scarborough argues that these ghosts "have more definite visibility, more reality than the purely subjective ghosts," and she cites James's *The Turn of the Screw* as an example of objective ghosts (85). However, since the publication of Scarborough's book in 1917, conventional readings of this text tend to regard these ghosts as somewhere between subjective and objective, and note that this ambiguity generates the anxiety. Scarborough notes the corporealness, the "unspectral description," of modern ghosts that take a more discernibly human form, and again she cites *The Turn of the Screw* and the Governess's description of Quint's human characteristics, such as his red hair (91). Only a few pages later, however, Scarborough

notes the importance of invisibility in representations of modern ghosts, citing H. G. Wells's *Invisible Man* (1897) and Ambrose Bierce's *The Damned Thing* (1893). The inconsistency of Scarborough's observations derive from her focus on the literature of the fin-de-siècle, a transitional period in the Gothic, during which explicit Gothic characteristics were being redeployed and some revised to represent fears about degeneration.[8] In Gothic Modernism, writers embrace the quality of invisibility, so as to relegate the ghost to the realm of senses other than sight.[9] Thus, the ghost must inhabit the uncanny and remain on the periphery of our perception within the realm of senses other than sight, unless they take the form of fleeting shifts of light. In other words, one must simultaneously always suspect and doubt the presence of ghosts.

Woolf suggests that Henry James' *The Great Good Place* fails to evoke fear in its readers because James privileges the dream/supernatural world over "the world we know" ("Henry James's Ghost Stories" 287). Combining this reading with her claim that, during modernity, readers "breakfast upon a richer feast of horror" (288), one can extrapolate that, for Woolf, horror became situated in the everyday and any movement outside the quotidian into the realm of foreign lands and distant castles also only produces humor. The ghosts of modernity are present "whenever the ordinary appears ringed by the strange" (291). While classic Gothic typically provides narrative closure and revelations of truth, Modernism avoids such moves. In "The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," Terry Castle's rereading of *The Mysteries of*

[8] See Stephen Arata's *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*.

[9] Scarborough notes that the sense of taste was yet to be "exploited" in relation to ghosts (95). One could argue that this sense becomes more prominent when Modernist writers begin to explore the connection between taste and memory, such as Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (published between 1913 and 1927), and, in particular, the now iconic Madeleine scene.

Udolpho suggests that the ghosts of Radcliffe were already evolving into the ghosts of Gothic Modernism. She contends that while much of the traditionally excessive Gothic tropes are "explained" away in the novel (120), the end is actually characterized by "the supernaturalization of everyday life" in which home has become just as uncanny and haunted as the Udolpho castle (Castle 120-3). This shift therefore also reveals a domestification of the Gothic during Modernism. Such conflation of the ordinary and the strange therefore accounts for the uncanny quality of Gothic Modernism. One can see this "supernaturalization of the everyday" that Castle traces back to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* being similarly evoked by Woolf's suggestion that moderns "breakfast on a richer feast of horror," which suggests its relocation to the quotidian. Castle contends that the characters in the novel are haunted by the absence of loved ones, who are both deceased or believed to be so, and this haunting affects those in possession of a "refined sentiment" (123). While Castle's ghosts represent loved ones and "the ghostliness of other people" (125), the ghosts within during modernity are inflected by a Freudian framework in which these ghosts are of the self. And, while Castle argues that Radcliffe's novel reveals the ways in which lovers (both dead and those just physically absent) haunt their lovers, by the time of Modernism, the emphasis has shifted to explore the effects of such haunting upon the self.

All of this subtlety and ambiguity results in one of the most prominent and distinct features of Gothic Modernism: lack of resolution and closure. While the classic Gothic more often than not resolves its plotlines, Modernism resists such neat narrative resolution and closure. The reader is left hanging, or as F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in a letter about the *Great Gatsby*, the "'hauntedness'" (*Letters* 551) he was trying to capture

produced the "lingering after-effects" he so desired to evoke for his readers (*Letters* 309). For Moretti, "this literature, having produced terror, must also erase it and restore peace. It must restore the broken equilibrium, giving the illusion of being able to stop history: because the monster expresses the anxiety that the future will be monstrous" ("Dialectic" 83-4). The monster must be slain, so as to assure a safe future; however, in Modernism, the monster takes a subtler form and thus cannot be identified, in order to be eradicated, and thus, the future remains uncertain. Modernism, in general, includes a proclivity for lack of resolution and closure, but those writers who employ revised Gothic conventions intensify this feature because their texts refuse to answer the question "what *is* that?" Unlike the classic Gothic, then, Gothic Modernism does not alleviate the anxiety produced throughout the course of the text because doing so would betray the realist commitments of Modernist writers who desire to reflect adequately the reality of modern experience, which does not include neat resolution and closure.

Double haunting takes the form of temporal and psychic haunting. Both the past and the present of one's individual history and one's mutually inclusive relationship to collective history haunt the individual, as does the presence of alternative selves within. Gothic Modernism complicates simplistic division between past and present and the idea that time moves in a linear, teleological fashion. Spectral metaphors depict this double haunting and thereby enable authors to comment on the nature and construction of history. According to Woolf, we fail to find the language to speak the "unspeakable" and "unutterable obscenit[ies]" that have "come to the surface" ("Gothic Romance" 292). Part of the problem of constructing history therefore results from the ways in which it is unspeakable. In this way, then, classic Gothic's exploration of the boundaries and

borders of both knowledge and representation were aptly suited to a general concern in Modernism about the nature and attainability of knowledge and truth. Such a discussion raises the problem of dominant and authorized versions of history versus the alternative histories that the ghost story genre typically focuses upon. As one is haunted by the ghosts of the past that return to provide their accounts of alternative histories, time itself is disrupted by these temporal anomalies and folds back on itself. Ghosts, by their very presence in the present, disrupt the natural passage of time (as linear and teleological).

In "Gothic History: Framing Devices and Double-Haunting in *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby*," I investigate the ways in which the canonical modernist writers Joseph Conrad and F. Scott Fitzgerald use the language and conventions of the Gothic to express anxiety about the narrativization of history by drawing upon the figure of the ghost and language on the specter. While *Heart of Darkness* has been discussed in terms of its relationship to the Gothic and *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's novel has not thus far been discussed as a Gothic text, as far as I am aware. Classic Gothic novels typically employ a framing device or series of framing devices in order to enter into the world of the past. The framing device distances the reader from the events being recollected but provides authenticity to the narrative by framing it as a found document, or retelling of true events. The distancing effect was particularly useful to writers who used the conventions of the Gothic to disguise real socio-historical anxieties. Conrad and Fitzgerald revise the Gothic framing device, playing with and disrupting its distancing effects, in order to confront readers directly with real and current anxieties, such as how history—as both a narrative about collective experience and as the expression of individual, lived experience—was only conceived of in Gothic terms but became a

Gothic experience. Because *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* problematize history, the self, in relation to those stable notions of historical narratives that define its parameters, becomes unanchored from time and unsure of the nature of its existence and definition. Thus, the self also becomes a Gothic experience in view of its uncanniness and the way it is both temporally and psychically haunted, which I refer to as double-haunting.

Following on from chapter one, chapter two explores the way in which the popular Modernism of Agatha Christie in the Hercule Poirot series interrogates the narrativization of history. Due to the popular form of this series, I argue that Christie conceals many of these anxieties within the subtext of the novels in order to provide her readers with the illusion of an escapist narrative via narrative resolution and closure. She employs Gothic stagings and deconstructs these stagings, parodying the presence of the supernatural and supernatural explanations in the earlier novels—such as "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb" (1923) and *Peril At End House* (1931)—of the series, to reinforce the escapist appearance of the texts. However, as history becomes an increasingly Gothic experience with yet another world war looming and the subsequent aftermath, Christie simultaneously increasingly struggles to divorce the surface from subtext as the Gothic subtexts erupt into the surface. History as a Gothic experience cannot be deconstructed in the same way that the stagy and supernatural Gothic elements of the earlier novels were, and, thus, her later novels and short stories—such as *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940), *Appointment with Death* (1938), and "The Capture of Cerberus" (1947)—fail to provide the neat narrative resolution and closure characteristic of those earlier in the

series. These later novels reveal the same "lingering aftereffects" that Fitzgerald desired to achieve in *The Great Gatsby*.

Finally, in the last chapter, I turn to examine the narrative of romance and how this, too, has become a Gothic narrative. Unlike *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Gothic novels contemporary with Radcliffe's text, the modernist romance narrative does not succeed and readers are not presented with lovers who achieve romantic ideology's pinnacle, fusion with another. In Susan Glaspell's *The Morning is Near Us* (1939), the haunted self is represented as unable to align itself with another, fearing the unknown nature of what lies within the psyche. Mina Loy's "Songs to Joannes" (1917) and "Feminist Manifesto" (1918) challenge and deconstruct romantic ideology by drawing attention to murderous impulses that lie behind romantic ideology's vision of fusion with another that result in the death of the self. Depictions of romance in Modernism therefore result in deeply dysfunctional and grotesque unions that, more often than not, do not survive. Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) explores the dysfunctional, grotesque, and traumatic nature of love that exists both within and without the bounds of romantic ideology. Through their representations of love and romantic ideology, these female writers reveal how the narrative of romance, like history, has become Gothic.

CHAPTER ONE

Gothic History: Framing Devices and Double-Haunting in *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby*

'*History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake*'

—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

At their core, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* express anxiety about both the narrativization of history—or, in other words, as Francis Mulhern argued in her comparison of the two texts, "Who or what makes history?" (793)—and the experience of history that is increasingly conceived of in Gothic terms. This anxiety and question are simultaneously primary concerns for the classic Gothic genre that contain repeated plotlines focused on quests to discover personal history, specifically ancestral lineage, and Fitzgerald and Conrad borrowed from the Gothic genre's conventions, language, and tones when writing their texts. While critics have recently begun to consider *The Heart of Darkness*'s relationship to the Gothic, *The Great Gatsby* has not been treated to a sustained analysis on its connections to the Gothic.[10] Furthermore, while I am not the first to explore the parallels between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Fitzgerald's *The*

[10] See Jennifer Lipka's "The Horror! The Horror!': Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a Gothic Novel," which offers a useful list of comparisons, and the latter part of her article that claims that the dread Conrad establishes constitutes the horror is "what *is*" (35) and that the horror extends beyond the "the last page" (36); however, Lipka only skims the surface of the possibilities of reading this novel as Gothic. See also David Glover's "The 'Spectrality Effect' in Early Modernism" (*Gothic Modernisms*), in which he briefly discusses the Gothic characteristics of *Heart of Darkness*, ultimately claiming that the novella reveals "the suspicion that the culmination of the civilizing process may in fact be no more than a higher phase of barbarism" and that Conrad reveals "the fear of a generalized breakdown in the narrative of progress itself" (41).

Great Gatsby, given Fitzgerald's well-known admiration for Conrad, I am, as far as I am aware, the first to discuss these texts in terms of their specifically Gothic thematic and stylistic similarities.[11] This is surprising, given that the language and tone of the Gothic was on Fitzgerald's mind as he wrote *The Great Gatsby*; in his letters, he explains that he was trying to "select…the stuff to fit a given mood or 'hauntedness'" (*Letters* 551). Furthermore, the presence of Gothic conventions, language, and tone can help one to elucidate more satisfactorily the connections between Fitzgerald and Conrad's work.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to elucidate those Gothic connections in order to argue that both Conrad and Fitzgerald used revised versions of the language, conventions, and tones of the Gothic to express anxiety about the ways in which history is narrativized, and, more importantly, to depict how history—as both a narrative about collective experience and as the expression of individual, lived experience—was conceived of in Gothic terms. I therefore carry on the work begun by David Glover in "The 'Spectrality Effect'" in Early Modernism" (*Gothic Modernisms*). Glover calls upon Jacques Derrida's concept of '"the *spectrality effect*'…, which operates upon and so repeatedly troubles the 'linear succession of a before and an after,' of a 'past present' and a 'future present'" (31-2). He argues that "the narrative of the present insistently folds back upon itself, pursuing historical parallels" (35), and he examines the effect upon "narrative[s] of progress" (31). I wish to develop Glover's analysis in several ways: 1. By combining a systematic analysis of the language, conventions, and tones with thematic considerations;

[11] Fitzgerald frequently discusses Conrad and expresses admiration for him in his *Letters*. For example, in a letter to H. L. Mencken in May or June of 1925, Fitzgerald writes in regards to writers whose work has been influenced by Conrad, "God! I've learned a lot from him" (482). See John Skinner's "The Oral and the Written: Kurtz and Gatsby Revisited," and Peter Mallios's "Undiscovering the Country: Conrad, Fitzgerald, and Meta-National Form."

2. By exploring specifically how the Gothic structural characteristic of the framing device reinforces the haunting quality of the text and its thematic considerations of ghostliness and haunting; 3. in the second section of this chapter, by contributing the term double-haunting to our understanding of both *Heart of Darkness*, which Glover discusses, and *The Great Gatsby*.

Anxieties about the narrativization of history are ably represented via the Gothic language and conventions of ghosts, specters, and spirits. The overtly monstrous and abject bodies of the classic Gothic are replaced by the intangible figure of the ghost who lingers on the periphery of our awareness.[12] The ghosts that haunt Conrad's and Fitzgerald's texts represent alternative versions of history that have been repressed by authorized versions of history. These texts are concerned with both the personal and collective histories, and authorized and alternative versions of history. The figure of the ghost is a record of individual and collective history, produced by the cultural and historical moment from which it originates. The process, by which history is narrativized and forms authorized versions, parallels the process of the construction of the self, in which versions of the self are repressed in order for the individual to fit within specific communities. And, thus, these texts are simultaneously an exploration into the construction of the self, and the ghosts of the psyche represent alternative versions of the self that exist. While Fitzgerald and Conrad frame the nature of anxieties about history as part of the conditions of modernity, these anxieties were neither new nor unique to the experience of modernity. As the writers of the classic Gothic period had already

[12] For example, Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein* and the demonic Matilda in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*.

expressed anxiety about such issues in their novels, Conrad and, later, Fitzgerald found a whole arsenal of tools that they could adapt into "subtler means" to suit the nature of these anxieties as they took shape during modernity.

In "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Woolf diagnoses a problem regarding the incompatibility between language or form and meaning:

> Far the greater number of critics turn their backs upon the present and gaze steadily into the past….For it is an age clearly when we are not fast anchored where we are; things are moving round us; we are moving ourselves….Nobody indeed can read much modern literature without being aware that some dissatisfaction, some difficulty, is lying in our way. On all sides writers are attempting what they cannot achieve, are forcing the form they use to contain a meaning which is strange to it." (218)

Woolf's quote raises the issue of needing to glance backward as deriving from the sense of being "[un]anchored" during modernity and looking to the past as a way to make sense of the present, and the pervasiveness of the uncanny, particularly the relationship between language and meaning. These issues constitute the "given mood, or 'hauntedness'" that Fitzgerald sought to communicate in *The Great Gatsby*.

Classic Gothic texts are driven by the question, according to Paul K. Saint-Amour, of "what *is* that?," which exposes a similarly uncanny experience, an epistemological crisis. In the following discussion, I add to Saint-Amour's analysis by examining how this question is refocused during Modernism to explicitly address the question of "who or what am *I*?" History and how one defines history is important because it is through history, as a narrative of experience, that one understands one's

relationship to time and one's self, as history situates one chronologically within a narrative and provides the contextual factors for determining the parameters of the self. For example, a self inhabiting the nineteen twenties Jazz Age of *The Great Gatsby* is not a self inhabiting a previous era regarded as less liberated and progressive. Anxiety about this question manifests, via representations of the self, as uncanny and ghostly because both express something "unsaid," according to David Punter (Routledge 136), and the ghost is "an absent presence, a liminal being that inhabits and gives shape to many of the figurations of trauma that characterize the Gothic" (147). The ghost figure operates on multiple levels and represents a variety of anxieties, then, representing the historical and cultural contexts that produced it; the uncanny self within; and, in a more general sense, anxiety, the "unsaid" or inexpressible. Oftentimes, the ghost expresses all of the above simultaneously and in true Modernist fashion revels in its ambiguous nature; indeed, this ambiguity of meaning is engendered by the "subtler" form it takes because Modernist texts are less prone to straightforward meaning than the classic Gothic.

Because *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* problematize history, the self, in relation to those stable notions of historical narratives that define its parameters, becomes unanchored from time and unsure of the nature of its existence and definition. The Gothic convention of the ghost, therefore—and its spectral metaphors—becomes a noticeable characteristic in the attempt to represent unstable and incoherent selves, because the ghost is indeterminate, allusive, unanchored from time, and frequently symbolizes unfinished business or, as of yet, untold alternative histories that motivate the ghost's haunting. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock discusses the importance of alternative

histories in *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* as both a source of anxiety and comfort:

> We value our ghosts, particularly during periods of cultural transition, because the alternative to their presence is even more frightening: If ghosts do not return to correct history, then privileged narratives of history are not open to contestation….[W]ithout ghosts to point to things that have been lost and overlooked, things may disappear forever. How can we get it right if we do not know that we have gotten it wrong? (6)

The temporal anomaly that is the ghost, thus, represents alternative histories and attempts to put right the past. However, this figure in its earlier classic Gothic form—for example, the ghost of Alfonso the Great in *The Castle of Otranto*—is too overtly supernatural and represents antiquated belief systems for Modernist writers, and, thus, they revise this figure into a subtler form. This subtler form relies upon Freud's uncanny and the ambiguity of the boundary between knowing and being aware of something, and not knowing and not being aware of something. Furthermore, Modernist writers experiment with and subvert chronological time in order to generate uncanny temporal moments and make the presence of ghosts much less anachronistic but no less disturbing.

Gothic (Modernist) Framing Devices

Walter Benjamin's image of the Angel of History in "Theses on the Philosophy of History" who "fixedly contemplate[s]" the past but finds himself "irresistibly propel[led]…into the future to which his back is turned" identifies the modern effects of mechanized time and the striking difficulty of maintaining agency over one's individual

experience of time (257-8).[13] One is represented as being pulled against one's will into a future that cannot yet be faced because one is still unable to tear one's eyes from the past that possesses him. This lack of agency over time is characteristic of both the novels of the classic Gothic and Gothic Modernist texts, such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Heart of Darkness* because, through such representations, Fitzgerald and Conrad seek to problematize historical narratives that insist upon progress and enforce rigid and limited versions of the past.

Before delving into *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby,* I will explore representations of history, temporality, and the self in the classic Gothic. The heroine of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* finds herself transported from the "social happiness amidst the grand simplicity of nature" of La Vallée, the home in which she grew up (157), to the "vast, ancient and dreary" Udolpho (210). Udolpho stands in stark contrast to the "pastoral landscapes of Guienne and Gascony" (3). The barbaric world of Udolpho is both spatially and temporally uncanny—a crumbling ancestral castle with "terrors," including ghosts, corpses, the threat of rape, and the dangerous banditti that

[13] Randall Stevenson, in *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*, explores the concepts of and distinction between time of the clock (84) and time of the mind (89), in his chapter "Time." He analyzes the sinister quality of and shock effect that clocks take on in Modernist fiction and Modernists' resistance to this symbol of standardized Greenwich Mean Time: Modernist fiction does not "smash up the clock entirely, but it does resist as far as possible the arrangement of 'events in their time sequence'" (87).

swarm the sublime[14] Italian landscape (210). Representing the world of the past (1584) for the readers of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794 and beyond, Emily's descriptions and impressions of her new home suggest a point further back in time than the progressive and enlightened present of the home she shared with her parents and the progressive present-day of the readers themselves. Time is specialized in the classic Gothic because of the convention of foreign landscapes. Despite the absence of reminders about the date or referents to provide historical context, Radcliffe creates an atmosphere of the past. The present world represented by La Vallée and Valancourt is spatially distant as well as temporally isolated from the past time that Emily inhabits at Udolpho.

Upon arrival at Udolpho, Emily hears disturbing rumors about Montoni, her new guardian, and his alleged crimes, and thus begin her adventures during which she is haunted by what lies concealed behind "a veil of black silk" (215)—in Freudian terms, what has not yet "come to light" ("The Uncanny" 225)—and the mystery of the missing Signora Laurentini di Udolpho, who some believe haunts "the woods and…the castle at night" (Radcliffe 220). While Laurentini is later revealed to be alive, her ghost is assumed to be very much real—the ghost is more literal than, as I will discuss later, those

[14] Emily's descriptions of the landscape as they embark on the final leg of their journey to Udolpho fit Edmund Burke's sense of the sublime in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* when one experiences terror or astonishment brought on by the idea and threat of physical pain: "The immense pine-forests, which, at that period, overhung these mountains, and between which the road wound, excluded all view but of the cliffs aspiring above, except, that, now and then, an opening through the dark woods allowed the eye a momentary glimpse of the country below. The gloom of these shades, their solitary silence, except when the breeze swept over their summits, the tremendous precipices of the mountains, that came partially to the eye, each assisted to raise the solemnity of Emily's feelings into awe; she saw only images of gloomy grandeur, or of dreadful sublimity, around her; other images, equally gloomy and equally terrible, gleamed on her imagination" (207).

haunting modernity. While Emily desires more complete knowledge of herself through uncovering her family's past, the ghosts in the novel represent deceased others and not the ghostly self. Emily finds herself thrust into the mysteries of the past that return to haunt her because they desire to communicate an alternative history that has been repressed and has hereto remained "inaccessible to knowledge" ("The Uncanny," 226). Emily's desire for knowledge about the past intensifies as her own relationship to this past remains unclear; Emily's quest transforms, therefore, into one for self-knowledge, and this motivation forces her into a cycle of repetition in which she continually places herself in dangerous situations in order to gain knowledge about Udolpho's mysteries and, by extension, her own ancestry. In the novel, then, Emily undertakes an unauthorized investigation into the sins of the fathers—both Emily's biological father, whom she fears has an indiscretion in his past that possibly affects her ancestry, and the sins of the substitute father figure, Montoni. Unraveling these mysteries, Emily finds that the ghosts of the past are not actually ghosts and that the decaying head behind the black veil is only a wax figure. Radcliffe, in the typical fashion of the female Gothic, deconstructs the Gothic conventions, language, and tones that have generated the anxieties within the novel. Once Emily escapes from the spatial and temporal confines of Udolpho, the horrors of the past begin to lose their hold over her. That is, the more Emily uncovers and the further she travels from Udolpho, the more she finds herself resituated back within the present, and the Gothic atmosphere of the novel begins to dissipate. While the setting for Emily and Valancourt's marriage, Chateau-le-Blanc, retains a supernatural quality, since Emily fancies it is "enchanted" and muses upon the "nightly revels" of fairies, the setting lacks the horrifying tone or uncanny atmosphere of

Udolpho and contains none of the anxiety or gloom and oppressiveness of the castle (619). By the end, Emily uncovers the truth of her ancestral history, learning that the Marchioness de Villeroi was her father's sister and not his lover, and, therefore, the Marchioness is Emily's aunt. With this truth communicated and the details of the Marquis and Laurentini's crimes exposed, Emily and Valancourt return to Emily's familiar family home, the "domestic blessedness" of La Vallée, in "the beloved landscapes of their native country" (620). The boundaries of the past and the present have been reestablished, and the movement of time once more progresses.

The classic Gothic typically focuses upon the superimposition of the past onto the present. The time of the present is disrupted as the ghosts of previous generations return to communicate their alternative histories, and such disruptions of time lead to prolonged encounters with the uncanny, as heroines, like Emily, often find themselves transported to unfamiliar spaces with disordered temporalities. The theme of ancestries and the trajectory (or passage) of generations reveal unfinished business and the desire to communicate traumatic alternative histories that have been repressed, concealed, or forgotten. For the novels of the classic Gothic, time is disrupted so as to enable these ghosts from the past to seek justice for the crimes of the past that have in some way robbed them, not only of their life, but of the rightful trajectory of the generations that have succeeded them. The past functions as the site of barbaric superstition and belief in the supernatural, and results in experiences of the uncanny, horror, and/or terror. Such narratives seek ultimately to restore order by reestablishing the time of the present characterized by enlightenment, progress, teleology, and stable and coherent selves who have access to accurate ancestral histories. Thus, the ghosts of the past are exorcized by

the close of class Gothic novels, as the novel's mysteries are resolved. Bearing witness to these ghosts' mysteries and their testimonies thereby inters the past and releases the present from its hold. Time, no longer disordered by the past, begins to progress once more toward a predictable future.

Time is a key component in the classic Gothic because these texts emphasize ancestry, buried secrets from the past, and the sins of the father revisited on the son. As protagonists try to uncover knowledge about their ancestry and the past they reevaluate their subjectivity. Like the classic Gothic, Gothic Modernism (and modernism in general) is similarly preoccupied with time[15] and its movement, as well as the nature of subjectivity. These concerns are compounded in Gothic Modernism, and, tellingly, anxieties about time, history (ancestral personal history and national history), and subjectivity are taken up by philosophers such as Henri Bergson, William James, and Sigmund Freud. Because mechanized time was standardized by Greenwich Mean Time, Modernism is traditionally understood as focusing upon the fraught and anxiety-ridden time of the present, while the past has been understood by critics as a source of nostalgia for a lost golden era.[16] The act of clocking-in and clocking-out and the creation of fixed transportation scheduling engendered a sense of time as spliced and fragmented. Mechanized time demonstrates a commitment to looking forward to the future deterministic progress and teleology, as opposed to the conventions of time in the classic

[15] For detailed discussions of the nature of and attitudes toward time during modernity, see Stephen Kearn's *The Culture of Time and Space* and Randall Stevenson's chapter "Time" in *Modernist Fictions: An Introduction*.

[16] Randall Stevenson argues in "Remembering the Pleasant Bits: Nostalgia and the Legacies of Modernism" that the atrocities of the present caused many modernists to look back with nostalgia to the past, but, of course, this backward glance was extremely selective.

Gothic that emphasize a return to the past in order to restore order and move forward. Furthermore, Conrad's and Fitzgerald's texts reveal how the narrativization of history, with its insistence upon progress, was yet another method through which the continual forward movement of time was promoted. The Gothic genre, with its return to the past and the return of the past, disrupts the forward motion of time, and the ghost figure, in particular, as a symbol of the return of the past with its unfinished business challenges notions of progress.[17] Therefore, even though mechanized time insists upon progress and teleology, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* emphasize the sense of being unanchored from time because mechanized time denies history, specifically barbaric history that damages narratives of progress. Conrad and Fitzgerald undercut this mechanized time and narratives of progress structurally via the classic Gothic convention of the framing narrative.

Critics have already begun to consider the structural affinities between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, but they have overlooked the Gothic structures at the heart of these texts. For example, while somewhat dated now, John Skinner's 1987 "The Oral and the Written: Kurtz and Gatsby Revisited" analyzes the differences between the oral tradition of *Heart of Darkness* and the written tradition of *The Great Gatsby*, which draws one's attention to the framing devices—a conventional Gothic trait—of these texts (132).[18] Skinner argues that "the credibility of

[17] See Ralph Noyes's analysis, "The Other Side of Plato's Wall," for a discussion of the denotative and connotative implications of the word "Ghost" and its many synonyms (*Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* 244-6).

[18] Skinner's article provides a useful overview of Robert Stallman's thematic and Robert E. Long's structural considerations in their attempts to illuminate the relationship between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Marlow's narrative must rest on Conrad's ability to produce a convincing imitation of authentic oral delivery" (133). Borrowing terms from Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse,* Skinner regards *Heart of Darkness* as failing to realistically mirror oral traditions because, unlike the spoken story, *Heart of Darkness* consists of a linear narrative much more similar to the written tradition (133); instead, Skinner finds Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* contains a much more experimental temporality that mirrors oral tradition (135). Skinner links these texts to the traditions of "movies and light romances, or even fairy tales" and "knights-errant" (138-9). While I disagree with Skinner's assessment that *Heart of Darkness*'s oral narrative is more like a written narrative because the narrative structure is linear, his analysis does drawn one's attention to the connection between narrative traditions and the temporal features of the novels. Taking up these ideas, one can push Skinner's analysis further by connecting the texts to the narrative tradition of the Gothic.

The classic Gothic genre frequently draws upon and is often self-consciously aware of its framing devices—i.e. the layering of narratives, stories embedded within stories, often framed by an introductory narrative. Such a narrative structure often replicates a journey of uncovering secrets or penetrating beneath psychological layers. Furthermore, these narrative structures also enable authors to introduce a variety of narrators. The framing devices of the classic Gothic establish anxiety about the authenticity of narratives and disrupt the present with the incursion of the past. Paradoxically, while framing devices serve to authenticate narratives by providing them with the allusion that the following events actually transpired, as Marshall Brown in *The Gothic Text* argues, Gothic fictions are simultaneously "cordoned off from real

experience by a framing device" (110).[19] While the framing devices of the classic Gothic call up the past and disrupt the present, this disruption is usually only temporary, and this past is presented as safely contained within the parameters of the narrative; incursions of the past into the present do not traditionally often linger beyond the closure of classic Gothic narratives. Thus, these framing devices create the illusion of authenticity and distance because the written and oral narratives are presented as "true" stories but that took place in the past and therefore will be contained again after the narrative has closed. Therefore, at least some classic Gothic writers relied upon framing devices so that they could discuss issues that caused contemporary readers anxiety, while paradoxically alleviating these same anxieties through distancing techniques that gave readers the illusion of being safely cocooned from the problems that transpired in spatially and temporally distant foreign locations. Critics are split over whether classic Gothic narratives are escapist literature or social critiques.[20] While these novels may, or may not, function as safe vehicles for metaphorically addressing historical events such as the French Revolution, Diane Hoeveler presents a convincing case in *Gothic Feminism* that the "fears that haunt Radcliffe's heroines are as real as they are ephemeral" (1-2). The novels she discusses "encode" real gender issues facing her female readers, such as disinheritance, sexual violence and, in general, women's precarious autonomy and lack of agency in the eighteenth century beneath the "vivid imaginative fantasies" (2).

[19] Michael Newton similarly notes this paradox in his discussion of the ghost story: it is "the intertwining of cosiness and terror" that constitutes the genre's paradox (xvii).

[20] For example, while, as Richard S. Albright acknowledges, "the use of the past is more atmospheric than historical" (50), Robert Miles has suggested that Ann Radcliffe's work can be read within the context of "working through a response to the French Revolution" (20). See Richard S. Albright's "No Time Like the Present: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," and Robert Miles's *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress*.

For example, the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* claims that the story was "found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529" (17). As Gretchen Cohenour argues in "A Man's Home is his Castle: Bloodlines and *The Castle of Otranto*," the castle spaces can be read as a metaphor for the maternal body and the novel as encoding eighteenth-century anxiety about the "contamination of bloodlines and property ownership" (74). While the preface to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* makes clear that the novel is a work of "fiction," the epistolary style of the opening and Frankenstein's first-person narrative style give the impression of an authentic retelling of actual events that express anxiety about modern science (3).[21] And, finally, to offer a later example of an explicitly Gothic text from the fin de siècle, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* contains a complicated layered oral and written narrative—the narrator recounts hearing Douglas's oral story about the Governess he once knew, and then he reads the written manuscript prepared by the Governess some time after her experiences at Bly. It is important to note that, since Edmund Wilson's reading of James's fin-de-siècle novella that called into question the authenticity of the Governess's narrative by suggesting her story might be only the delusions of a sexually repressed Victorian woman the text does not necessarily offer the neat closure with which the classic Gothic is typically associated because the existence of the ghosts—whether the Governess imagined the ghosts or whether they were real—is not resolved at the end of the

[21] See Andrew Bartlett's "Originary Science, Originary Memory: Frankenstein and the Problem of Modern Science (Part 1 of 3)," and "Frankenstein and Scientific Revelation: Frankenstein and the Problem of Modern Science (Part 2 of 3)."

narrative, and, thus, the anxiety generated through the course of the story lingers.[22] For Fitzgerald, such "lingering after-effects" are "the purpose of a work of fiction," a theory he credits to Conrad's preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (*Letters* 309). These "lingering after-effects" are appealing because they "leave people in a fighting or thoughtful mood" (309), which suggests that good fiction goes beyond simply telling an entertaining story, as Conrad himself suggests when he wrote,

> Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting—on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder, of human experience. ("Henry James" 19)

Therefore, while we can speculate about the presence of historical criticism in the classic Gothic, for Fitzgerald and Conrad—and, I would posit, Modernist writers in general—fiction is strikingly motivated by and expresses actual historical anxieties. And, thus, one is brought back to the importance of telling history, which suggests that the revised versions of the conventions, language, and tones of the Gothic were at least partly motivated by the desire to move beyond conventions that explicitly encoded historical fears and anxieties in the "escapist" narratives.[23]

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[22] See Edmund Wilson's "The Ambiguity of Henry James" (*The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays*).

[23] Again, the escapism presented by these narratives depends on one's sense of the historical contexts that do (or do not) haunt the novels. See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of surface text versus subtext.

While the emphasis on both specific dates and unspecified time frames from the past serve to create distance between the readers of these texts and the events that have transpired, Modernist writers do not abandon entirely the distancing effects of framing narratives; instead, these writers choose to subvert distancing effects subtly and emphasize the breakdown of the distance between the narrative timeframe and a reader's timeframe so as to heighten anxiety at opportune moments. Regardless of whether one reads the likes of Ann Radcliffe's novels as encoding commentary on historical events contemporary to the novels' production, as Woolf explains in her review of "Henry James's Ghost Stories," the dissemination of information, particularly of world news and events during the time of the classic Gothic texts' production, differed greatly from that produced during modernity. Developments in the printing and publishing industries affected framing devices and the temporal features of Gothic conventions because those living during modernity found themselves, as Woolf explains, "breakfast[ing] on a richer feast of horror than served [to our ancestors] for a twelve-month" ("Henry James's Ghost Stories" 288). The increasing immediacy of world news tightened the distance between readers and the historical concerns of the novels they read.[24]

Conrad's revisions of the framing device reflect the increasing sense of immediacy generated by developments in the newspaper industry, or, as Paul K. Saint-Amour explains in *Gothic and Modernism*, the new experience of "integrated communications" (223), which contributed to the experience of "perpetual suspense" (207). As several critics have already noted, Conrad's literary career coincided with

[24] For example, technological developments that lead to cheaper production methods and mass readerships brought on by broader distribution.

developments in the printing and publishing industries, and this helps to explain the revised version of the framing device that Conrad employs in his novella.[25] First published in serial form in 1899, *Heart of Darkness* employs Gothic framing devices but revises them to suit the nature of modern experience. The novella subverts reader expectations by first employing Gothic framing devices, which creates the illusion that this is a narrative situated within the safety of a distant past as the framing narrative establishes several temporal moments—the time in which the narrator hears Marlow's tale, the time of Marlow's trip up the Congo, and the past history of Empires referenced in his first line in the narrative, "And this also…has been on the dark places of the earth" (5). However, this illusion is simultaneously undercut because the Congo problem was not resolved by 1899 or by 1902, when the text was published in book form. Furthermore, Conrad subverts the distancing effect of the framing device by referencing the presence of "the great spirit of the past" that haunts the Thames, which reveals that this text is not just about Belgium and the former colonies referenced in the opening pages, but that the novella is about accounting for the atrocities of *all* empires from the past and present, and intentionally establishing a direct lineage between these temporal moments (5-6). London, and by extension the British Empire, is both one of the "greatest…town[s] on earth" and the "dark[est]" (5). Conrad's description of the "gloom, brooding motionless over" the city, which is "mournful," suggests a mixed attitude

[25] See Allan H. Simmons's "Conrad Among the Critics: The Early Reviews," David Finkelstein's *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition 1805-1930*, and Peter McDonald's *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880-1914*.

toward Imperialism that creates "great[ness]," while simultaneously evoking the responses of sorrow and grief (4-5).

Even though the framing device lends an air of authenticity to the account, Conrad's own experiences in the Congo shaped *Heart of Darkness*. The layering of one narrative within another narrative situates the reader in the same position as the narrator who hears Marlow's tale about an experience that '"thr[e]w a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts"' alongside those listening on the yawl (7). This is not just a story, then, but a confession, a remembering of an experience that greatly affected its storyteller, and the reader, like the listeners on the yawl, is invited to listen. The emphasis on the individual man's tale distances the reader removing any connection between Marlow and the reader and the latter's impression of culpability. And, yet, when Marlow interrupts his tale about the past to return abruptly—disorientingly, even—to the present, that temporal and physical distance between the tale and the reader is disrupted. Marlow interrupts his tale to ask, '"Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd?"' (47). Given that Marlow has just been describing his '"sorrow"' that '"had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush,"' Conrad seems to anticipate that the connection Marlow draws may elicit a similar sigh from readers, and his sudden break in Marlow's story to address the tellingly unnamed '"somebody"' produces an uncanny effect for the reader, as if he/she is the someone being addressed (47). In narratological terms, this is a metaleptic moment when the narrative transgresses the boundaries of fiction and reality and contaminates the reader's reality, which demands a direct, self-referential moment for the reader, who is traditionally not addressed in the classic Gothic because it seeks to

preserve the narrative "reality." In this sense, then, while the classic Gothic may encode real historical anxieties in its narratives that the reader can choose to acknowledge, Conrad forces readers, in this moment, to examine their own attitudes. Analyzing this effect in cinema, Frank Philip argues such disruptions "take viewers out of the temporal—spatial context in which they are anchored" (355). Applying this to Conrad, then, one can see how his use of, and revisions to, the classic Gothic framing device mimic, for the reader, the temporal experience described by Conrad in the text.

Lan Dong similarly notes the occurrence of such temporal and spatial disruptions in one of the novel's frequently cited passages:

> 'Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest…There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare for yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect.' (33-4)[26]

The experience of history is conceived of in Gothic terms, as time folds back upon itself, as the past erupts into the present moment but takes the form of an uncanny "dream." As Dong notes, this temporal feature enables Conrad to gesture "out towards a surrounding

[26] See Lan Dong's "Countervailing Moments of Time and Space: Narrative Structure of *Heart of Darkness*."

context of Europe" (67). In other words, one can read such passages as disrupting the effects of the framing device that have traditionally distanced readers from the anxieties of the text. The temporal and spatial journey forward is actually a journey backward to the past and, thus, history as a narrative of progress is challenged. The strange space is disturbing and, yet, "inscrutable"—uncannily familiar and unfamiliar. While Marlow may struggle to find the words to explain his experience, the framing device lends an air of authenticity to his narrative.

While the question of whether one should trust Nick Carraway's reliability as a narrator has become standard for literary discussions of *The Great Gatsby*, critics have not paid attention to Fitzgerald's attempts to establish an air of authenticity to the narrative and its events by calling upon Gothic framing devices in his novel. Carraway describes the story as "this book" written about his experiences with Gatsby, and, thus, Fitzgerald creates an air of authenticity for the narrative, at least in the sense that this text accurately represents Nick's conflicted emotional response to the events, even if it does not offer an accurate retelling of the events themselves. Furthermore, the novel captures the experiences of the lost generation in the Roaring Twenties, the Jazz Age. Responding to the disillusionment suffered by many returning back from the war, Nick writes that he "wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever" (2). His desire for the "world to be in uniform" may reference the clothing worn by soldiers during the war, as he has just mentioned returning from service, or uniform may refer to a desire for things to be unchanging. Either way, Nick's comment proposes the very opposite of a history as Gothic because he desires stability and consistency over the disorienting and inharmonious sense of history expressed via the language and

conventions of the Gothic. Expanding upon his feelings, Nick explains that he "wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart" (2). The uniformity Nick longs for prevents such "glimpses," which, is made evident by Marlow's experience, alienates one from the rest of society and intensifies anxiety.

Furthermore, the structure, as in *Heart of Darkness*, mirrors a central thematic concern in the novel—namely, how history is recorded and how the motivations of those recording it shape the account produced. Carraway's story begins with the exact opposite motivation to Marlow's, the latter of which is propelled forward by his very desire to glimpse into the man who is Kurtz. While Carraway's narrative provides—despite his resistance to doing so—insight into an individual man, Gatsby, and the tale focuses upon a specific community of characters, this community serves as a microcosm—just as Marlow's account of Imperial communities in the Congo extends outward beyond the immediate context. Nick's story extends beyond the immediate scope of this isolated community of East and West Egg to encompass a larger American problem about how history is recorded and experienced in Gothic terms. The appeal to authenticity, then, is vital to Fitzgerald's attempt to address a more pervasive American problem, rather than simply an East and West Egg problem.

While Nick establishes a framing narrative set in the post-WWI era of the nineteen-twenties and the novel is largely written in the past tense about past events, the framing device that establishes "this book" as a retelling of events gives the impression of presentness. According to Matthew J. Bolton in "'A Fragment of Lost Words': Narrative Ellipses in *The Great Gatsby*," "Nick's sense of time and of continuity is beginning to fray" (198). The thematic consideration of fraying time, of time resisting the order of

mechanized time, is reinforced by the narrative structure. Bolton, too, recognizes that "While Nick continues to write in the past tense, the repetitive phrasing of the sentence suggests a present-tense, stream-of-consciousness account of the party" (198). This use of tense heightens the immediacy of the narrative events by creating the impression of immersion within the moment, that any moment the sense of impending doom that permeates the novel—and Gothic novels in general—may be upon the reader, and, thus, suspense is generated.

In his chapter "Dialectic of Fear," Franco Moretti draws a distinction between the role of fear in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Drawing upon Benjamin, he argues that the former constitutes "a description of fear" because Shelley is not attempting to "*scare* readers, but to *convince* them," while the latter is "a frightening description" intended to immerse the readers in the present moment of the text to thereby generate "suspense" and fright (106-7). According to Moretti, Stoker "forcibly" drags the reader "*into*" to the text, destroying the distance between reader and text (107). Such neat division between "a description of fear and a frightening description" is complicated in Gothic Modernism because its writers are experimenting with the temporality of framing devices. Temporal characteristics are, of course, vital to creating the experience of fear for a reader of Gothic novels, in which one is required to suspend disbelief in order to experience the text in the present moment, as if the events of the text transpire within the present moment of the reader. This effect heightens the emotional state of the reader thereby creating suspense and making the eruption of what one fears more intense and horrifying.

While the Classic Gothic novels typically fall into either the category of those that terrify and those that horrify, Gothic Modernist texts favor horror over terror because terror is associated with the sublime in which one experiences enlightenment. Ann Radcliffe defined terror as that which "expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life," which is usually brought on by an encounter with vast, expansive, dangerous natural terrain in foreign settings, while horror "contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them" ("On the Supernatural"). While the domestic and populated—and sometimes urban, when the characters travel into the city—setting of *The Great Gatsby* partially accounts for the change in the sublime moments, the effect emphatically results from the pervasive uncanniness within the texts, in which meaning remains frustratingly and persistently allusive. Moreover, while in the classic Gothic, the sublime is traditionally recognized as a positive encounter, in Gothic Modernism, such an encounter leads to isolation as one gains knowledge that others do not.

While the majority of Marlow's story in *Heart of Darkness* takes place in the Congo, the presence of the domestic space of home—from which in the introductory frame narrative takes place and is told—and the city space—from which Marlow's story—are never far away and continues to linger on the periphery of perception and memory during the journey up the Congo River. In other words, while most of the plot of *Heart of Darkness* occurs in the Congo jungle, Marlow realizes at the end of his journey that the true horror of what he encountered in the Congo was the horror of colonialism and, therefore, the horror created by the home nation. Going home does not represent an escape but a further reminder of his sublime moment, his '"a glimpsed truth"' culminating in Kurtz's final words (70). This glimpsed truth alienates Marlow

from the inhabitants, the '"intruders,"' of the city '"whose knowledge of life was…an irritating pretence because [he feels] so sure they could not possibly know the things [he knows]"' (71). The home space becomes as uncanny as the foreign space, and thus the distancing effects of the classic Gothic novel are subverted.

Fitzgerald similarly revises the framing device to subvert the distancing effects in *The Great Gatsby* at opportune moments. He disrupts the sense of a "safe" cocoon away from contemporary anxieties by emphasizing the past. The reader is thus immersed in this present time of the novel, and the slips back into the past create the impression of a past erupting into and haunting the present. For example, "…One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling, and they came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight" (110) sets this eruption in the past by using the pluperfect progressive tense. This continuous action that was completed in the past, however, is disrupted by the next sentence: "They stopped *here* and turned toward each other" (my emphasis 110). The use of "here" shifts the temporal register of the event into a continuous present, even though "stopped" and "turned" communicate an action in the past. And, "*Now* it *was* a cool night" further pits the past and the present against each other (my emphasis 110). This collision of the past and the present tense resembles news speech that uses the present perfect to describe past events that happened at an indefinite time or still continue into the present in order to produce a sense of immediacy for the listener.[27] Such manipulations of tense mirror Gatsby's own relationship to time and his attempt to

[27] See Ronald Berman's "Media in *The Great Gatsby*," in *The Great Gatsby*: *Readings in F. Scott Fitzgerald*, for a discussion of the prevalence of the media and its effects upon the novel's characters.

"recover" and make present the past, to reveal that the past is always already present. This structural component of the framing device with its temporal technique complements these novels' thematic considerations of temporality. Furthermore, because this framing device draws our attention to layered and often repressed narratives that metaphorically resemble psychological functioning, our attention is also drawn to the process by which collective and national identities are constructed and rely upon certain systems of time. The result of this temporal strategy is an uncanny and disorienting experience in the structural form that mirrors the uncanny and disorienting thematic experiences. Present anxieties are simultaneously repressed via the distancing effects of the framing device, and then they rise to the surface of consciousness, as these novels disrupt temporality to reveal the persistent presentness of the past and its anxieties that are strikingly similar to those anxieties of the present.

Double-Haunting: The Nature and Experience of Collective and Personal History

One specific anxiety that both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* express is the self in relation to and as effected by the experience of history. This self is represented by Conrad and Fitzgerald as doubly-haunted, as temporally and psychically haunted. Double-haunting is both made up of the ghosts from the past, which return to the present and make one aware of alternative histories, and the ghosts within, that inhabit one's psyche in the form of (repressed or forgotten) memories and constitute alternative versions of the self.

As Henri Bergson writes in *Matter and Memory* (1896),

> [O]ur memories, on the contrary, inasmuch as they are past, are so much dead weight that we carry with us…we prefer to imagine ourselves unencumbered. The same instinct, in virtue of which we open out space indefinitely before us, prompts us to shut off time behind us as it flows. And while reality, in so far as it is extended, appears to us to overpass infinitely the bounds of our perception, in our inner life that alone seems to us to be *real* which begins with the present moment; the rest is practically abolished. Then, when a memory reappears in consciousness, it produces on us the effect of a ghost whose mysterious apparition must be explained by special causes. In truth, the adherence of this memory to our present condition is exactly comparable to the adherence of unperceived objects to those objects which we perceive; and *the unconscious* plays in each case a similar part. (187-9)

The above quote from Bergson's *Matter and Memory* enables one to vision this double-haunting in *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* as both temporal and psychic—or Woolf's "ghosts within"—as they are memories of *past* events reappearing in *consciousness*. For example, Suzanne Guerlac ponders, "Where *is* the past? The easiest answer is, 'in the brain'" (148); but, as Bergson explains, "we have great difficulty in representing the matter to ourselves in this way, because we have fallen into the habit of emphasizing the differences and, on the contrary, of slurring over the resemblances, between the series of *objects* simultaneously set out in space and that of *states* successively developed in time" (189). And, thus, these memories appear to us like "ghosts" as they materialize because these spectral figures spatialize time and memory—put them into representable form outside of internal consciousness. The figure of the

ghost, thus, becomes a way for Conrad and Fitzgerald to represent individual or collective history that struggles to, or is prevented from, moving into consciousness and outward into language. The ghost becomes a "readable" document, signifying the past that we carry with us, and, because of its association with communicating repressed alternative histories, it is often a figure that induces shame or trauma.

The ghost's association with traumatic or shameful content and the process of repression designed to conceal alternative histories affects the readablity of this ghost figure as a document. These associations frequently confine the ghost to lingering on the boundaries of perception as one struggles to acknowledge and recognize what the ghost desires to communicate. In light of this, then, Stephen Bernstein's analysis on the '"double narrative"' of Gothic novels proves useful. Drawing upon Tzvetan Todorov, Bernstein claims that the Gothic Novel contains a similar structure to the detective novel that "'contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation'" (Bernstein 151). In Gothic Modernism, this double narrative documents the "crime" through the framing device and allows authors to temporally disrupt the narrative and recapture the past; the investigation undertaken is both one into the self within and the self as part of the process of and as a product of the history that transpires via these temporal disruptions.

The framing device and the temporal effects it engenders are essential to overcoming modern reader's resistance to supernatural "modes of thought" that Freud argues "we have surmounted" because the present and its reliance upon other modes of thought to explain the world exclude Gothic conventions, such as the ghost, that Modernist writers employed in order to express their anxieties about the self and history

("The Uncanny" 247). Modernity's insistence upon teleological and mechanized time that creates and enforces boundaries between the past and present, and frames history within a discourse of progress, explains why Freud posits that "we have *surmounted*" such "modes of thought." However, in the same sentence, he explains that that "we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation" which, when they return, lead to feelings of uncanniness (247). Or, as Woolf suggests, skepticism about old modes of thought may have been partially surmounted and replaced by newer modes of thought—science, technology, and other so-called rational discourses—and ways of expressing those revised older modes of thought via subtler means, but these ghosts "within" still exist.[28] These ghosts within constitute man's sense of hauntedness that there are other hidden versions and layers of the self.

While Emily from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, like her Gothic Modernist counterparts, desires knowledge about other versions of her self in the form of knowledge about her family ancestry, her desire to know stems from the exterior circumstances in which she finds herself when thrust into the mysteries of Udolpho; conversely, knowledge in Gothic Modernism stems from theories on and awareness of the interior psychic life of individuals, provided by, for example, Freud. The shift from external to internal factors that affect definitions of the self becomes apparent through the repeated questioning about who people are and the distinction drawn between what one does and who one is. The classic gothic question of "what is that" refocuses into a qualitative

[28] See the introduction for a discussion of Woolf's arguments on "the ghosts within."

question about the nature of self that, as I will discuss, resists linguistic definition, instead of lending itself easily to categorization or labeling.

In light of the temporal disruptions discussed above, both Conrad and Fitzgerald express anxiety about the decline of civilization, a civilization that relies upon narratives of history to orient and express its experience. Unlike the explicitly Gothic beasts and grotesque bodies of the Victorian fin-de-siècle, however, degeneracy, as one would expect, takes the form of subtler means in Gothic Modernism.[29] Instead, fears about the degenerating self are articulated via temporal disruptions that explore one's lack of agency over this degeneration and challenge narratives of progress and the figure of the ghost that reveals fears about alternative selves hidden within.[30] The ghosts within resist mechanized time and the distinctions it enforces between past, present, and future. Conrad's and Fitzgerald's texts disrupt the boundaries between these temporal moments by blurring them and refusing to allow them to be contained and organized by the time of the clock. Time for these authors is envisioned through metaphors of the sea and its tidal currents that oppose the rigid movement forward of mechanized time; instead, time moves back and forth allowing ghosts from the past to emerge into the present and reveal alternative histories and selves:

> We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with

[29] See Stephen Arata's *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin-de-siècle: Identity and Empire* for a discussion of the fear about degeneracy and how this fear was expressed in turn-of-the-century Gothic novels.

[30] Michael Newton asks, "What is a ghost? It is a figure that remains at once interpretable and evading, exceeding interpretation. All in the self that cannot be understood stands personified in the ghost" (xxi).

> reverence and affection, that to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud [….] What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth?...The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealth, the germs of empires. (4-5)

Here, Conrad links the movement of time as "to and fro" to history of the past. The London of *Heart of Darkness* is haunted by a past (and present) that has been repressed. Travelling along the river Thames, twenty-six miles from London, the narrator notes how a "mournful gloom" hangs over the "greatest town on earth" (3), a town which he then refers to as "monstrous" and "one of the dark places of the earth" (5). The setting sun reveals London in a new light, one that distorts the surface image of the town as illuminated by daylight; what the eye immediately perceives does not necessarily reflect the truth or the heart of what one gazes upon. London paradoxically becomes both glorious with its rich history and monstrous because of the atrocities committed in the name of Empire. In the changing light, London becomes an uncanny place—both familiar and homely yet simultaneously unfamiliar and unheimlich. With the setting sun, Conrad creates an "ominous" tone that persists throughout the text (5). And, in highlighting the paradoxical and complicated nature of something that can be both glorious and monstrous, light and dark, he intensifies the ominous tone of the text by creating a sense of mystery—we do not always understand or fully perceive the truth about that which we think we know. The continual references to "haze[s]" and a

"brooding gloom" that permeate the air around the yawl reveal the boat and its crew as haunted by the legacy of the British Empire's policies (3-5). While alternative histories exist, they primarily occupy and linger on the periphery of our perception, but sometimes they invade or intrude into our space.[31] While seemingly always present, one is shielded from them by the habits of daily life and, thus, when they intrude into the space of daily life, they produce anxiety and shock (Newton xxiv).

Marlow's alternative history takes the form of a wound, imperceptible to most others, except to Marlow and Kurtz, which they have witnessed (or even inflicted in Kurtz's case). The narrator describes Marlow as different from other seamen because he is a "wanderer" (5). A seaman, as the narrator describes, carries his "home" with him, he does not perceive "mysteriousness," and "the secret of a whole continent" is either easily discernible or "not worth knowing" (5). Home provides the illusion of complete and secure knowledge. As a wanderer, Marlow fixates upon that which does not even interest or capture the attention of the typical seaman. The narrator's description in many ways resembles that of the figure of Charles Baudelaire's flâneur in *The Painter of Modern Life*, the explorer and "*man of the world*" who "wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of the globe" (Baudelaire 6-7). This man is "curious" and willing to "hurl…himself headlong into the midst of the throng, in pursuit of an unknown, half-glimpsed countenance that has, on an instant, bewitched him" (7). Marlow and Baudelaire's Monsieur G. are both driven by curiosity, and Marlow's fascination with Kurtz, whom he has only briefly glimpsed through the inadequate

[31] See Michael Newton's discussion of "Hauntings" in *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories* (xxiii-xxviii).

descriptions of the Company's employees, suggests a similar impetuous but passionate thirst for knowledge that Baudelaire describes. Even though Marlow encounters Kurtz in the jungle and not in the typical flâneurian haunt among the city's crowds, what Marlow learns through observing Kurtz leads him back to that "sepulchral city" (70). The location of sublime landscapes in the classic Gothic is thus modernized and evolves into the city, a location that is as equally horrifying and haunting as the sublime locations of the classic Gothic.

The ominous gloom haunting London and the Nellie, as she travels up the Thames estuary, symbolizes the darkness that is contained within the country's capital city, a darkness which follows Marlow on his trip to Africa and up the Congo River. While the ebb and flow of history is recognized by the narrator, he frames this past as "great." Even though the sea (and time) ebbs and flows, it is framed within the context of these "great" expeditions that were commissioned as "conquests" in efforts to expand the Nation's wealth and land acquisitions in the name of progress (4). This sea, as the document of a history of conquests, is littered with the ships "that never returned" (4). And, thus, the sea is haunted by the men who never returned and who offer alternative versions of histories that speak to these conquests outside of the narratives of progress that these Empires generated. These ghosts disrupt the chronological order of the quotidian world and its schedules by bringing the past with them, thus resulting in "historical interpenetration" and the fear that time is folding back on itself, manifesting atavism (Newton xxv). Marlow acts as if a medium for these ghosts to communicate through his own narrative, a narrative that undercuts authorized versions of history with his interjection that "this also […] has been one of the dark places of the earth" (5).

Marlow, however, as the reader learns, is not like other seamen:

> In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (5)

Marlow does not suffer from the "ignorance" of other seamen. Unlike these other seamen, his tale "lies [not] within the shell of a cracked nut"—the shell representing an authorized version of history—but "outside of the kernel." These alternative versions of history offered by Marlow are not characterized by fixed and discernible boundaries of meaning because the boundaries of meaning of his tale are "brought out only as a glow brings out a haze" like the "misty halos" only "sometimes made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine" (5). The language of the Gothic erupts in this description in order to contrast the rigid boundaries of meaning of authorized narratives of history. Marlow's tale of the "darkness," "savagery," and "abomination" of "yesterday" becomes

the darkness of today, of the present (6), and yet, like the Narrator's description of the effect of Marlow's story, Marlow's experience similarly "seemed to throw a kind of light on everything about [him]" (7). As the reader learns by the end of this story, this light is characterized only by a "haze," a "halo," a "spectral illumination" because exact meaning does not emerge—it is inconclusive, even—because such vague boundaries more accurately reflect the experience of history and meaning during modernity (7).

The oft-quoted closing lines of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*—"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (180)—leave the reader with the following questions: why is the current of history moving us in the wrong direction? And, why are we seemingly powerless to stop it? The novel closes on a weary tone, despondently resigned to the pull of the past and unable to resist the force of its "current." Gatsby, who insists on the possibility of reinhabiting the past, may as well have "smashed in pieces" Nick's "old clock" as he attempts to deny the mechanized time that he perceives as having prevented him from fulfilling his desire to reconnect with a version of his self that he mistakenly believes represents an authentic self (86). Even though Nick is initially "simultaneously enchanted and repelled" by the immediate present, he recognizes and revels in the passage of time in the closing moments of the text (35):

> gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowed once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of human dreams….I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world. (180)

The past, present, and future collide in Nick's musing, as he inhabits the present, thinking about the past and recognizing "the orgiastic future […that] recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther….And one fine morning" the past reasserts its hold and pulls one back into its mire (180). Despite running toward a future, the past will not relinquish its hold because Nick has not yet come to terms with it and thus its alternative histories return to haunt the present and disrupt temporality through their return. The current of history therefore moves us in the wrong direction because the ghosts of the past and their alternative histories refuse to remain buried. Temporal disruptions are necessary because they reveal the delimiting boundaries of authorized versions of history that insist upon progress and deny alternative versions of history. However, while these metaphors and temporal disruptions envision time differently, they also reveal that time is still outside of one's control. Furthermore, the ghostly Gatsby, who has already returned to the past to complete his unfinished business by attempting to turn back time, is now actually dead, having been murdered by Wilson.

The ending of *Heart of Darkness* similarly depicts the lack of agency over time and the sense that little has been resolved. The ship has "lost the first of the ebb" as Marlow's tale of decline comes to a close with his account of the lie he told Kurtz's fiancé (77). And, yet, the narrator's description of the return of the flood and the "offing" that "lead […] to the uttermost ends of the earth" is "somber" and leads "into the heart of an immense darkness" (77). While Marlow notes that it would have "been too dark—too dark" to tell Kurtz's fiancé what his real final words were, his refusal to do so represses Kurtz's recognition, thus providing likely circumstances for unfinished business as Kurtz

was not able to communicate his recognition to anyone but Marlow. Marlow himself therefore also remains haunted by what he knows,

> on the point of crying […], 'Don't you hear them.' The dusk was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in a whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of a rising wind. 'The horror! The horror!' (76)

Marlow commits himself to '"mourn[ing] […] in silence"' as Kurtz's fiancé has had to endure, until Marlow's visit (76). Lying to her about Kurtz's final words isolates Marlow to the lonely experience of being the only one to hear the '"whisper[s] all around"' (76). Even though Marlow believes he provides peace for Kurtz's fiancé, he confines himself to the perpetual and isolating experience of haunting. In typical Modernist style, the anxieties of the texts are not resolved as agency over time has not been restored, and the self and the narrative of history are still uncertain. The endings of these texts are not moments of the sublime, of enlightenment produced by terror. Ann Radcliffe defined terror as that which "expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life," while horror "contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them" (Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural"). Both *Heart of Darkness* and *The Great Gatsby* end with a vision of the past, present, and future. While there is movement—represented by the ebb and flow of the nautical metaphors—this movement toward a future, in the case of *Heart of Darkness*, promises further encounters with "darkness," and Nick's vision, in *The Great Gatsby*, appears relentless and futile, because, even though one can "run faster" toward the future, one is still "borne back ceaselessly into the past" (180). Thus, both Conrad's and Fitzgerald's texts refuse the neat narrative closure frequently provided by the classic Gothic genre, or, to return to Fitzgerald's words from above, these texts produce

"lingering after-effects," which are "the purpose of a work of fiction." These "lingering after-effects" reveal that the reader and the characters are equally haunted by the lack of resolution or order.

Common wisdom about ghosts tells one that they do not traditionally rest until their business has been resolved. The lack of resolution and order at the end of these novels means that the ghosts of double-haunting are compelled to repeat their visitations until they have communicated and resolved their business; ignoring them is not a viable option. In other words, while communication can be painful, as Freud teaches us, repression only lasts for so long before that which has been repressed returns to haunt. Instead, one must accept and embrace double-haunting, so that one bears witness to the psychic and temporal ghosts within and resists mechanized time that insists on progress. The Angel of History, like many of the characters whom I will discuss in this chapter, is unable to resist the incursion of the past's ghosts into the present, just as one is unable to ignore the ghosts of the present, even while time of the clock forcibly propels one into the future with its insistence on the forward passage of time.

Joseph Conrad's novella, via the conventions and language of the Gothic, explores the relationship between self and the sins of the homeland, thus expanding exponentially the classic Gothic novel's concern with the sins of the father. The double-haunting depicted throughout *Heart of Darkness* represents the temporal and national psychic ghosts only to uncover the national authentic self and recoil in "horror" from it (73). Refusing to put into words the exact nature of this horror, Conrad demonstrates how one runs up against language in the attempt to externalize the authentic self through communication. As Marlow tells his tale, he muses upon how the obscurity of the jungle

preoccupied him: “the silence of the land went home to one’s very heart—its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality of its concealed life” (26). Michael Newton notes in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories* that “the ghost story mirrors the imperial expansionism of the period and hence denotes the intrusion of the disturbingly ‘foreign’ into the comfortably domestic” (xxvi). Newton’s reading of the ghost and its intrusion suggests that the Imperial invaders themselves can take on a ghostly quality for the natural inhabitants of the Congo.

For Marlow, though, the mystery of the jungle becomes tied to the mystery of Kurtz, and Marlow explains how he became increasingly agitated to meet Kurtz (33); indeed, he is so disappointed that the natives’ attack delays his “talk” with the enigmatic Kurtz that he compares the experience to having been “robbed of a belief or [he] had missed [his] destiny in life” (47). While the accountant and the Russian both regale Marlow with tales of Kurtz and his greatness, Marlow feels no closer to really knowing the mysterious man. Even though readers of *Heart of Darkness* penetrate beneath the “curtain” of the Congo jungle through Marlow’s tale, the exact nature of the heart of darkness is left to the reader to determine (35). In this way, *Heart of Darkness* deviates from conventional gothic texts by refusing to define and thereby divulge the exact nature of the mystery of the Congo jungle.

Marlow finds himself increasingly preoccupied with versions of the self as he tries to uncover the mystery of Kurtz: ‘“who is this Mr. Kurtz?’” (25). Marlow finds the Manager’s reply unsatisfactory as his response focuses upon Kurtz’s professional characteristics and position. Marlow’s lack of concrete knowledge about the nature of Kurtz transforms the man into a phantasmagoria—inchoate, evasive, and constantly

shifting. The country itself similarly takes on an impenetrable quality as Marlow repeatedly refers to the jungle that borders the river Congo as a "curtain" (35). This curtain functions like the veils in the classic Gothic that obscure one from knowledge. The knowledge, which remains concealed from Marlow until toward the end of the novella is constituted by his awareness of the barbarity and savagery of the colonizers toward the Congo natives. Increasingly, Marlow acknowledges the simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity of the land. The land and the people and customs it comprises are uncanny precisely because colonial narratives of progress have repressed the brutal nature of colonial customs beneath the rhetoric of native savagery. As Marlow progresses up the Congo, he simultaneously regresses—turns back—to a confrontation with what he has known all along but cannot initially grasp until he returns home:

> The fact is I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was—how shall I define it?—the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly. This lasted of course the merest fraction of a second, and then the usual sense of commonplace, deadly danger, the possibility of a sudden onslaught and massacre, or something of the kind, which I saw impending, was positively welcome and composing. (64)

As other critics have noted, Marlow comes to understand that one is "possessed" (Edmundson 5) and "shackled to a past that haunts" (Weinstock 6). Conrad reveals a profound and deep anxiety about the self that will always remain unknowable to us. Versions of the self, as part of the conditions of modernity, are conceived of in Gothic

terms. The ghosts of modernity do not provide closure—they are present but they do not successfully communicate in the same way as, say, the ghost of Alfonso in *The Castle of Otranto*. The attempt to exorcize these ghosts is futile because, as representations of the self, the ghost will never be fully known and understood. The authentic self—a fully known self free from the forces that attempt to limit the parameters around its conception and force it to exist within mechanized time—always remains present but ultimately uncanny. It is both homely because we know it exists and unhomely but we are ultimately alienated from full knowledge about its essence. While contemporary philosophers analyze the self and its relationship to time, Modernist writers represent this self via the ghost because, to put it literally, try as we might, we cannot grasp—cannot touch—this ghost. Kurtz, then, represents Conrad's fantasy of a self free from the forces that attempt to limit its parameters, and the implications of this fantasy is that it is dangerous and still remains unknown because Marlow cannot articulate what he has glimpsed in this horror.

Fitzgerald's novel, in turn, depicts one man's attempt to rewrite his personal history and thereby control the terms of his own identity—an attempt that Fitzgerald presents as futile, given that Gatsby dies. His novel, then, enacts the conflict between personal and collective history, that these versions of history are not necessarily compatible. In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald envisions his characters as isolated from, and thereby haunted by their authentic selves, particularly Jay Gatsby who denies his authentic past by disavowing his Gatz ancestry. Jay Gatsby represses his authentic self in favor of a self derived from his fantasy of Daisy. While Fitzgerald's characters are haunted by their individual psychic and temporal ghosts, they are simultaneously haunted

by the national ghosts within America that search for an authentic American identity. Fitzgerald's novel therefore asks: what does it mean to be an American in the nineteen twenties?

When one thinks of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), "gothic" is unlikely to be the first descriptor that comes to mind, if such a descriptor comes to mind at all;[32] nevertheless, the closing image of one's powerlessness against the past, as well as the text's overall preoccupation with the power of the past, disjointed and disordered temporalities, quasi-ghostly (or phantasmatic) characters, and a potentially sinister mystery suggest a connection to the generic conventions that form the Gothic genre. *The Great Gatsby's* focus on the energy and life of the 1920s jazz age seems to establish the text as the very antithesis of the Gothic, and yet, the text also contains a strong undercurrent of the Gothic themes of degeneracy, decay, violence and death. Fitzgerald's canonical American Modernist text deconstructs the neat differentiation between the Jazz Age's (or present's) progress and enlightenment, sharply contrasted against Gothic (or past) regression and barbarism. Fitzgerald's representation of time and one's powerlessness against its currents, combined with the ghosts within, create a mood of hauntedness. Fitzgerald's novel enacts, as well, the tension between mechanized time

[32] Alan Lloyd-Smith very briefly situates *The Great Gatsby* within the tradition of the American Gothic in *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction*. While Lloyd-Smith provides a list of the Gothic qualities of the text—"city as labyrinth; the imprisoned maiden/femme fatale motif; the wasteland wilderness…; the sadistic accident…[of] Myrtle Wilson; [and] the scene of Gatsby's death" (1)—he does not provide a full reading of the text. However, his claim that "Gatsby's mistake…is to believe that the past can be superseded, transfigured, overcome by the valiant present—a very American assumption" when the Gothic "is about the *return* of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare not tell itself" provides a contrast from which to generate a more sustained reading of the text's relationship to the classic Gothic (1).

and progress—represented via Tom Buchanan—and time of the mind and degeneration—represented by Gatsby.

Jay Gatsby expresses a desire to and sincere belief that he can repeat the past: '"Can't repeat the past' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'" (110). Gatsby's dream of the past is understandably obsessively nostalgic, given the nature of the present, but his version of the past is also revealed as a fantasy. Gatsby has identified his "impulse to action" and thinks he has located his authentic self during his courtship with Daisy. After the war, Gatsby returns to haunt Louisville where he first met Daisy as if trying to recapture the experience and emotion of what has been lost:

> He…made a miserable but irresistible journey to Louisville on the last of his army pay. He stayed there a week, walking the streets where their footsteps had clicked together through the November night and revisiting out-of-the-way places to which they had driven in her white car. Just as Daisy's house had always seemed to him more mysterious and gay than other houses, so his idea of the city itself, even though she was gone from it, was pervaded with a melancholy beauty. (152)

To focus on the past in such a way is problematic,[33] even dangerous, in Gatsby's case, because he immerses himself in what has already decayed, departed, died. In misidentifying his authentic self and making it dependent upon circumstances from the past, the ghosts within and the ghosts of his past perversely consume his being, transforming him, in turn, into a ghost. In living as if still in the past, Gatsby has

[33] Like the novels Heather Love examines in *Feeling Backwards* for their relationship to loss, Fitzgerald's novel demonstrates that "the effort to recapture the past is doomed from the start. To reconstruct the past, we build on ruins; to bring it to life, we chase after the fugitive dead" (21).

symbolically already died prior to the beginning of the text's narrative. Acting like a ghost with unfinished business, he haunts Daisy and forces her to remember the past and confront her present. He hopes to represent an alternative history, one that Daisy has repressed by marrying Tom.

The self Gatsby has cultivated since his courtship with Daisy is inauthentic, and, ironically, it is Tom who best sees this. Gatsby acts like a historicist, attempting to "blot out" those parts of the past that do not fit within his desired version of events, and, therefore, he treats history like a palimpsest (Benjamin 256). He attempts to seize the position of the victor by colonizing the past and begs Daisy to insert herself into his colonizing, palimpsestic narrative, when he demands that she deny she ever loved Tom (132). Daisy "helplessly" pleads with Gatsby to desist from revealing their history, but he is too consumed by his dream to realize the horrible truth that it is a dream, a fantasy, and that the victor has long been established as Tom (130). Tom's angry retort that "there're things between Daisy and me that you'll never know, things that neither of us can ever forget" begins to deconstruct Gatsby's dream of victory, and he then attempts to bring the narrative back within his control by asking to speak with Daisy alone (132). Daisy admits, however, that "[e]ven alone I can't say I never loved Tom" (133).

Linking Tom Buchanan's racist views to Lorthrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (called *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by Goddard in the text), Walter Benn Michaels in *Our America* argues that Daisy's affair with Gatsby represents "something like the impulse to miscegenation" for Tom (25), who is greatly concerned that "civilization's going to pieces" (*Gatsby* 12). Michaels concludes that part of Gatsby's task in his effort to win Daisy requires that he "get a past"

and establish a legitimate ancestry, which he will ultimately fail to do, because with Gatsby's lack of past and known breeding, he may as well be black or Jewish (26). However, Gatsby's authentic self will also never be "worthy" of Daisy. Not only is Gatsby's narrative degenerate but, in Tom's eyes, Gatsby himself is degenerate. The topic of ancestry is at the heart of the classic Gothic novel, and the concern over ambiguous or wrongly traced ancestry accounts for the disorder of time as the past returns to share its genealogical narrative. For Tom, the intrusion of the past into his present in the form of Gatsby serves as further evidence that the threat from "these other races" increasingly encroaches upon the "Nordics," and Daisy's affair with Gatsby confirms Tom's fears about the degeneration of "the white race" (13). Gatsby's intrusion is unacceptable because it serves only to disorder further a present that Tom identifies as already disordered by racial threats that must be kept at bay in order for progress to triumph. For Tom, Gatsby's palimpsestic narrative does not function to put right an ancestral usurpation but, instead, would itself be an act of ancestral dilution.[34]

Gatsby's desire to cut out a section of the past, the time that has passed between his courtship with Daisy before the war and his reunion with her, affects the chronology of the narrative itself as Fitzgerald experiments with disordered temporalities and intensifies the mood of hauntedness—of something hidden beneath the surface—that he desired to communicate. The reader suddenly finds herself thrust into the past, along with Gatsby, when she is transported back "…[o]ne autumn night, five years before" (110). Fitzgerald uses ellipsis to signal the falling away of the present moment in which

[34] Gatsby's narrative, then, does not function like that of the ghost of Alfonso in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, who seeks to restore his true ancestor, Theodore, to the throne.

Nick pontificates on Gatsby's need to "return to a certain starting place to go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was…," referring to what Gatsby has lost from that moment (110). The reader then seemingly experiences the narrative from Gatsby's perspective as the narrative slips into the past: "His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own" (110). For the reader, the familiar time and space of the narrative's present is disrupted and produces an uncanny moment, and for Nick as well who is "reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a long time ago" (111). However, as Freud explains, the experience of the uncanny suggests something "inaccessible to knowledge" and incommunicable (226), as we see demonstrated in Nick's experience:

> For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of started air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever. (Fitzgerald 111)

Something that has long been repressed attempts to return, but Nick cannot access the memory.

Even though Nick knows that one "can't repeat the past" (110), Nick himself has an unhealthy relationship to the past as he tries to avoid both the past represented by his "tangle back home" and the war (58). Initially, Nick revels in the "romantic readiness" of Gatsby and his "heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" (2). Disillusioned by his experiences in the War, Nick is initially swept up by and seeks refuge from his own traumatic and anxiety ridden history in Gatsby's romantic fantasies about the future based on reinhabiting the past. Later, reflecting back on his summer with Gatsby, Nick realizes

that Gatsby's relationship to the past was unhealthy and "preyed" upon by a "foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his dreams" (2).

Gatsby's colonizing narrative does not successfully result in the reversal of history, and Fitzgerald presents such behavior as unhealthy because it avoids the present and all sense of progress. Repression, avoidance, and denial are pathologies that many of the characters employ in their relationship to history, the past, and its traumas. While Nick reflects warmly on the past that was his youth and his years before the war, ever since then he has experienced a profound "restless[ness]" (3), even as he understands that the past cannot be re-experienced or recaptured (110). While Gatsby's death clearly signals the failure to reinhabit the past, those in the present fare no better. The present simultaneously figures as a site of haunting in which some characters—Tom, Daisy, and Jordan—desperate to shut out the past appear frozen in the nightmare of a never-ending and static present, in which they are compelled to repeat the fruitless pursuit for pleasure and therefore make no progress, something Tom does not realize. This vision of suspended time is thus very similar to the nightmarish (past) present that characters in the classic Gothic encounter during their pursuit of knowledge of the past discussed earlier in the chapter. These characters exist in an unnatural (and uncanny) decadent state, filled with endless parties and the pursuit of fleeting desire. They fail, however, perhaps because they cannot, listen to the ghosts within that seek to communicate real desire. Like Nick, many of the other characters of the novel, such as Daisy and Jordan, demonstrate a belief that they are cut off from the past through their disavowal of it. The decadence and avid insistence with which they inhabit the present suggest they are also neither connected nor looking to a future; they have not accessed Bergson's élan vital.

Characters like Daisy and Tom attempt to immerse themselves fully in the immediacy of the present, thereby repressing the past and avoiding looking to a future.

While Gatsby lives as if he were a ghost from the past, the other characters in the text refuse or try desperately to repress the past. When Daisy halfheartedly chastises Nick for their distant relationship and that he did not even come to her wedding, Nick replies, "I wasn't back from the war" (16). Daisy briefly acknowledges "[t]hat's true" but quickly turns the subject away from the war and toward her own "bad time," without elaborating on the details of her experience (16). The war and the effects of it upon America are constantly sidestepped, as are most topics about the past by the majority of the text's characters. Frederick Hoffman writes, "A generation is 'lost,'…when it believes itself to be cut off from the past and unconnected to the future" (qtd. in Parrish 184). Pearl James argues that Nick especially "denies the war's place as a superlative experience in his life or in history" because "his conscious knowledge of what he knows would be too costly, too destructive" (34). While the US did not experience anywhere near the number of casualties that its European allies did during WWI, the number of losses was significant.[35] The human loss was not the only negative after-effect of the war on America; America was also afflicted with immense emotional, social and political "wounds" (Parrish 187).[36] The postwar period underwent labor strikes, race riots, prohibition and the rise of organized crime, and a Red Scare. Woodrow Wilson struggled to unite his county and its leaders behind the Treaty of Versailles, and, while the prosperity experienced during the war continued for many, inflation also caused periods

[35] Tom Streissguth's *The Roaring Twenties* estimates the figure of US casualties as 320,710 (1).

[36] For further discussion, see Michael E. Parrish's *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941*.

of depression that would eventually culminate in the Great Depression. Because this period was so unstable, America chose to "forget"[37] and deny the past (or present), instead immersing itself into a constructed version of the present that required repression of the past's unpleasantness.

But, what is the punishment for such denials of the past? In *The Great Gatsby* and other Gothic Modernist novels, punishment often takes the form of frequent eruptions of violence. According to John Lutz, in Gothic texts, "the nightmare of history continually impinges upon and defines the present" (my emphasis, Lutz 162).[38] Despite many of these characters' best efforts to deny the presence of the past in the present moment, the incorporeal ghosts of the past repeatedly impose themselves upon the present by making themselves corporeal through violence. Repetition, specifically of violence in *Gatsby*, "signifies…imprisonment within the nightmare of history" (175). Ruth Prigozy explains what she call the "incremental violence" of the novel as a reflection of the growing culture of violence featured in newspaper reports from the time about the growing problem of organized crime (345).[39] Fitzgerald's text reflects his awareness of the connection between the recent violence of the past WWI and the violence of the present moment. These violent events are related through the anxiety they cause and their traumatic effects. These larger and collective anxieties are often not overtly discussed in *The Great Gatsby*, and, instead, often surface as spectral metaphors that can only allude to, grasp at, or reference in passing such violence, until they erupt in

[37] See William E. Leuchtenburg's *The Perils of Prosperity*, in which he argues that the after effects of the war lead many Americans to "choose to forget" (104).
[38] See "From Domestic Nightmares to the Nightmare of History: Uncanny Eruptions of Violence in King's and Kubrick's Versions of *The Shining*" in *The Philosophy of Horror* (162).
[39] See Ruth Prigozy's *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (345).

moments of extreme violence that retaliate against attempts to repress them. In other words, the pain of WWI and the effects of a changing American society, culture, and economy are too raw, too *present*, to be examined with any kind of immediacy or detail by the psyche. For example, as was already discussed, Nick avoids discussing the war, and, indeed, the violence of the war is completely silenced. Instead, the violence of modern warfare erupts into the present when Myrtle's life is "violently extinguished" by an automobile, only moments after she appealed to her husband to '"[t]hrow me down and beat me'" (137). Myrtle charges out of her husband's garage, reminiscent of scenes of soldiers charging across no man's land, only to be violently "ripped open" (144) ,"her blood" mixing with the "dust" of the road (137).

Later, while Gatsby stands outside the Buchanan house watching over Daisy, she sits inside with Tom, "conspiring" and planning their subsequent departure from East Egg (145). Gatsby winces in response to Nick's description of Myrtle's body and implores him, '"Don't tell me, old sport'" (144). Gatsby does not want further knowledge of Myrtle's violent and grotesque death. Cathy Caruth's discussion of the problem of knowledge and the processes of trauma is useful here. Caruth argues in the introduction to *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* that "[w]hat returns to haunt the victim…is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (6). She therefore contends that trauma has a "belated impact" because one does not know the traumatic event that one has experienced (7). Not knowing and the belated effects of trauma also can be understood to manifest in the "aesthetic of absence" that Alan Lloyd-Smith argues constitutes a key theme in the American Gothic, in which "almost-meaning" replaces

certainty of meaning (123). As Nick sleeps that night, he finds himself "toss[ing] half-sick between grotesque reality and savage, frightening dreams," a reality consisting of violence, betrayal and disappointment, and dreams that one can imagine are a collage of violence which cannot be repressed during his semi-unconscious state (147).

These characters' avoidance of the future explains their frequent inability to make plans and their preference for spontaneity, which often results in disastrous consequences. Immersing themselves in the present, Daisy, Tom, and Jordan revel in the glamour and glitz of the Jazz Age. However, this glamour and glitz begins to implode upon itself, as we learn of characters' actual dissatisfaction with life. Despite their attempts to deny the past by creating an "artificial world" based on immediacy, time haunts them and insists on being recognized (151). The death of Myrtle disrupts the "variety of life" which these characters try to immerse themselves in and her death begins the "holocaust," the series of deaths that occurs in the closing section of the novel and culminate with Wilson's suicide (162). While these deaths create a sense of finality and closure on one level, their circumstances leave the novel littered with "poor ghosts" whose "dreams" remain unfulfilled (16). Indeed, as Gatsby explains in his account to Nick of the accident, "it seemed to me that [Myrtle] wanted to speak to us, thought we were somebody she knew" (143). Myrtle does not get her opportunity to speak, just as Gatsby does not get to recapture the past and regain Daisy, and Wilson does not get to reclaim his wife and his revenge, for he kills the wrong person.

Moreover, the ghosts within constitute yet another trap because one becomes aware of the presence of something that cannot be exteriorized via language. And, yet, while resistance is futile, ghosts in these texts do not fulfill their desire to communicate.

What Marlow sees when he gazes upon the city, and tries to explain in the circular frame of his narrative, is the scar of the wound left upon England by its dark and violent history. This wound, like the phantasmatic knowledge that Marlow has only "peeped" at during his journey up the Congo River, remains inaccessible to others, except Kurtz who has similarly "glimpsed" it (70). Alternative histories are not easily voiced because these narratives often reveal a shameful truth about historical events. Doubly-haunted by his experience in the Congo, Marlow attempts to "correct" history by providing his own account of England's colonization of Africa and his own complicity with that history (6). However, the closest verbalization of the significance of and truth of what Marlow witnesses is delivered via Kurtz's iconic words, '"The horror! The horror!"' Such struggle with words, combined with a paradoxical need to attempt to tell, signifies the traumatic nature of the experience that haunts Marlow. In refusing to define just what is '"The horror! The horror!,"' Conrad neatly avoids closing his narrative by resisting neat resolution in the form of an easily discernible message. Indeed, this resistance to closure and the lingering haunting effects of *Heart of Darkness* explain why the novella has garnered such ferocious debate about Conrad's own position on the imperialist policies and racist ideologies as presented within the text. The reader, then, like Marlow, continues to be haunted by Kurtz's last words, and the mystery continues after the end of the narrative. In other words, the "truth" is too dark to bring fully to light. Marlow begins his counter-hegemonic tale on the *Nellie* by reflecting in general upon the nature of England's history. Reflecting upon the history of England, Marlow ponders the plight of those men involved in England's past on a larger historical scale: "He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that

goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate" (6). One man's tale of how he witnessed the unspeakable horrors of England's colonization, filtered through the words of his obsession, Kurtz, is extended outwards to the unspeakable horrors wrought by England on a larger scale. Weinstock, in his account of academia's fascination with the spectral, references *Specters of Marx* in which Jacques Derrida uses the phrase the '"plus d'un,' simultaneously the 'no more one' and the 'more than one'…[which] suggests the complex relationship between the constitution of individual subjectivity and the larger social collective" (4). Derrida's concept helps us to make sense of the subtler (and filtering) methods used in *Heart of Darkness*; Marlow's tale is so horrific and paradoxically unspeakable because it is not simply the tale of one individual man but of a nation's complicity with colonialism. The process of history and the experience of trauma are analogous because both have a belated impact when knowledge resurfaces at a later—perhaps too late—date for the individual and the collective.

The anxiety produced in these texts is generated and enforced through the use of Gothic convention to highlight the problem of history; history, as the narrative through which humans make sense of their identity, their lives, and their place in time, remains incomplete. Despite the subtlety of these revised Gothic conventions and language, they emphasize that one cannot "wake" from the "nightmare" of history. One is always rooted to time, and, despite the attempt to know the alternative histories of the past and challenge authorized versions of history, these alternative histories remain elusive, intangible, and difficult to fully comprehend.

CHAPTER TWO

Gothic Stagings: Surfaces and Subtexts in the Popular Modernism of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot Series

'*I believe in the terrific force of superstition*.'

—"The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb"

> *It was as though somewhere, just out of sight, was a fact that I did not want to see—that I could not bear to acknowledge. Something that already, deep down, I knew…*
>
> *—Curtain*

Agatha Christie's work has traditionally been read as "armchair" detective fiction designed to uphold upper-class Tory values by promoting a return to order and the status quo.[40] Christie herself may even be responsible for such a reputation because of such claims as "I have never been in the least interested in politics," as reported in an interview she gave for Mondadori (her Italian publishers) in 1970 (qtd. in Curran 430). The following argument posits that taking such comments by Christie at face value has largely caused her work to be overlooked outside of the context of detective fiction and thus critics have failed to consider the complexities of her work that is, in fact, extremely politically minded and reveals similar concerns to those of other Modernist writers. This chapter, then, seeks to rediscover Christie as an author, and, given the complexities of the

[40] While Agatha Christie has received increasing attention from scholars in recent years, given the immensity of her popularity, there is still considerable work to be accomplished in revaluing Christie's oeuvre, particularly in regards to finding her a place among her modernist contemporaries. For many years, her work was dismissed by scholars on the grounds of being too popular, escapist, and the author herself as being guilty of "functional stylization" (qtd. in Birns and Bow Birns 120).

Poirot series and its commitments to particular themes, to argue that her work should be read alongside traditional Modernist writers discussed earlier in this dissertation.[41] Through a careful consideration of both biographical information contained in *An Autobiography* and her business letters,[42] and examination of thematic concerns permeating both the textual surface and subtext of the Poirot series, I argue that a much more complicated and subversive version of Christie emerges.[43] As do Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* and F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, Agatha Christie, in the Poirot series, interrogates the narrative of history; Christie uses a popular form of modernism because doing so enables her to disguise the anxieties she discusses within a subtext and present the illusion of an escapist experience. However, as history becomes an increasingly Gothic experience with yet another world war looming and the subsequent aftermath, Christie simultaneously increasingly struggles to divorce the surface from subtext as the Gothic subtexts erupt into the surface. History as a Gothic experience cannot be deconstructed in the same way that the stagy and supernatural Gothic elements of the earlier novels were.

Phyllis Lassner's provocative dramaturgical reading in 2009 of four 1930s Poirot novels, in "The Mysterious New Empire: Agatha Christie's Colonial Murders," opens up

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[41] In light of my attempt to reevaluate Christie's relationship to Modernism, I continue the invaluable work begun by Birns and Birns in "Agatha Christie: Modern and Modernist," Allison Light in "Agatha Christie and Conservative Modernity," and Phyllis Lassner in "The Mysterious New Empire: Agatha Christie's Colonial Murders."

[42] These letters are unpublished and held at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom.

[43] See Dan Shen's recent work: "Implied Author, Overall Consideration, and Subtext of 'Désirée's Baby,'" and "Subverting Surface and Doubling Irony: Subtexts of Mansfield's "'Revelations' and Others." Shen calls for critics to conduct "an overall consideration [of the textual, extratextual, and intertextual]," so as to expose "the subtext" ("Implied Author" 288). If one employs Shen's method, Christie's claim that she has "never been in the least interested in politics" does not have to distract critics from uncovering the rich subtext in the Poirot series, which, as Booth highlights, may be consciously or unconsciously communicated (xiii).

our understanding of Christie's work as subversive. Lassner argues that a "trap" is set for readers that "manipulate[s]" them into "noticing only [Christie's] conventionally domestic plotting" (33).[44] Drawing upon Erving Goffman, Lassner concludes that the "secret" of Christie's "archeological satire[s]" is the way in which she illustrates that social interaction is made up of a front stage upon which humans perform roles that conceal a more authentic, backstage, self (39). Lassner's goal is to highlight that our traditional readings of Christie as nostalgically extolling a conservative and glorious England represent a failure on the part of readers to see that this is a "false England, masquerading as the real thing" (126). I extend Lassner's dramaturgical reading by considering non-colonial Poirot texts, and by exploring the relationship between the theme of performance and emerging psychological theory. I argue that the performances enacted by these texts mask the political anxieties and fears that readers sought to escape by reading popular detective fiction. The texts pacify readers by enacting a performance that hides a rich subtext, which was very much invested in discussions about the effects of the wars upon England as well as questions about the political climate of Europe and the character of its politicians.

The degree to which this performative strategy is fully realized fluctuates, I posit, depending upon the proximity of those texts to the wars. Therefore, in general, those texts produced in the interwar period—for example, "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb" and *Peril At End House*—depict "realities" that successfully avoid explicit references to political issues and tensions, and thereby provide the desired experience of

[44] Lassner's analysis includes readings of *Appointment with Death*, *Murder on the Orient Express*, *Murder in Mesopotamia*, and *Death on the Nile*.

escape for readers. Furthermore, those forces that do generate anxiety in the texts' narrative—such as supernatural forces and other elements of the Gothic—are represented as easily deconstructed in these interwar-era texts. Poirot successfully solves his cases, and there are no lingering anxieties left at the end of these texts; such texts I characterize as containing an anti-Gothic gesture that remains committed to restoring order and alleviating the anxieties readers bring to texts by distracting them. She employs Gothic stagings and deconstructs these stagings, parodying the presence of the supernatural and supernatural explanations in the earlier novels of the series to reinforce the escapist appearance of the texts by providing neat narrative closure and resolution.

However, the majority of the Poirot series—for example, *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe, Appointment with Death*, and "The Capture of Cerberus"—fails to deconstruct so neatly the conventions and language of the Gothic and to avoid references to political concerns and anxieties. Christie does not abandon her anti-Gothic gesture in these texts, though. Poirot still successfully solves his cases and deconstructs those Gothic influences designed to hide the truth, but the historical circumstances and anxieties external to the texts' individual plotlines seep into the narratives and engender a Gothic tone that resists the drive toward narrative resolution and order.[45] This group of texts therefore contains an increasingly rich subtext, which, once one decodes it, paradigmatically gestures toward external concerns and anxieties that haunt these texts. That is, these texts contain evidence of a resistance against escapism and optimism through a sinister, Gothic inflected tone. The final Poirot novel, *Curtain*, is the most

[45] Resistance against providing narrative resolution and order is a characteristic feature of Modernism, and the later Poirot texts increasingly employ this modernist strategy.

extreme example from this series, as the text is wholly consumed by the Gothic tone, failing to provide escape and optimism.

In this chapter, then, I begin by examining the earlier Poirot texts, predominantly those from the interwar period, in which Gothic language and conventions are parodied and successfully deconstructed. I turn next to explore Gothic stagings and the parallel the series draws between performed subjectivity designed to conceal psychological real selves and performance at the level of the text's surface designed to conceal the subtext. Through this section I track the ways in which the conventions and language of the Gothic begin to appear in revised forms and maintain an increasingly strong presence in the texts. Finally, I examine the last novel of the Poirot series, *Curtain*, revealing how this text subverts many of the conventions the series had thus far established as the lines between reality and text blur. *Curtain* is consumed with extreme anxiety about WWII and the inability to deconstruct the Gothic-inflected nature of this reality. This text therefore does not provide the narrative resolution or closure, or optimism, needed for escape.

Christie's anti-Gothic Gesture or Gothic Parody

Christie's claim about her lack of political interest may have derived from a desire to preserve the public perception of her work as an escapist writer and to capitalize on the popularity of the genre. According to Howard Haycraft in a "survey-and-summary" written in 1945, "special 'raid libraries' were set up at the reeking entrances to underground shelters to supply, by popular demand, detective stories and nothing else" as these novels became the "chosen escapist literature of modern times in general and in

wartime in particular" (536).[46] In *British Literature of the Blitz*, Kristine A. Miller collects several revealing Mass-Observation materials, which further reinforce this impression about readers' attraction to the genre as motivated by the desire to get '"away from all the horrors"' and because these novels '"provide…as complete a break possible from the work and worries of the day"' (qtd. in Miller 117). Indeed, one of Christie's letters dated 16 November, 1940, references a letter she received from an Air Raid Warden in London regarding the escapist appeal of her novels: "Air Raid Warden…who said that my book was the only thing that had taken her mind off the bombs and that she had had a really good time with it." This escapist motivation to experience different realities may account for Christie's use of classic Gothic conventions and language in the earlier texts in the Poirot series, as the Gothic genre has had a similar reputation to that of the detective genre in that it provides distraction and escape via the depiction of exotic, foreign, and distant events and settings.[47]

Christie takes advantage of readers' familiarity with the language and conventions. She uses these conventions and language to depict Gothic circumstances and atmospheres that the characters inhabit, and readers recognize that this Gothic reality produces anxiety for the characters. When these conventions and language are deconstructed in the Poirot series, the emotional effect of alleviating anxiety produced by

[46] Haycraft's "survey-and-summary" appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* on August 12, 1945, and in addition to the escapism these books offered, he argues that despite the decreasing number of titles being published, reduced prices and pocket-size editions of Whodunit mysteries further account for the vast readership of this genre. He speculates that the genre has a promising future, once paper restrictions are removed after the war (536-7).

[47] However, one must also keep in mind that the reputation of the Gothic genre has evolved, as critics have sought to uncover deeper meanings in the texts of this so-called escapist genre, in the same spirit of this chapter's reevaluation of Christie's Poirot series. This Gothic genre has more recently been regarded as providing safer ways—by disguising anxieties and relocating them abroad—for working through eighteenth and early nineteenth century anxieties.

narrative closure and the restoration of order is intensified in contrast. For Woolf in "Henry James's Ghost Stories," the language and conventions of the classic Gothic will make readers laugh because "We breakfast on a richer feast of horror than served [to our ancestors] for a twelve-month" (288). Modernist writers, according to Woolf, should not therefore employ the same strategies to evoke fear, given the frequent media coverage of the horrors of the early twentieth century. These twentieth-century horrors are located within the ordinary and everyday life, and within the domestic sphere—the home residence and the home country—rather than the extraordinary distant and foreign landscapes of the classic Gothic. Many of the early texts in Christie's Poirot series contain recognizably classic Gothic conventions and language—particularly curses, spirits, séances—which are presented in intentionally comical ways and often safely located outside of the domestic sphere. Doing so alleviates reader tension via the laughter it generates, and thereby these texts successfully provide distraction and escape from the readers' real worlds.

For example, in the interwar 1923 short story "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb," the British criminal Dr. Ames takes advantage of local Egyptian superstitions to disguise his crime. In this foreign environment, the other British nationals find themselves contaminated by these superstitious beliefs and attribute the deaths to a curse. These supernatural beliefs are then exposed as foolish because they cloud one's judgment, preventing one from understanding the truth of the matter. Poirot's own characteristics and methods of detection reinforce this anti-Gothic gesture, a gesture which Christie cannot sustain throughout the entire series. Understandably, then, Captain Hastings remains baffled by his companion's behavior throughout the story because the

traditionally *reason*able Hercule Poirot initially confirms Mrs. Willard's idea that the "'Curse of Men-her-Ra'" is responsible for the deaths of Sir John Willard, Mr. Bleibner, and his nephew (*Hercule Poirot* 153).[48] Upon arrival at the dig site and the discovery of a fourth death, the sentimental Hastings "feel[s] an atmosphere of evil, subtle and menacing" (157-8), but he remains perplexed by the Belgian detective's apparent conversion to believing in the supernatural, especially when Poirot begins drawing "the five-pointed star or Pentagon" in the sand outside his tent (162). The credibility of the Men-her-Ra curse seems to be confirmed by Poirot when "[a] shadowy figure…moving amidst the tents" is witnessed. Hastings reports, "I recognized distinctly the dog-headed figure I had seen carved on the walls of the tomb. My blood froze at the sight" (161). Predictably, Hastings finds himself duped by a performance designed to ensnare the murderer, Dr. Ames. Poirot explains,

> I wanted to see if I could frighten the doctor. But it would take more than the superatural to frighten him. I could see that he was not entirely taken in by my

[48] The origins of the Detective genre begin with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" published in 1841 by a writer also associated with the origins of the American Gothic, Edgar Allan Poe. Poe, like many of his American Gothic counterparts, explored the conflict between reason (or rationality) and sentiment, which was a characteristic feature of the classic European Gothic genre. This conflict between contained reason and excessive sentiment (and for Poe, particularly, horror) are crucial components of the detective genre and to the recurring figure of the ratiocinating genius detective. While classic Gothic novels typically focus on the mystery of uncovering the past, a murder, and a family tree heretofore unknown to the novel's protagonist, the protagonist finds herself struggling to maintain her reason when faced with the horror of the past and her present circumstances—often consisting of abduction and/or imprisonment, and the threat of violation by a licentious pursuer. This protagonist, while she more often than not manages to conquer her sentiment, does not demonstrate any particular skill at solving the mysteries of the past; instead, she usually stumbles upon information and those who possess information. The modern detective, such as Poe's C. Auguste Dupin and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, value exact thinking and well-reasoned thought to arrive at their solution because, having "eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth" (111). Poirot and his "little grey cells" are clearly in this vein of tradition, and Poirot cautions Hasting against '"mix[ing] up sentiment and reason'" (97). While Poirot frequently solves crimes because of his ability to think outside of the box, he always arrives at his solution by following the evidence, whereas Hastings, according to Poirot, '"give[s] too much rein to [his] imagination" (48-9). Poirot explains to Hastings that "[i]magination is a good servant, and a bad master. The simplest explanation is always the most likely" (48-9).

> pretenses of belief in the occult. The little comedy I played for him did not deceive him. (164)

As Poirot suspects, he then finds himself the next target of the doctor, and, again, Hastings is taken in by a performance—in which Poirot pretends he has been poisoned by something in his chamomile tea. [49]

A "stupefied" Hastings later questions Poirot: "But I thought you believed in some occult influence?" (163), to which Poirot explains,

> You misunderstood me, Hastings. What I meant was that I believe in the terrific force of superstition. Once get it firmly established that a series of deaths are supernatural, and you might almost stab a man in broad daylight, and it would still be put down to the curse, so strongly is the instinct of the supernatural implanted in the human race. (163)

All along, Poirot has remained committed to reason over superstition and to deconstructing the Gothic fiction of a curse being responsible for the four deaths. Instead, Poirot reveals Sir John Willard's death as the result of natural causes, and that the "idea" of murdering Mr. Bleibner (Willard's nephew) and Mr. Schneider came to Dr. Ames after the topic of curses arose upon the death of Sir John Willard.

At no point in reading "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb" is the reader encouraged to believe in the curse because it is presented as too comical for one to take seriously, and a regular reader of the Poirot series would have acquired sufficient

[49] Emma McEvoy in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* traces a historical relationship between the Gothic and the theatre, pointing out the Gothic novel's emphasis on setting that is similar to that in drama. She argues that "[t]he figure of the theatre, as a site where the past can be performed within the present, and the present within the space of the past, has possessed a particular appropriateness for a mode whose defining characteristic has been its twinning of history and place" (214).

experience with the detective to be skeptical of his attributing the crime to supernatural influences. By parodying the conventions and language of the Gothic, Christie establishes an anti-Gothic gesture. This anti-Gothic gesture refuses the anxiety traditionally generated by the presence of Gothic conventions and language. In these earlier texts, then, Gothic settings and trappings function as performances that create theatrical realities designed to conceal truth and that must—and can be—deconstructed by Poirot.

Many of texts in the Poirot series return to the topic of spiritualism as they feature séances, mediums, and/or Ouija boards. The presence of these topics reflects the continual popularity of spiritualism from the Victorian period into the early twentieth century.[50] In *Dumb Witness* (1937), while Emily Arundell's death does not "surprise" anyone, given her general ill health, her will does (1). Emily falls ill at a séance and dies soon after, leaving a new will in her place and a large list of suspects because no one is sure who knew about Emily's revised will and would therefore have had motive to kill her. Her state of appearance at the séance leads her aunts, the Misses Tripps, and her companion (and inheritor) Miss Lawson to form their own theories about the nature of Emily's death—namely, that it was due to an encounter with a spirit as they observe Emily with '"a halo of light…[surrounding her] head during the *séance*"'(189). Miss Lawson qualifies the halo as '"like the beginning of a manifestation"'(189). Miss

[50] Helen Sword's *Ghostwriting Modernism* explores high Modernists' relationship to spiritualism, from the appeal of mediumistic metaphors to the actual practices of W. B. Yeats and H.D. Her "Epilogue" contains a useful list of scholarship from the eighties and nineties on spiritualism. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart's "The Twentieth Century: Manufacturing Ghosts on an Industrial Scale," in *Ghosts: A History of Phantoms, Ghouls, and Other Spirits of the Dead*, discusses the historical and cultural attitudes toward ghosts in the twentieth century. Of particular interest is his discussion of the shifts around WWI, during which there was "a desire, almost a desperation, in the general public to know whether those who were absent, fighting, were alive or dead, and if dead, to establish contact with them again" (216).

Peabody expresses Christie's sentiment toward spiritualism when she explains to Poirot, '"If you think…that the spirit of John Arundell came back and ordered Emily to leave her money to Minnie Lawson and that Emily obeyed, I can assure you that you're very much mistaken" (84).[51] In her opinion, '"Emily wouldn't be that kind of fool….[S]he found spiritualism one degree better than playing patience or cribbage"' (81). She goes on to express her distaste toward the Tripps: '"Irritating women. Always giving you messages from one or other of your relations—and totally incongruous ones. They believe it all. So did Minnie Lawson. Oh, well, one way of passing your evenings is as good as another, I suppose"' (81). Miss Peabody mocks those who believe in spirits and attend séances. Predictably, Poirot reveals Miss Lawson's suggestion that Emily's death as the result of some spirit encounter is incorrect and attributes her death to phosphorus poisoning, which caused the halo effect but was missed by the doctor because he has lost his sense of smell ever since a bout of flu. The death of Emily is attributed to human causes and at the hand of a human, Bella Tanios, Emily's niece. Supernatural elements serve only to confuse the truth, and Christie parodies belief in such supernatural explanations for death.

[51] Christie was interested in spiritualism but never believed in it. She recounts the "tedious" stories Wilfred Pirie would tell her about the mediums he knew. Relating one particular story about two sisters who frequently saw spirits and Wilfred's closing expression, '"Would you believe it?,"' Christie writes that she had to stop herself from replying, '"No, I wouldn't"' (191). She comically reflects the lucky escape from a complicated break-up with Wilfred, when he calls one day to tell her he is leaving for a trip to South America and that "The Mediums…had expressed approval" (191). When he asks her whether she minds, she remembers, "I found myself having not the slightest hesitation. I said to him I thought it a wonderful opportunity, that of course he must go, and that I hoped with all my heart that he would find the Incas' treasures. Wilfred said I was wonderful; absolutely wonderful; not a girl in a thousand would behave like that…..But I was not a girl in a thousand; I was just a girl who had found out the truth about herself….I was delighted for Wilfred to go treasure-hunting, because I loved him like a brother" (192).

Peril at End House (1931) contains a clear anti-Gothic gesture when Poirot deconstructs the staged Gothic atmosphere at the house designed to obfuscate the truth of the case. End House may by "dreary looking" (31), resembling the setting of a classic Gothic tale, but the interior, as Hastings notes, is "ultramodern" and "full of sunshine" (32). While the house is '"not haunted,"' according to its owner, Nick Buckley (19), her maid, Ellen, explains that it '"isn't a good house"' because it is '"[e]vil….It's like dry rot in a house…, you can't get it out. It's a sort of feeling in the air. I always knew something bad would happen in this house, someday"' (140-1). Nick later agrees with Ellen's assessment of the Gothic atmosphere, confirming that "There's a queer feeling in that house…"' (157). Mrs. Buckley, the mother of Nick's cousin, Maggie, concurs that '"There's an evil feeling about that house'" (178). The Gothic quality of the house—despite its modern interior—fueled by the fears of those associated with the house provides Nick with the perfect stage for her plan to assume the role of fiancé to the now deceased Michael Seton and thereby inherit his money.

Poirot capitalizes on these fears about the house by staging a séance: '"Tonight, we stage…a play in End House….[T]here will be a ghost in this play. Yes, a ghost! End House has never seen a ghost. It will have one tonight….[W]e will produce our comedy—and reveal the truth"' (219).[52] Poirot stages his "comedy" so as to reveal the various twists and turns of the case and to expose those involved in the elaborate schemes to profit from the death of others. Nick, believing herself cast in the role of director, fails to understand that she, too, is merely an actor in Poirot's play. Poirot concludes, '"How

[52] The text even begins with a cast of characters, mimicking a play's traditional format.

well she played her part!...Oh! yes, she staged a fine drama here'" (240). The near-death experiences that she stages are believed to be attempts by someone to inherit her money, and, thus, Maggie's death is attributed to a case of mistaken identity for her cousin, Nick. Nick murders Maggie because it was actually Maggie who was engaged to Seton. Because both women have the same name, Magdala Buckley (but go by nicknames), Nick has "evidence" of her affair with Seton in letters addressed to Magdala. Poirot explains the nature of the evilness in the case: '"The maid, Ellen, said this was an evil house. I am inclined to agree with her. It was from the house that Mademoiselle took her inspiration"' (240). Poirot's assessment of the case here once again draws our attention to the potential of Gothic language and conventions to conceal the truth. The house's gothic quality and atmosphere result from its owner's skillful staging of the house as a site of evil. However, the crime was not due to the effects of supernatural influences but to human greed.

In *Taken at the Flood* (1948), Poirot's attention is drawn to the mystery of Warmsley Vale when Mrs. Cloade—sister-in-law to the deceased Gordon Cloade—visits Poirot in the spring of 1946 with reports of "a communication…from a spirit" via an Ouija board (xv). The message states that R. U. is '"*Not dead*"' (xv). Not a believer in the supernatural, Poirot declines to take the case, until he later reads a newspaper report about the death of Enoch Arden, a pseudonym of Robert Underhay, according to a story told by Major Porter that Poirot overheard in the autumn of 1944 (x). Poirot does not treat the spirit communication as legitimate and appears extremely skeptical, mocking even, of Mrs. Cloade and her "sham Egyptian beads" and "rambling method of approach" (xii-xiii). And, yet, Poirot observes the "remarkably shrewd light-blue eyes" of the lady

(xiii). Poirot's observation turns out to be extremely significant as he later discovers that Frances Cloade's visit and story about the Ouija board communication were staged and part of an elaborate "plan" to extort money from Rosaleen so as to help her husband out of his financial troubles (208-13). Her reports of a spirit communication are revealed as fraudulent and part of an act designed to ensnare Poirot's interest in the case and thereby cause Rosaleen to confess that her first husband is still alive and, therefore, that she is not rightfully entitled to inherit Cloade's money.

Despite the presence of the above discussed conventions and the theme of manipulating belief in the supernatural to stage Gothic performances, critics have been reluctant to examine Christie's use of the Gothic. Alison Light's assessment of Christie as a conservative Modernist relies upon a conventional understanding of Modernism as breaking with its literary ancestors, and she uses this to argue that "the lingering Gothicisms" are "gone" (70). Susan Rowland similarly dismisses the influence and presence of the Gothic in the Poirot series by arguing that Poirot's "obsessive tidiness defeats" the genre (113). Such readings fail to take into consideration the detective genre's indebtedness to the Gothic—especially for generating laughter in the above discussed texts—and to account for the continual presence of its conventions and

language that are skillfully employed in order to reveal that humans (and not the supernatural) are responsible for crimes.[53]

Modern Psychology and Performing Subjects

In the Poirot series, the self contained within neither takes the form of the indeterminate and allusive "ghosts within" discussed in chapter one, nor is this self committed to the overtly horrifying and monstrous self within that one finds in the fin-de-siècle Gothic. Instead, this self, although disguised within a performance that conceals its true motives and instincts, can be accessed through the methods employed by the psychologist—or alienist as he is often referred to in Christie's oeuvre—and the detective. On the surface, the figure of the genius detective who can identify the perpetrator of a crime by exposing those *conscious* performances designed to conceal guilt seems to conflict with emerging psychological theories that view identity as largely the result of *unconscious* drives. However, psychologists and detectives are linked through the methods they employ of reading clues (or symptoms) that the untrained eye does not observe. Furthermore, the performative and psychological theories present in Christie's work are committed to the idea of a "true" identity concealed beneath what the public views, whether this be a consciously performed or unconsciously derived identity.

[53] See Susan Rowland's discussion, in **"**Margery Allingham's Gothic: Genre as Cultural Criticism," that, having concluded that the Poirot series does not contain any residues of the Gothic, then argues that "crime fiction as a whole never escapes from the gothic because it is, like its monstrous parent, a form of cultural excess" (31). While too casually dismissive of the Poirot stories, Rowland's short, two-page analysis of the Miss Marple novel *They Do It With Mirrors* (1952) raises a useful point when she aligns Miss Marple with Jane Austen's Catherine Morland, arguing that Austen "disentangle[s] Gothic fiction from a Gothic-inflected actuality" (123). Rowland's assessment draws our attention to the difference between Gothic fictions, often emphasized via the overt and staged conventions of the Gothic such as haunted spaces and settings, and covert Gothic conventions that need to be uncovered or revealed.

Despite willed and conscious presentations of self, slippages occur during which the bodies of characters unconsciously reveal clues (or symptoms) about the real self. That is, these characters' seemingly simple identities constitute a performance that conceals deeper, richer, and truer content. As mentioned above, these selves are not as monstrous (and, perhaps, as overtly evil, then) as the selves contained within presented in the fin-de-siècle Gothic, such as Oscar Wilde's Dorian Grey or Robert Louis Stevenson's Mr. Hyde. However, both the fin-de-siècle Gothic and Christie's Poirot series represent the self as corruptible and innately possessing the capacity for committing evil acts. The repulsiveness of Dorian Grey or Mr. Hyde is replicated in the murders (or other kinds of criminal acts) in the Poirot series, but these criminals frequently evoke pity from the characters in the texts because their behavior is attributed to a potentially curable pathology or misguided judgment. This distinction is, however, challenged in the last of the Poirot novels, *Curtain*, which I discuss in the last section of this chapter. The repeated and prominent exploration of the self concealed by performance in the Poirot series suggests that these texts, like *The Great Gatsby* and *Heart of Darkness*, are as equally concerned with questions of identity—especially authentic identity—during modernity and committed to uncovering these concealed selves.

In the same vein as Phyllis Lassner's provocative dramaturgical reading—but extending the issue of performance beyond Christie's "colonial" novels—then, I read the texts from the Poirot series as performing in an attempt to make absent the historical and social contexts that haunt through the subtext. Characters' conscious performances are designed to conceal some kind of truth, but they are represented as unable to contain unconscious slippages—that the psychoanalyst and detective identify and interpret—that

erupt into their presentation of self. These slippages function at both the level of the narrative in terms of clues that give away the criminals' motives and guilt, and at the level of the texts in terms of revealing historical and social contexts that permeate the story and thus constitute a haunting subtext and story. Such a dramaturgical reading is extremely provocative because it suggests that there is a truth (or alternative reality) concealed beneath the surface performances of the text. Psychological considerations in the Poirot series gesture to fears about the unknown self—a fear characteristic of the classic Gothic and Modernism in general—contained within each individual and concealed from others via performative strategies. Of course, as Goffman's study reveals, these performative strategies are not always designed to conceal bad intentions and thoughts; indeed, Poirot's own penchant for performing reveals the usefulness of presenting a particular version of the self. However, often the most skillful performers in these texts conceal a dark pathology that only Poirot can identity.

As Freudian theory becomes increasingly important and popular in the early twentieth century, the detective figure evolves into a kind of psychologist who must uncover the repressed secrets and parts of human identity in order to establish motive and solve a crime. In *Appointment With Death* (1938), psychology plays a vital role in the solution of the crime, but it is routinely scrutinized as a profession and skill. Colonel Carbury particularly scoffs at Poirot's claim that he can solve the crime: "after you've sifted the evidence and done some reasoning and paddled in psychology—*hey presto!*—you think you can produce the rabbit out of the hat?" (117). Psychology, here, is compared to magic as if it is hocus-pocus, an illusion designed to trick its audience. However, much time is invested in the psychological analysis of the Boynton family in

order to determine the particular motives of each family member for killing their matriarch and to ascertain whether any of them have the capacity or "courage to defy her and shake off her influence" (204). Dr. Gerard, a renowned psychologist in the text, tutors Sarah King, a medical student, in the art of psychology, and she correctly concludes that "the mental equipment of Mrs. Boynton is very important in this case" (176). Poirot surmises,

> We have taken the *facts,* we have established a *chronological sequence of* events, we have heard the *evidence*. There remains—the psychology. And the most important psychological evidence concerns the dead woman—it is the psychology of Mrs. Boynton herself that is the most important thing in this case. Take from my list of specified facts points three and four. *Mrs. Boynton took definite pleasure in keeping her family from enjoying themselves with other people. Mrs. Boynton, on the afternoon in question, encouraged her family to go away and leave her. She was the petty tyrant of one isolated family* (228)

It is this psychological insight that leads Poirot to uncover the reason behind this "complete reversal of her usual policy" (227), and he comes to the conclusion that the trip abroad had revealed to Mrs. Boynton the "futility" of her own existence, as Sarah King has previously pointed out to Mrs. Boynton during a heated argument with the matriarch (229). Indeed, Sarah's argument with Mrs. Boynton, according to Poirot, results in Mrs. Boynton being "*exposed to herself* by an intelligent young woman! She was full of baffled fury—and at that moment she *recognized* someone—a *face* from the past—a victim delivered into her hands!" (229). Poirot understands that the powerlessness Mrs. Boynton experienced on her trip abroad led her to take advantage of a new victim to toy

with in order to restore her own sense of power; therefore, Poirot concludes that on the day of her murder, she uncharacteristically "*wanted to get rid of her family because*—to use a vulgarity—*she had other fish to fry!* She wanted the field left clear for an interview with a new victim," Lady Westholme (229).

While Sarah and Dr. Gerard are equally able to analyze Mrs. Boynton and her family's behavior, the text suggests that not all are astute psychological observers, as is the case of Jefferson Cope, a family friend of the Boyntons, who initially regards Mrs. Boynton's treatment of her family as a result of "'over-devotion'" (32). Similarly, while Poirot proves himself to be an astute observer of human behavior and user of modern psychological methods, his frequent companion Hastings lacks the same skills, and he frequently misinterprets situations entirely. For example, in *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, much of the evidence surrounding the crime falls into place for Poirot when he identifies Mary Cavendish's feelings toward her husband as inspired by jealousy over his affair and not, as Hastings thinks, her dislike of him. Poirot, furthermore, understands Lawrence's motive for insisting on his step-mother's death being classified as an accident because he is in love with Cynthia and fears she murdered her (119). Hastings can neither correctly interpret the psychology behind other people's behaviors nor recognize a performance.

Christie creates suspense for her readers by filtering the narrative through this good-intentioned but slightly inept narrator, a strategy which, no doubt, avid readers of the series began to recognize, as Hastings is time and time again revealed to have misinterpreted people and clues. In addition, Hastings appears even more comically inept when he frequently dismisses Poirot as losing his touch because he is "growing old" (34)

or that, perhaps, "the war had affected the little man's brain" (24). This seemingly benign reference to the war—given that the reader probably realizes it is Hastings whose skill is lacking and not Poirot's—paradigmatically gestures to all those who did indeed suffer psychological damage during the war and to the growing awareness about and recognition of the pathology of shell-shock.[54]

Poirot's age, foreignness, and general comical appearance frequently lead people to dismiss him as a dangerous adversary. Poirot is described by Hastings as

> an extraordinary looking little man. He was hardly more than five feet, four inches, but carried himself with great dignity. His head was exactly the shape of an egg, and he always perched it a little on one side. His moustache was very stiff and military. The neatness of his attire was almost incredible. I believe a speck of dust would have caused him more pain than a bullet would. Yet this quaint dandified little man who, I was sorry to see, now limped badly, had been one of the most celebrated members of the Belgium police. (15)

Poirot himself is astutely aware of others' perception of him, and frequently he uses this to his advantage. In the war-themed short story "The Incredible Theft" (1937), Poirot plays the fool as he investigates the theft of specifications for a new British bomber: '"Here I scream,' said Poirot helpfully. He opened his mouth and emitted a shrill blast. Lord Mayfield turned his head away to hide a smile and Mr. Carlile looked extremely uncomfortable" (*Hercule Poirot* 226). Lord Mayfield—himself performing a role—cautions Poirot, '"You'll have to proceed with a good deal of camouflage, M. Poirot.

[54] Dorothy Sayers experiments with a shell-shocked war vet in her Lord Peter Wimsey series, proving that while a detective may be severely psychologically damaged by the war—as his shell-shock attack at the end of *Whose Body?* reveals—he can still function as an effective detective. Sayers repeatedly returns to the theme of shell-shock and its effects. For example, see also *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*.

This matter has to be kept dark'" (230). Poirot assures Mayfield, '"The lies I invent are always most delicate and most convincing'" (230). Solving the crime by recognizing that the whole theft was an elaborate performance to entice Mrs. Vanderlyn, a known Nazi sympathizer, into stealing fake specifications, Poirot informs his skeptics, '"I am not such a charlatan as you think….I am not offended. It is sometimes necessary for me to adopt a certain pose"' (246). Extremely self-aware, Poirot recognizes the power of performance and is uniquely gifted at recognizing the performances of others.

In *The Mysterious Affair at Styles,* while readers may learn to be suspicious of Hastings' narration and figure out more than he does, they are initially led astray when their suspicions are directed toward Inglethorp and then further confused by Poirot's insistence on his innocence. Poirot alone sees the truth of the matter, but, as he himself confesses, '"it is not my habit to explain until the end is reached"' (25). Furthermore, as he explains to his friend when he accuses him of keeping secrets, '"you have a nature so honest, and a countenance so transparent, that—enfin, to conceal your feelings is impossible! If I had told you my ideas, the very first time you saw Mr. Alfred Inglethorp that astute gentleman would have… 'smelt a rat!'" (114). Hastings cannot perform like Poirot or the criminals they investigate. Early on in the text Poirot figures out that someone was trying to make Inglethorp look extremely suspicious, only later to have him reveal his airtight alibi. It was therefore not Inglethorp who purchased the strychnine but someone disguised as him, and, moreover, what characterizes Evelyn Howard's feelings toward her cousin, Alfred Inglethorp, is not '"over-vehement hatred"' but '"the very opposite emotion"' (118). Through the careful application of his method, Poirot successfully, despite many brief spells of frustration, solves the crime through the

combined method of recognizing performances meant to fool him and penetrating beneath these performances in order to understand the suspects' psychology. Poirot successfully provides resolution—indeed, he rarely ever fails—and delivers the criminals into the hands of the law or, through exposing their crimes, causes the criminals to take their own lives.

These performative gestures may derive from Christie's connection to the theatrical world that she discusses in *An Autobiography*:

> I always found it restful to stay with actors in wartime, because to them, acting and the theatrical world were the *real* world, any other world was not. The war to them was a long drawn-out nightmare that prevented them from going on with their own lives, in the proper way, so their entire talk was of theatrical people, theatrical things….Then I would find myself back again in Lawn Road, my face covered with a pillow as protection against flying glass. (507)

The juxtaposition in this quote between the "theatrical" world of her actor friends that Christie finds "restful" and her own horrifying "wartime" reality parallels the distinction between performed realities in the Poirot series and the reality that continues to exist outside of these staged refuges. These theatrical realities cannot be sustained outside of the immediate proximity of her actor friends' environment, as evidenced by the "flying glass" she experienced in the bomb attack when she returned to Lawn Road. Still, Christie longs for the refuge provided by these "wonderfully refreshing" locations because they provide escape from the reality of the war. Her novels, then, reflect this very desire for escape but simultaneously acknowledge the inability of these theatrical realities to provide permanent refuge. Moreover, these theatrical realities may, in fact,

make reality more difficult to cope with upon return home. So, while these theatrical realities provide escape, they are only an illusion, a fiction, and, paradoxically, then, theatrical realities take on a sinister quality. Further, the escapism offered by these texts is equally an illusion, as readers must return to their reality after having submersed themselves within the narrative's reality. In other words, one cannot permanently escape from the reality that exists beyond and beneath the veneer of theatrical worlds, and attempts to do so may make reality harder to face.

The Gothic and Christie's Aesthetics of Absence[55]

The theatrical metaphors discussed above influence the form of the narratives in the Poirot series. An aesthetics of absence reinforces the escapism of these theatrical realities by absenting those fears and anxieties that disturb the escapist ethos of the series. Although seemingly absent from the surface of the text, these fears and anxieties exist within the series subtext, just as authentic selves exist beneath performed selves. To understand this aesthetics of absence, I turn to Sigmund Freud's essay on "Slips of the Tongue" (parapraxis) in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), in which Freud explains that during his practice of psychotherapeutic methods,

[55] I was originally drawn to this term in Alan Lloyd-Smith's brief discussion of it in the section "The Gothic Aesthetics of Absence" in *American Gothic Fiction* (123-125). Lloyd-Smith explains that "Fears of science, contemporary paranoia about forces within history, and the vulnerability of the observer replace earlier belief structures in an uncanny new landscape, even more 'unreal' than the stagy original Gothic, but equally representing 'real' forces at play, real threats to the human, even if they are only to be seen off to the side" (125). This term has received increasing attention from scholars, particularly those interested in architecture. For example, see Marita Sturken's "The Aesthetics of Absence: Rebuilding Ground Zero," Yuan Yuan's "From Ideology of Loss to Aesthetics of Absence: The Endgame in Beckett's *The Lost Ones*," and Richard Shusterman's "The Urban Aesthetics of Absence: Pragmatist Reflections in Berlin."

> I very often have to track down the subject of a train of thought from the remarks and ideas which patients bring out as if by chance. They may try to conceal that subject, but cannot help revealing it unintentionally in many different ways. In such circumstances a slip of the tongue often proves very helpful. (78)

Earlier in the essay he recounts an example of "intentional suppression of an idea" when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a walking holiday with two ladies, one of whom explains her distaste for "sweat[ing]" (63). Freud notes the woman's hesitation when discussing the need to change one's clothes after a long walk and that she then unintentionally mentions her '"knickers,'" a topic he posits she chose to withhold during her hesitation (63). Parapraxis constitutes the return of the repressed; what has been absented is always already present, waiting to return fully. There are few literary studies that have directly analyzed Freud's theory of parapraxis, and one has to turn to Thomas Elsaesser's application of the concept on the seemingly absent image and thematic consideration of the Holocaust in the "New German Cinema" of the 1970s. He persuasively qualifies Freud's term: "I define parapraxis…not primarily as the 'slip of the tongue,' or the lapse in attention, but as a kind of effort, a kind of persistence" (109). He does so in order to highlight a mode he labels as "presence as parapraxis" in which what is seemingly absent is actually present via the strategies of parapraxis, or, in his words, when "presence can be recognized within absence" (109). I find such a version of parapraxis useful for understanding the relationship between surface text and subtext in the Poirot series, especially when one considers this strategy in combination with Christie's use of performance and psychology. Slips of the tongue reveal information that one would rather keep concealed but cannot prevent from slipping out. Such slips

are not inconsequential but provide insight into what is withheld. This withheld information is both present and absent because the speaker knows the information exists but attempts to conceal its presence from others. The reader must recognize, then, the presence of fears and anxieties within absence. For readers open to recognizing presence within absence, the surface text is haunted by specific themes and concerns that inhabit the narratives' subtext. This aesthetics of absence then creates the illusion of escape in its theatrical reality.

This aesthetics of absence complicates readings of Christie's oeuvre that argue she creates a "social and historical cocoon" (48) and that the "physical and social settings are so isolated from the post-war depression that it is as if the Great War never happened" (Scaggs 48). John Scaggs acknowledges what he refers to as "fleeting" references to the war, but he does not warrant these references as worthy of sustained analysis (48). Colin Watson, in "The Message of Mayhem Parva," calls Christie "virtually apolitical," contending that "Poirot personified an orderly and sensible approach to such problems as refused to be things of the past but kept erupting into the present, despite the efforts of politicians" (103-4). This short essay from the 1977 collection *Agatha Christie: First Lady of Crime* hits upon the very problem Christie's Poirot series tackles. However, Watson does not read her works as subversive because he takes for granted that Poirot's approach dispels readers' anxieties over social "problems" and offers the chance for escape from the realities of a turbulent era.

To complicate matters further, Christie found her output mediated by the requests of her publishers. Her business letters reveal that she was frequently required to revise material or advised prior to beginning a project to include or exclude war references as

per the instructions of different publishers. In a letter dated April 18th, 1940, written to her literary agent, Edmund Cork, Christie writes this in reference to *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940):

> Have altered the end, written in a dissertation on murder by Poirot addressed to Blunt and pointing straight at him so that hardly anybody can miss it! And have dragged the war in neck and crop all over the place.

In a letter dated September of the same year, Cork quotes the editor of *This Week* who requests that Christie not write any "war stories":

> I realize the difficulty of writing about other subjects just now, but we have had to make an absolute rule against buying or ordering any more war stories, the difficulty of course being that the war may be over long before we could publish the stories and they would therefore sound dated. The sudden collapse of France forced us to kill three stories already paid for and illustrated, but predicated on the fact that the Maginot Line would hold out. Murders and thefts and other things in which a detective interests himself continue in civilian life, war time as well as peace time.

Cork notes that this request "is exactly the opposite of Colliers' decision." These requests, of course, help one to account for the varied intensity of references to the war, but, as was already argued above, the war functions as a significant contextual factor that continues to haunt the subtext.

Before turning to the first Poirot novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, I want to examine the short story that should have appeared in *The Labours of Hercule*, "The Capture of Cerberus" (1940), but was only recently published in John Curran's *Agatha*

Christie's Secret Notebooks. This story requires our attention because it is one of the few examples of an explicit discussion and analysis of the after-effects of WWI and the climate leading up to WWII. This story's content thus explicitly challenges Christie's claim that she was uninterested in politics. According to Poirot, "The world was in a very disturbed state—every nation alert and tense. At any minute the blow might fall—and Europe once more be plunged into war" (433). Reflecting on the First World War, Poirot believes that war "settle[s] nothing. The peace it brought in its wake was usually only the peace of exhaustion—not a constructive peace" (433). The story's plot revolves around Poirot's investigation into the death of Hans Lutzmann, who was killed by a mob of August Hertzlein's supporters because they believed Lutzmann responsible for Hertzlein's assassination. Given the date of the story's creation, the reference to a looming second war, and the descriptions of Hertzlein's power as a rhetorician, and even the same initials—A. H.—Hertzlein clearly functions as the literary doppelgänger for Adolph Hitler. While the text includes only one direct reference to the "Nazis," Hertzlein is described as "the dictator of dictators": "His warlike utterances had rallied the youth of his own country and of allied countries. It was he who had set central Europe ablaze and kept it ablaze. On the occasion of his public speeches he was able to set huge crowds rocking with frenzied enthusiasm" (438-40). This short story expresses anxiety about the power of such political figures. These explicit discussions of the political climate are why Curran believes the story was not accepted for publication, and, given the letter from Cork about *The Week*'s editor's request that Christie not write any more war stories, Curran is likely correct in his assumption (427).

The title of the story, which comes from the name of the stolen dog, Cerberus, references the mythological figure of the multi-headed dog. The allusion to this gothicesque monster, traditionally represented as a three-headed dog whose heads represent the past, present, and future, captures the story's concern about the repetition of the past, the present "sick" state of the world, and the uncertainty of the future that may suffer another war (442). Poirot's manservant, George, says, '"It looks like war whichever way you turn,"' and this comment, in collaboration with the name Cerberus, conveys a pessimistic outlook on the world's political climate, the repetition of history, and the anxiety felt over the immanency of another war (442). As Christie herself wrote in one of her many notebooks, "history repeats itself," and, by the nineteen-forties, the uncontrollable nature of history and its trajectory suggest that while one may seemingly attempt to provide some sense of escape by offering a vision of resolution and restored order, the task becomes increasingly more difficult to achieve (qtd. in Curran 118). This anxiety appears in other texts from the series but is divorced from such explicit discussion about the war. The tension between order and optimism, and impending chaos and pessimism, is strikingly apparent in this short story that contains fantasy, an experiment with theoretical history, about a redeemable Hitler, while it cannot alleviate fully the anxiety that history, despite Hitler's performed character, will inevitably repeat itself.

Christie rewrites the trajectory of Hitler's career, as the assassinated Hertzlein, in fact, is still alive but has been imprisoned in a mental institution because he has changed his political beliefs and wants instead to promote "peace" (447). In re-envisioning Hertzlein's conversion to peace, the text imagines a more optimistic world wherein

Hertzlein inspires chants of "*Peace…Love…Brotherhood…The Young are to save the World"* rather than the reality of WWII (450). This text, therefore, reads like an exercise in theoretical history in which the author desires to and experiments with rewriting history, a desire F. Scott Fitzgerald explores through his character Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*. Curran, in his introduction to the story, wonders "Why Christie chose to write this story…, as there is little evidence elsewhere in her work that she was particularly political" (427). While this story is uncharacteristically overt in its engagement with political issues of the time, Curran's question foregrounds the failure to consider the ways in which Christie encodes similar concerns about the political climate and political figures into the subtext of other works from the Poirot series.

For example, turning now to *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, the first defining characteristic that readers learn about the narrator, Captain Hastings, is that he "had been invalided home from the Front" and has since spent his time in a Convalescent Home (5). During his month-long sick leave, Hastings takes up an invitation from an old, childhood friend, John Cavendish, to stay at his family's ancestral home, Styles. The bucolic "peaceful[ness]" of Styles St. Mary feels like "another world" to Hastings, who finds it "almost impossible to believe that, not so very far away, a great war was running its appointed course" (6). Immediately, the reader is tricked into a false sense of security with the suggestion that Styles St. Mary is a refuge from the atrocities of the war. The reader of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* is tricked, then, into assuming that despite the occasional references to the war, this novel is not about the war. Hastings' vision of the "peaceful" early July day in Styles St. Mary—a vision, as I will discuss in detail later, that Poirot deconstructs in his and Hastings' return to Styles in *Curtain*—while, "not so

very far away, the great war was running its appointed course," enacts the tension between this bucolic and dated world of the past and the horrifying present reality of WWI (6). Christie litters clues (or reminders) in these opening pages that point to the importance of and central role the war plays in this novel. In other words, despite being seemingly absent due to the infrequent references and the lack of a sustained or detailed discussion about its effects, the war is very much present. Indeed, there are two brief references to the war in the opening two pages of the text, and these references shape our impression of the novel's narrator, Hastings. Hastings is a wounded soldier and his current situation has resulted from his experiences in the war.

While readers are presented with the illusion of escape from the harsh reality of the war, Christie cannot fully divorce her text from the current circumstances of the war. Therefore, the text contains references to the war and resonances of its effects that remind the observant reader that, even though it may seem "almost impossible to believe," the war continues beyond the immediate context of Styles, England, and beyond the desire to escape from the war by reading the novel. Christie immediately establishes a contrast between the summer day Hastings appreciates and the seemingly distant war, and, as readers soon learn, this peacefulness is an illusion—a performance—concealing a Gothic plot-line revolving around the family, intentions of murder, and dysfunctional interpersonal relationships based upon lies and deceit. Such a reading disrupts Grossvogel's claim, then, that only the act of murder "spoils what was otherwise good" (43). The act of murder and the investigation into the crime serves to uncover the family's dysfunction and both the presence and importance of the war.

The war has clearly disrupted the status quo and the lifestyle of the Cavendish household, from the daily functioning of the household—for example, the number of the gardeners the household can employ has decreased (31), Mrs. Inglethorp has imposed a series of "War economics" to save paper and other items (109), and the government has imposed economies in the form of food rationing (38)—to the media's attention upon "The Mysterious Affair at Styles," when there is a lull in the war's activity (73).[56] These factors serve not only as reminders of the war, but, more importantly, many of them function as vital clues in Poirot's case. Had Mrs. Inglethorp not imposed her "War economics" plan to save paper, Poirot's attention would not have been drawn to an important clue. The burning paper in Mrs. Inglethorp's room suggests to Poirot that an '"important document"' was destroyed (110). Concluding that the document was a will, Poirot discovers a possible motive for the killer—inheritance. Further, the fact that Cynthia does not take sugar in her coffee, even when rationing is not in effect, leads Poirot to conclude that she was drugged, which explains why she did not awaken during the commotion caused by the discovery of Mrs. Inglethorp's body (111). With this information, Poirot is able to dismiss two possible suspects, Cynthia and Mary Cavendish. The number of coffee cups and a mysterious substance in the bottom of one of the cups suggests poisoning to Poirot. He realizes that the latter of the two women drugged the former so that she could sneak through her room into Mrs. Inglethorp's in order to obtain a piece of paper, which she believed to contain evidence of her husband's having an affair. This piece of paper that caused Mrs. Inglethorp such distress before her

[56] One is again reminded of Woolf's comment about the horrors breakfasted upon daily due to the media's prevalence in modernity, as compared to the time of their ancestors.

death was actually a letter from Alfred to his cousin and lover, Evelyn. The war and its effects, because they influence the daily existence of the inhabitants of Styles, are vital to Poirot's case. The effect is subtle and easily missed, as one is swept along in the suspense of the mystery, but this aesthetics of absence reveals that what is seemingly absent or inconsequential in this "refuge" from the war turns out to be strikingly present and vital.

In the texts produced in the period leading up to the war, one notices a tonal shift in Christie's novels, and the stagy Gothic conventions of her interwar novels are harder to find. I argue that the endings of many of these works contain only the appearance (or illusion) of resolution, escape, and optimism. Christie litters clues in the ending sections of these texts that can cause one to question the optimism with which they seemingly end. Furthermore, the language and conventions of the Gothic begin to appear in revised and subtler forms and are relocated to address the day-to-day concerns faced by British subjects. For example, as was mentioned briefly above, Christie is repeatedly drawn to discussions and plotlines about the theme of the corrupting potential of power, especially for those involved in politics. Such discussion focuses upon the psychology of the corrupted individual and reinforces fears about the unknown self that lies within.

In *Appointment with Death*, Lady Westholme '"who's very prominent in English politics"' murders in order to prevent a secret being exposed about her and the ensuing scandal ruining her career (30): '"Her career, her ambitions, her social position—all at stake! What the crime was for which she served a sentence in prison we do not yet know…, but it must have been one that would effectively blast her political career if it was made public"' (232). Mrs. Boynton, despite her maliciousness, tyrannical control

over her family, and desire for power over others, is pitied by her family in the epilogue to the novel: '"Poor Mother…She was *queer*…Now—that we're all so happy—I feel kind of sorry for her. She didn't get what she wanted out of life. It must have been tough for her"' (238). These words are spoken unexpectedly by Ginevra (Jinny), while Sarah looks upon her "grave[ly]" because she has observed the '"likeness"' between Ginevra and Mrs. Boynton. The women are different, however, because Mrs. Boynton '"was in darkness,"' whereas Jinny '"is in light"' (238). Prior to this line of conversation, the reader experiences a momentary interruption when Christie shifts the narrative focus to the actor playing Hamlet who states "gloomily," "'Her mannerisms! Of course people like it at *first*—but what I say is, it's not *Shakespeare*. Did you see how she ruined my exit?'" (236). The happy tone of the ending created by the family's reunion is momentarily contaminated by this brief interruption from the actor playing Hamlet—so momentarily, in fact, that one may skim over and miss the significance of the interruption entirely. The briefness and seemingly non-essential nature of the information to the narrative arc makes one pause and question Christie's motives for including such a textual interruption. It is as if Christie wishes to remind readers that darker human emotions still exist, and one can almost read this brief textual interruption as preparing the reader for a future novel in which Ginevra is targeted by a fellow actor motivated by jealousy. Therefore, despite Poirot having successfully solved the case, the novel's end contains an ominous tone.

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe, in turn, contains an interesting treatise on political progress and history. Blunt's niece, Jane, defends her boyfriend, Howard Raikes, and his '"crowd,"' arguing that her uncle's politics are "stodgy" because his political beliefs are

so "cautionary and conservative," as evidenced by such statements as "'We could never risk that….It wouldn't be sound economically….We've got to consider our responsibility….Look at history"' (96). Jane rejects such beliefs, arguing, '"But I think one *mustn't* look at history. That's looking back. One must look *forward* all the time"' (96). This debate between the stagnant and safe politics of her uncle versus the progressive and forward moving politics of Raikes and his crowd provides one with material to challenge criticisms levied at Christie's conservative politics and dependence on nostalgia. Kristine A. Miller, in *British Literature of the Blitz,* argues that Christie and other wartime detective novelists have been dismissed by scholars because "[t]heir mysteries, the argument goes, describe the process of outwitting an evil villain…in order to return the chaotic world to its more peaceful status quo" (117). Indeed, as recent as 2005, John Scaggs, in *Crime Fiction*, concurs that Poirot's "aim (and purpose) is to restore order after it has been disrupted by crime," and he argues that Golden Age fiction in general is characterized by "romantic resolution" that seeks to "maintain…the upper middle-class status quo" (47). David Grossvogel, in *Mystery and Its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie*, accuses Christie of creating a world of "nostalgia and illusion" (52) and that, ultimately, her works contain "all-enclosing myster[ies]" (46). Such attitudes suggest that Christie nostalgically restores order to a world temporarily disrupted by "contrived" "trivial unpleasantness" but that this world was only ever a fictional one to begin with (Grossvogel 52). Grossvogel does not read Christie as engaging in any kind of social or historical criticism. However, Jane's assessment of the contrast between Raikes' politics and her uncle's suggests that Christie was acutely aware of differing political outlooks and that she attempted to work through these differing

political positions. While Poirot favors Blunt's '"natural honesty and rectitude"' in his politics and his '"upright, trustworthy, [and] honest"' public persona, he clearly, as was discussed above, feels Blunt has been corrupted by power into taking for granted human life (220). Given that Blunt represents a conservative politics but turns out to hold extremely disturbing views about human life, it would be remissive of readers to dismiss Christie as having a clear-cut and romanticized vision of conservative politics. The political conservative, after all, is the criminal in the novel, and, as I have suggested above, Blunt's defense of his crimes recalls Nazi party rhetoric. Furthermore, Poirot ensures that Blunt is arrested, despite Blunt's '"justification[s]'" and appeals to the detective that he be allowed to continue with his political life in the interest of the '"happiness of the whole nation"'(221). Poirot concludes by informing Jane and Raikes, "The world is yours. The New Heaven and the New Earth. In your new world, my children, let there be freedom and let there be pity…That is all I ask"' (222). While celebrating the "freedom" and progress this new generation of politicians have, he clearly cautions them about that power, reminding them to maintain their sense of humanity.

In *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940), the descriptions of Poirot's method of gathering the evidence, his "collecting twigs," and waiting for his mind to put them into the right order gestures toward the uncanny (103). He recounts the frustrating feeling of "waiting for something" (102-3), but he questions, "What was it?," concluding that it is "Something inevitable, fore-ordained, the next link in the chain" (103). This "kaleidoscope" of conscious and unconscious observations falls into place to reveal "[a] snare cunningly laid—…a pit open at his feet—dug carefully so that he should fall into it" (162). As previously discussed above, Christie was asked by her publishers to include

the war more overtly in this text, as she reports in a letter to Cork on April 18th, 1940: "Have altered the end, written in a dissertation on murder by Poirot addressed to Blunt and pointing straight at him so that hardly anybody can miss is! And have dragged the war in neck and crop all over the place." The murderer, Sir Alistair Blunt, explains to Poirot that he has killed three people for his country: '"If I was ruined and disgraced—the country, *my* country was hit as well. For I've done something for England, M. Poirot. I've held it firm and kept it solvent. It's free from Dictators—from Fascism and from Communism….We *are* democratic in England—truly democratic"' (217).[57] The reference to Fascism juxtaposes Blunt's crimes to Germany's crimes. Despite Blunt's professed semi-altruistic motives for murder, Poirot reminds him that he has still killed three people (220). Blunt's assessment of his victims—Mabelle Sainsbury Seal as "a woman with the brains of a hen," Mr. Amberiotis as "a crook and a blackmailer," Henry Morely "as only a dentist," and wrongly accused murder suspect, Frank Carter, as "[a]n utter rotter" who is not worthy of his "pity"—alludes to similar judgments made by Hitler and the Nazi party in their hierarchy of so-called worthy individuals (220). Poirot chastises Blunt's allegiance to hierarchy in which he values his own life above those of these lesser humans: "we are all human beings. That is what you have not remembered….For to me the lives of those four people are just as important as your life" (220). Blunt, however, disagrees, telling Poirot he is "wrong," to which Poirot responds, "No, I am not wrong….[W]ithin you the love of power grew to overwhelming heights. So you sacrificed four human lives and thought them of no account" (220-1)

[57] See Kristine A. Miller's discussion on Christie's "fear of the too-powerful leader" (123), and the "public mistrust of political leaders earlier in the war" (127).

The texts Christie produced in the years just preceding the end of the Second World War struggle to provide escape and optimism. She explicitly begins to channel her own experiences during the London Blitz into her work. In *Taken at the Flood* (1948), she uses the bombing of her London home, 48 Sheffield Terrace, as a central plot line. Christie recounts the bombing of her home in *An Autobiography*: "I remember that Sheffield Terrace was bombed on a weekend when we were away from London. A land-mine came down exactly opposite it, on the other side of the street, and completely destroyed three houses. The effect it had on 48 Sheffield Terrace was to blow up the basement, which might have been presumed the safest place, and to damage the roof and the top floor, leaving the ground and first floors almost unharmed" (472). In *Taken at the Flood*, Gordon Cloade, the patriarch of the Cloade family, dies in the bombing of his London home in which the basement is blown out. His new wife, Rosaleen, is unharmed and inherits her husband's money, much to the chagrin of the family. Rosaleen is later revealed as an imposter, having been only a servant in the house, and she survived because she was not in the basement at the time of the bomb's explosion. The parallel between Christie's own experience and the circumstances of the book are clear.

Unlike Jeremy Cloade, Gordon's older brother—who states, '"The truth is that one never believes for a minute, no matter what danger you're in, that you yourself are going to be killed. The bomb is always going to hit the other person!"'—Christie feared she would die in the Blitz (20). Christie notes that due to a "horror of being trapped under-ground" she herself never went down to the basement and always slept in her own bed (473). Christie remembers how she was sure she would never see Greenway again. She believed her beloved house would be bombed, reveals an intense anxiety about

dying in a bomb attack and/or losing her home. She remarks how she had heard so many stories of "deaths of friends" (475). These prolific and routine bombings led to, in Christie's opinion, the sense that they were "not…something extraordinary, but as perfectly natural. After three years of war, they were an everyday happening. You could not really envisage a time when there would not be a war any more" (475). *Taken at the Flood*, written just after the war, certainly conveys a tone of mourning for a lost world and the sense that the effects of the war still resonate within England: "It's the aftermath has left. Ill will. Ill feeling. It's everywhere" (35), and '"The world is becoming a difficult place to live in"' (207). The novel contains an ominous tone because, despite the end of the war, "*Nothing's safe*" (38). Christie's accounts in *An Autobiography* and her representations of the war in England suggest that she, like Woolf in her discussion in "Henry James's Ghost Stories," realized that the conventions and language of the classic Gothic no longer inspired fear in readers in the wake of the horrors of world war.[58] According to Charles Osborne, "Christie comes dangerously close to a realism which could easily have destroyed her cosy murder mystery world" in her portrayal of "a post-war England whose buoyant 1945 mood of triumph has given way to a certain restlessness and dissatisfaction." Christie strategically places a final chapter after the crimes are wrapped up in which the lovers, Lynn and Rowley, are united. This final chapter's emphasis on this romance is perhaps what Osborne would credit as restoring the "cosy murder mystery world" over the realism Christie invokes. However, Poirot's final lines, which he only murmurs—'"*There is a tide in the affairs of men / Which, taken*

[58] Woolf writes that "we breakfast upon a richer feast of horror than served our ancestors in a twelvemonth" because of the relentlessness of the two world wars and the increasing news coverage of their effects (288).

at its flood, leads on to / fortune…' 'Yes, the tide sweeps in—but it also ebbs—and may carry you out to sea"' (260)—sound eerily familiar to the closing lines of *The Great Gatsby*---—"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (180). Poirot's lines communicate anxiety about the inevitability of history repeating itself, like the tides of the flood.[59] Had the novel ended on these lines, the tone would have been very different, and the reader would have been left with a very different impression of the text; but, Christie strategically performs narrative resolution and escape by returning to the romance story-line.[60]

Jane's insistence, in *One, Two Buckle My Shoe*, that '"one *mustn't* look at history. That's looking back. One must look *forward* all the time"' complicates readings of Christie's nostalgia. While Christie certainly explores the theme of nostalgia, often herself lamenting the loss of stability and the status quo, critics overlook how she interrogates her own attitudes toward progress and change and expresses anxiety over the difficult political climate of post-WWII England. The recurring theme and fear about the repetition of history suggest, moreover, that the past is not necessarily a site for refuge. The certainty that Poirot feels about the distinction between good and evil also begins to waiver. When Mr. Barnes questions Poirot's decision to turn Blunt in by arguing that the country does need Blunt, Poirot agrees but qualifies his claim by suggesting that '"We may be wrong'" (223). The text suggests that change does not come easily; instead,

[59] Flood here references both the movement of the tides inward to climax and the climax of the bombing attacks on London during the Blitz.

[60] For feminist scholars this union between Lynn and Rowley is not so rewarding and does not provide such a sense of escape because not only has Rowley shown himself capable of committing extreme violence—indeed, he tries to strangle Lynn at one point—but marriage to Rowley means a predetermined and conventionally feminine life for Lynn. She has expressed restlessness and the desire once again to leave this familiar world for the excitement and freedom she experienced during her time in the Wrens, but marriage to Rowley, a farmer, means settling down into a traditionally feminine and domestic life.

change comes begrudgingly and with the reservations that one might be making a mistake. Despite successfully solving his case, Poirot is not his typically elated self that readers witness at the end of many of Christie's other novels. He is clearly troubled by his support of Blunt's success as a political figure and deeply disturbed by some of his views that lead him to dismiss the lives of four individuals so easily. Further, one must not forget that Poirot is a Belgian refuge, living in England because his country has been occupied by the Germans who similarly expressed such beliefs that they were doing what was best for their country. While the case is resolved, an unresolved and uncertain political future lingers at the end of the novel challenging such readings of Christie that argue she restores the status quo.

Curtain

In the last book of Agatha Christie's Poirot series, *Curtain*, Poirot and his companion, Captain Arthur Hastings, are reunited at the scene of their first adventure, Styles. Lacking the ratiocinative skill of the retired Belgian detective but finding himself thrust into a more active detective role than usual because of Poirot's ailing health, Hastings comments that "[i]t was as though somewhere, just out of sight, was a fact that I did not want to see—that I could not bear to acknowledge. Something that already, deep down, *I knew*…" (175). From the opening of the novel, then, the novel's narrator, Captain Hastings, experiences the sense of history repeating itself, the uncanny: "[w]ho is there who has not felt a sudden startled pang at reliving an old experience or feeling an old emotion? '*I have done this before…*'" (1), and, later, "suddenly, from nowhere, a vague feeling of uneasiness and disquiet assailed me" (138). Hastings's experience of

‘“vague unformulated dread”’ and his assessment of knowledge reminds one of Joseph Conrad’s Marlow who struggles to access knowledge he is sure he already possesses (175). Hastings’ experiences of the uncanny are corroborated by many of the other guests of the former manor house, such as Boyd Carrington, who feels he has had a ‘“[a] premonition of evil”’ (138) and tells Hastings that ‘“there’s some malign influence about it. Things happen here”’ (171). Nurse Craven asks Hastings whether he can ‘“feel”’ ‘“the atmosphere”’ (58). Hastings wonders whether the murder in 1916 has left an “impression” and now the house “bear[s] traces” of that event (58). The uncanny combined with the sense of “evil” that haunts the house configure this text in Gothic terms; however, unlike, for example, *Peril at End House*, this Gothic atmosphere is not staged, and it is therefore not deconstructed at the end of novel. The uncanny, a tool of Christie’s subtler revised Gothic language and conventions, represents “an absence that is called up, [but]…doesn’t come” (Lloyd-Smith (124). This moment draws readers’ attention to the modernist anxiety about the slipperiness of frustratingly absent knowledge that is only almost within one’s grasp but never quite fully present—except, of course, for Poirot—and that exacerbates the Gothic tone of anxiety in the last Poirot case. The observation that he “did not want to see” and “could not bear to acknowledge” emphasize Hastings’ extreme anxiety. The Gothic conventions and language in this novel take the form of revised subtler means that do not evoke laughter and prove impossible to deconstruct.

While Christie may be guilty of attempting to pacify her readers by offering them an escape from their own realities in earlier texts from the series, the increasingly persistent theme of presentness in absence as the series culminates with *Curtain* suggests

that Christie struggled to deconstruct the Gothic-inflected reality of WWII that surrounded the text's historical context and refused to be silenced (or absented) by more frequently derailing the narrative trajectory toward order and resolution. Furthermore, the theatrical metaphor takes on a strikingly sinister quality. Like her Modernist counterparts, Christie utilizes the revised language and conventions of the Gothic in order to articulate both specific historical and social problems but also to convey the mood of anxiety and suspense that characterized the era.

Even though this was not the last Poirot text written, *Curtain* represents a culminating moment for Christie's fears and anxieties. This novel is chronologically the last in terms of the narrative time of the series, but it was actually written by Christie during WWII and stored in a bank vault as an insurance policy for her family should she die in the London Blitz. By the time Christie produces *Curtain* during WWII, she has become consumed by anxiety, and, in *An Autobiography*, she writes,

> I suppose one always does expect things to repeat themselves. The first war came with a shock of incomprehension, as something unheard of, impossible, something that had never happened in living memory, that never would happen. This war was different. (469)

Christie recounts the shock of the war beginning not in London but "in our part of the world" that was bombed and attacked by machine-gun fire (469). As the war continued to progress, Christie reflects that "time went on, now not so much like a nightmare [but] as something that had been always going on, had *always* been there" (475). Influenced by this sense of repetition and the return of the past, Christie returns to the scene of her first Poirot novel, Styles, and the haunting sense of the always already ever-present war

affects the tone of *Curtain* and the representation of evil in the text. Even though Christie wrote the text during WWII, it is WWI that she most frequently directly references so as to highlight the theme of return.

As previously mentioned, I contend that, while Christie's first Poirot novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* successfully dissipates anxiety at the end of the novel, culminating with a series of successful romantic unions, Christie cannot sustain this optimism as the series progresses toward a second world war. In *Curtain*, Hastings contemplates his return to Styles when he muses "There was, too, not only the past, but a sinister present. The shadow of murder and a murderer haunted the house" (113). Hastings' comment sets the ominous tone for the novel, and this tone sharply contrasts with the tone of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

Hastings is initially incredibly nostalgic in the text for his former days at Styles. However, the past does not function as a sight of refuge from the "sinister present" of Styles that is both haunted by "[t]he shadow of murder" of its former owner, Mrs. Inglethorp, and a "murderer" who currently "haunt[s]" the converted bed and breakfast. Hastings longs for his youth and feels alienated from the modern views of the world, as represented by his daughter, Judith (4). "Modern times" have affected the town of Styles and the house from the presence of "[p]etrol stations, a cinema, two more inns and a row of council houses" to the baths in the rooms (3-5). Hastings laments that Sir William Boyd Carrington, one of the guests at Styles house, represents that "sort of man…that we no longer seemed to breed in these degenerate days" (8).[61] He frequently returns to his

[61] Hastings's language here replicates the language of degeneracy that Stephen Arata discusses in *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*.

daughter's and the younger generation's modern ways that are "impatient of…[his] sentimental and outworn ideas," and Hastings finds "[t]he young…very unsympathetic" (4). Anxiety over the generational divide remains a consistent theme throughout the novel and accounts for Hastings's nostalgia because he feels anachronistic. Even though Hastings concludes that it is "'painful"' to be back at Styles, he admits '"it brings back…a hundred old thoughts and emotions"' (13). While Hastings laments the loss of his youth in his "twili[ght]" years (77), Poirot reminds him, however, that for him, "Styles St. Mary was a sad and painful time. I was a refugee, wounded, exiled from home and country'" (13). Poirot also reminds Hastings that the past was not quite the refuge he remembers: "'you were not so happy as you think. You had recently been severely wounded, you were fretting at being no longer fit for active service, you had just been depressed beyond words by your sojourn in a dreary convalescent home"' (13). Rather than looking backward, Poirot suggests that Hastings look "forward," but Hastings responds with "a gesture of disgust" at the suggestion, questioning, "Look forward? What is there to look forward to?" (14). These words spoken by Hastings reflect Christie's (and England's) fears about a future that cannot be conceived. Instead, Hastings continues to turn toward the past, to its '"ghosts,"' because the future seems so uncertain (32), until later in the text when he ascertains that he has '"been indulging in false sentiment" (78). He arrives at this conclusion after recognizing that "My regret has been for the past as the past, not for the reality. For even then, in that far-off time, there had been no happiness at Styles. I remembered dispassionately the real facts" (78). Christie clearly challenges the selectiveness of nostalgia through Hasting's musings and

his ultimate revelation that the past he misses is not a real past but a fictional one based on remembering only the pleasant bits, such as being young.

Hastings finds his moral standards challenged as well in this novel as Poirot asks him to be his ears and eyes, as he himself is seemingly too encumbered by his health to '"look through keyholes"' and '"spy upon [the suspects] unobserved"' (69). Although resistant at first, Hastings soon acquiesces to his friend's request out of pity for the man he believes to be severely crippled and losing his ability to solve crimes. Taking on a more active and independent role in the detection of the crime, Hastings's skills seem to improve as he becomes a more astute observer of others. For example, he has the "suspicion" that the invalided Mrs. Franklin "rather liked playing different roles. At this moment she was being the loyal and hero-worshipping wife" (103), a suspicion he later relays to Poirot, stating that she is '"[g]iven to dramatizing herself in various roles"' (105). However, this insight is clouded by Poirot's observation that, for Hastings, Mrs. Franklin's performances make her '"rather a fool"'(105). Once again, Hastings fails to see the truth of the matter, unlike Poirot.

Hastings makes a near fatal mistake when, after being manipulated by Norton, he decides to kill Major Allerton. Failing to go through with his plan because he falls asleep, Hastings searches for an answer as to why he would act in such an uncharacteristic way. He turns to the house and its malign influence upon its inhabitants. Frequent discussions of the house's evilness, as a site haunted by the crime that transpired in 1916, imbue the house with the power to influence those who inhabit it. Hastings questions Poirot as to whether he thinks '"because of that murder long ago there's a sort of infection in the air"' (130). Hastings appears to fall prey to the infectious

quality of the house when he plans to kill Major Allerton because he believes him a killer and the lover of his daughter. Fortunately for Hastings, Poirot prevents him from his rash (and misinformed) intention by giving him a sleeping tablet instead of an aspirin for a headache he complains of (205). Poirot, as demonstrated in the above discussion of "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb," responds to Hastings' suggestion that the house has influence over people by affirming the power in such beliefs in the supernatural: '"A virus of murder, you mean? Well it is an interesting suggestion"' (130). He then characteristically responds by redirecting attention toward the involvement of humans when he states, '"There have been people here—several of them—who desired deeply that someone else should die"' (130). While in "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb," Christie's anti-Gothic gesture mocks such beliefs with Poirot's elaborate performance that he believes in curses, this scene from *Curtain*—indeed, the entire novel—refrains from such a gesture. The power of belief in the supernatural appears as an almost comforting explanation in contrast to the psychology of such a murderer as Norton, whom Poirot calls "the perfect criminal" (195). What makes Norton such a perfect criminal? Norton, like Iago from *Othello*—a connection Poirot makes himself (197)—manipulates others into committing murder without them realizing that he has influenced them. Given the historical context, namely the dangerously powerful rhetoric of Hitler—and Christie's interest in Hitler's rhetorical skills, as discussed in "The Capture of Cerberus"—it cannot be a coincidence that Christie chooses such a criminal method.

Further, Christie invokes the rhetoric of the Nazi party and the Holocaust during a discussion between Boyd Carrington, Judith, Norton, and Hastings. Carrington tells a story of a man dying of cancer who asked his doctor to euthanize him, to which request

the doctor refused but left the man morphia tablets and told him how to correctly and incorrectly manage the dose. The patient, however, did not take an overdose. This story introduces an important conversation about the survival of the fittest in the novel:

> It was then that Judith spoke for the first time, spoke with vigour and abruptly:
>
> "It shouldn't have been left to him to decide….[A]nyone who's weak—in pain and ill—hasn't got the strength to make a decision. They can't. It must be done for them….[I]f you love someone, you would take the risk….I'm not afraid of taking risks"…
>
> Boyd Carrington shook his head. "It wouldn't do, you know. You can't have people here, there, and everywhere taking the law into their own hands. Deciding matters of life and death." (109)

Norton's presence for this conversation is ironic given that he has been '"[d]eciding matters of life and death"' by manipulating others into committing murder. Whereas Norton does this for enjoyment, Judith explains that '"It's got to be absolutely impersonal. You could only take the responsibility—of ending a life if you were quite sure of your motive"' (109). Ironically, it is Judith's opinions that veer worryingly close to those of the Nazis, who killed millions of Jews and were quite sure of their motive, unlike the monstrous compulsion in Norton that simply enjoys murder. Christie returns to the topic of the sanctity of human life that she later writes about in *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* when Judith explains, '"I don't hold life as sacred as all you people do. Unfit lives, useless lives—they should be go out of the way. There's so much *mess* about. Only people who can make a decent contribution to the community ought to be allowed

to live. The others ought to be put painlessly away"' (110). Judith's language eerily mirrors the rhetoric of the Nazi party who, at the 1935 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, developed plans to euthanize '"lives not worth living"' in "A contribution to health care in today's [1934] Germany" (qtd. in Proctor 181). After Judith's speech, Norton draws a contrast between theory and practice, stating, '"A lot of people would agree with you in theory. But practice is a different matter"' (110). It is Norton who tries to console a "rather dismayed" Hastings, informing him '"She doesn't mean it, you know. It's the sort of half-baked idea one has when one is young—but fortunately one doesn't carry it out. Theories needn't worry anybody"' (111). Norton's assessment about theories not being a danger turns out to be strikingly incorrect with hindsight, given that the Nazis did put their theory into practice.

The greatest tragedy and, paradoxically, triumph of the novel, however, lies in Poirot's own actions, which are only revealed in a letter Hastings receives four months after Poirot's death. Once again Poirot reveals himself as a skillful performer, as, in his letter, he confesses he was only "pretending to be helpless" and, in fact, came back feeling much better from his retreat to Egypt (205). Poirot plays the invalid in order to dupe his suspect into believing the great detective is not a threat. This performance enables Poirot to undertake his investigation unhindered by the observant eyes of the criminal. Despite his investigation, Poirot cannot build a substantial case against the cunningly "perfect criminal," and thus he undertakes to murder him.

In the letter Poirot leaves Hastings, he explains his rationale for seemingly going against the very being that readers have come to expect throughout the series. While Poirot has, at times, allowed murder suspects to take their own lives, rather than face

prison, his decision to commit murder is shockingly out of character and belies the intense anxiety in this novel, an intensity that sets *Curtain* apart from the rest of the series—both those novels written before *Curtain* and those written after, as Christie survived WWII. I quote from Poirot at length on all humans' capacity for murder and X's (Norton's) skillful manipulation of this fact:

> Everyone is a potential murderer—in everyone there arises from time to time the wish to kill—though not the *will* to kill. How often have you not felt or heard others say: 'She made me so furious I felt I could have killed her!...Your mind at such moments is quite clear. You would like to kill so-and-so. *But you do not do it*. Your will has to assent to your desire. In young children, the brake is as yet acting, imperfectly. I have known a child, annoyed by its kitten, say: 'Keep still or I'll hit you on the head and kill you' and actually do so—to be stunned and horrified a moment later when it realizes that the kitten's life will not return—because, you see, really the child loves that kitten dearly. So then, we are all potential murderers. And the art of X was this: not to suggest *desire*, but to break down the normal decent resistance….X knew the exact word, the exact phrase, the intonation even to suggest and to bring cumulative pressure on a weak spot!...It was a marshalling of the forces of a human being to widen a breach instead of repairing it. (196)

Poirot's assessment about the proclivity of all humans for murder and their ability to act upon, under the right circumstances, those otherwise repressed urges channels Freud's theory of aggressive instincts. Poirot's example of the child killing the kitten because his/her "brake is…acting, imperfectly" resembles Freud's belief that humans are all born

with criminal tendencies that are contained through proper socialization during the childhood phase. Poirot psychoanalyzes Norton, concluding that a childhood incident in which he was laughed at "for nearly being sick when seeing a dead rabbit…may have left a deep impression on him….Subconsciously, I should say, he has waited to redeem himself by being bold and ruthless" (198). Furthermore, one hears resonances of *Heart of Darkness* and Kurtz's corruption in Poirot's thoughts about X's "break[ing] down the normal decent resistance" in his victims. Christie also draws upon Freud's explanation of the Oedipal complex when she has Poirot align himself with Hamlet because he, too, was "eternally putting off the evil day" (197). While Poirot himself recognizes that his behavior is "odd—and laughable—and terrible!" because he does not "approve of murder" and "value[s] human life," he concludes that Norton could be "defeated" no other way (197).

Christie repeatedly reinforces the Gothic tone of the novel by having Poirot remind Hastings that Norton's success depends upon all human beings' capacity for murder: "he could make people do things they didn't want to do—or (mark this) *thought* they did not want to do" (my emphasis 198). Through her representation of this "sadist," Christie finds a way to comment upon how the war affected questions of morality that she had not previously addressed (198). Christie's sense of her own evolution as a writer and her attitude toward psychology, as expressed in *An Autobiography*, help to explain the increasing moral complexity of her attitude toward why an individual commits a crime:

> When I began writing detective stories I was not in any mood to criticise them or to think seriously about crime. The detective story was the story of the chase; it

> was also very much a story with a moral; in fact it was the old Everyman Morality Tale, the hunting down of Evil and the triumph of Good. At that time, the time of the 1914 war, the doer of evil was not a hero: the *enemy* was wicked, the *hero* was good: it was as crude and as simple as that. We had not then begun to wallow in psychology. I was, like everyone else who write books or read them, *against* the criminal and *for* the innocent victim. (424).

Prior to the popularization of psychological explanations for murder, the line between good and evil seemed clearer. This reflection suggests that the once comforting simplicity of the distinction between good and evil dissipated as the line was blurred by developing psychological considerations of the subject and as England later faced another world war in which humans committed all manner of atrocities. Christie's comment that "The evil man nowadays may be the successful man of the past" emphasizes the increasingly complicated attitude she developed toward good and evil (426), and, furthermore, the quote gestures toward such complex definitions of evil that evolve over time, which Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* posits in its consideration, in the opening pages, of the distinction drawn between the conqueror and the colonizer. Freud, interestingly an avid reader of Christie and other popular detective writers of the time, explains in his letter entitled "Why War" to Einstein in 1932 that war itself complicates evaluative judgments about murder: "war puts an end to human lives that are full of hope, because it brings individual men into humiliating situations, because it compels them against their will to murder other men….[I]n its present-day form war is no longer an opportunity for

achieving the old ideals of heroism" (145).[62] Freud's argument, then, validates Poirot's belief that "[e]veryone is a potential murderer" and not because of aspirations of being a hero (196).

Curtain closes with the once "too sure" Poirot "humble[d]" because he finds himself questioning his actions: "By taking Norton's life, I have saved other lives—innocent lives. But still I do not know…It is perhaps right that I should not know […] 'I do not know…'" (215). The sense of closure established by the moral certainty at the end of the previous Poirot novels has been lost, and, as argued above in my discussion of *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*, Christie continues to subvert readers' expectations by repeatedly refusing to deconstruct the Gothic atmosphere and tone of her later novels and thereby restore the status quo and moral order that is characteristic of her earlier novels' happy endings. In the wake of another world war and the anxieties associated with the effects of the war—manipulation of moral standards about who deserves to die and who deserves to live in the interest of victory and in the effort to "save" the life of other "innocent lives"—Christie, like Poirot, no longer seems to "know," no longer seems so sure about moral issues that once seemed so "simple" (*An Autobiography* (424).

[62] See Peter Gay's discussion of Freud's reading habits in *Freud: A Life of Our Time* (166).

CHAPTER THREE

Gothic Romances: The Trouble with Love and Deconstructing Romantic Ideology in Gothic Modernism

'*The bottom's tumbled out of sentiment.*'

—*To Let* by John Galsworthy

She didn't give herself because she didn't know the self she would give.

—*The Morning is Near Us* by Susan Glaspell

Keep away from me Please give me a push
Don't let me understand you Don't realise me
Or we might tumble together
Depersonalized
Identical
Into the terrific Nirvana
Me you — you — me

—"Songs to Joannes" by Mina Loy

If, as discussed in chapter one, meaning in Gothic Modernism eludes the reader—if the sublime only leads to further alienation, to the intensification of this modern experience, and to the inarticulation of the secrets of the past—and the narrative of history does not provide coherence and stability, what other narratives does the classic Gothic contain that offer the promise of stability and coherence? When one examines the

classic Gothic's interests and repeated plotlines, one finds conventional romance narratives at the core of these texts. The romance narrative in the classic Gothic frequently rewards the reader, at the end of the novel, with a vision of two lovers overcoming the obstacles that conspire to keep them apart and uniting in marriage; however, in Modernism, one is hard-pressed to find an example of a successful and fulfilling romance storyline. As Soames Forsyte's assessment of a sculpture entitled "Jupiter" suggests, sentiment no longer has a place in modern society. Despite this perception of sentiment and the difficulty of finding successful representations of romance, discussions of love and romantic ideology are everywhere.

Romantic ideology or love as a system of ideas and ideals takes (and has taken) many different forms throughout the course of history and across different cultures and demographics within those cultures. In other words, love is not ahistorical. However, despite each culture's unique variations of romantic ideology, some general principles can be extrapolated regarding modern Western definitions of love. For example, as Aaron Ben-Ze'ev and Ruhama Goussinsky argue, ideal love is characterized by three basic principles: profundity, purity, and the uniqueness of the beloved (4). The profundity of love determines that the ideal experience is eternal, it endures, and it provides meaning to our lives. Love is pure because it is "morally good" and can thus "'do no evil'" (4). The beloved is unique and the union created by the fusion of two lovers is similarly unique; in other words, the experience of true love only happens once. Romance constitutes the representations of romantic ideology and the series of practices that comprise the experience of love.

Love, as defined by romantic ideology, is the goal toward which one should strive in life. The ideology surrounding love engenders and maintains optimism, hope, and perseverance toward a supposedly obtainable goal. Even if love is initially misrecognized and one fails at it, romantic ideology dictates that this failure was not the stuff of true love and therefore the lover should maintain hope and repeatedly seek the true love with whom a permanent and successful fusion (or union) can be achieved. Because romance as a narrative provides a trajectory and establishes a teleology, it functions like history to provide meaning, stability, and coherence to life.

While the writers of the Romance genre began to popularize during modernity and form the conventions of the genre readers are familiar with today in the form the Harlequin and Mills and Boon series—literary ancestors of E. M. Hull and Barbara Cartland—those writers we associate with Modernism seemed to rebel en masse against the very possibility of love and achieving successful romantic unions. This resistance against the possibility of romance thus opposes the conventional romance plotlines that are fundamental to the classic Gothic. The goal of this chapter, then, is to examine the forms romantic ideology and experience of love take in a variety of Modernist texts by examining how the conventions (and clichés) and language of romance are employed, revised, and, as I will argue, deconstructed in Gothic Modernism; furthermore, I will discuss what these representations possibly reveal about the experience of love and romance ideology as a condition of this tumultuous historical and literary period. In order to provide some limits to this discussion and because the topic of romance has traditionally been associated with women writers, I will focus my discussion on three very different women authors and types of texts: Susan Glaspell's psychologically realist

sensational novel *The Morning is Near Us* (1939), Mina Loy's avant-garde poetry, "Songs to Joannes" (1917) and her "Feminist Manifesto" (1918), and Djuna Barnes's experimental text *Nightwood* (1937). These texts, in their various forms and via their stylistic methods, explore the fraught connections between self, love, and romance. In the discussion that follows, I argue that Glaspell, Loy, and Barnes enmesh their discussions of love and romantic ideology within Gothic conventions and language. However, they reveal that love is not just a part of the Gothic novel but that the experience is a Gothic plot in itself. To fall in love, according to these writers, one must take part in the uncanny Gothic plot to discover the self and to uncover those repressed parts of the self and discover its secrets; the inevitable failure to uncover the self results in the failure to successfully fall in love. Further, Mina Loy reveals the double-bind that even if one could discover the self, the act of falling in love merely constitutes a death of the self.

Indeed, romance shares qualities with the death drive and trauma. Lynne Pearce, in *Romance Writing*, and Denis de Rougemont, in *Love in the Western World*, examine the "paradox at the heart of romantic love" (Pearce 84), which "turns out to be a desire for death, and an advance in the direction of death" (Rougemont 45).[63] While both de Rougement and Pearce turn toward Freud, I, instead, want to call upon Sabina Spielrein, the "Forgotten Pioneer of Psychoanalysis," and her essay "Destruction as the Cause of

[63] Looking at the representations of love and romantic ideology as presented in literary texts from different literary periods, Lynne Pearce argues that love has been expressed in terms of the gifts the experience offers. For example, the gift of a name in pre-Eighteenth century literature, companionship in English courtship fiction, immortality in the classic Gothic, self-sacrifice in wartime romance literature, selfhood in post-WWII literature, the fourth dimension in postmodern literature.

Coming Into Being," (1912). [64] I choose to focus on Spielrein because she anticipates Freudian theory on the sexual instinct that simultaneously contains the compulsion toward destruction and death. She writes,

> In young women, I find that a feeling of anxiety is normal and moves to the forefront of repressed feelings when the possibility of fulfillment of the wish first appears. It is a well-defined form of anxiety: You feel that the enemy is within; its characteristic ardour compels you, with inflexible urgency, to do what you do not want to do; you feel the end, the transient, before which you vainly may attempt to flee to an uncertain future. (156)

Spielrein's own description of the enemy within and its compulsion to act in a way that goes against reason gestures toward the Gothic. Furthermore, the lack of agency she describes suggests that love and temporality share similar features. This psychoanalytic view envisions romantic ideology as the enemy within and that, despite the security it professes to offer, on some level one wants to resist its compulsion because the future is "uncertain." Spielrein connects desire with death through her explanation of how desire constitutes an encounter with death, specifically death of the self. Analyzing Shakespeare's idealized couple, Romeo and Juliet, she argues that the

> impetuous lovers cannot be satisfied by the activation of a small amount of libido that is indispensible to a more common love alliance. They must continuously encounter more obstacles through which they may discharge the destructive urge.

[64] See Caroline Covington and Barbara Wharton, *Sabina Spielrein: The Forgotten Pioneer of Psychoanalysis*.

> Yet no impediment is great enough to satisfy their passion, which finds peace only with complete annihilation, with death of the personality (172-3).

Her description of the trajectory of Romeo's and Juliet's romance and the nature of their love is now an all too familiar model—albeit an extreme version—in which conflicts arise to keep the lovers apart. Conventional and idealized attitudes toward romance dictate that "great" love is characterized by its ability to overcome even the most extreme of obstacles, such as death. In other words, a love story is not a love story without the lovers being drawn apart from each other by external circumstances beyond their control; such a view of love serves to intensify the fulfillment experienced when the lovers find their way back to each other and unite. Spielrein's essay draws our attention to the language of death enmeshed within romantic ideology, when she contends that "For a normal young woman, the image of a burial is blissful since she imagines herself vanishing in the beloved" in this fusion (166).

While the death of one or both of the lovers sometimes occurs in the classic Gothic, this death is usual a physical and literal death. Furthermore, romances in the classic Gothic are complicated by the gender dynamics of the historical periods in which they are set or written. In other words, women have less autonomy and therefore less say in whom they marry. Marriage plotlines are presented frequently as mutually exclusive from romance plotlines. For example, the classic Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* contains a wide variety of distinct marriage and romance plotlines. The opening of Walpole's novel introduces Manfred, Prince of Otranto, and the arranged marriage he has organized between his "sickly" son, Conrad, and Princess Isabella (33). Witnessing his son being crushed by a giant helmet on his wedding day, Manfred blames the death of his

son on a peasant boy, Theodore, and violently shuns his daughter's (Matilda) attempts to comfort him. Manfred decides to divorce his own wife, Hippolita (who has failed to bear him a suitable male heir), and, in an "incestuous" move, he declares his intention to marry Isabella himself (54). The motivation for these unions is not love but the political and intended to ensure the continuance of a suitable ancestral lineage. No sooner "delivered" from one arranged marriage, Isabella finds herself forced into another marriage, and, horrified by Manfred's plan, Isabella flees, assisted by Theodore who does not know her true identity (29). In an effort to make sense of her defiance, Manfred assumes Theodore is her secret lover. The novel contrasts the series of arranged and forced marriages against the later love that develops between Matilda and Theodore. The coercive nature of these marriages frames the institution within the language and conventions of the Gothic as those doing the coercing assume a violent and monstrous quality, and seek to confine women within literal and figurative prisons.

In contrast to these intended marriage unions, the reader is presented with representations of "true" love in the novel that provide escape from Gothic narratives. Unaware that it was Isabella whom he met in the labyrinthine tunnels beneath the castle, Theodore mistakes Matilda for the "lovely self" he helped escape (73). After their first face-to-face interview, "passion" arises between the couple, and they become the example of true love in the text (73). The text draws the readers' attention to two important features of their love: love at first sight, and first love. While Matilda and Theodore have communicated previously, this communication did not occur face-to-face, and, moreover, he is initially taken for a "ghost" by Bianca, Matilda's maid (48). Matilda, however, soon realizes that the voice arises from the bedroom below, and thus

Theodore's and Matilda's first communication occurs via an open window. The first conflict arises for the lovers when Bianca assumes Theodore to be a man already in love with another woman (49). The reader, however, is privy to the truth via an omniscient narrator that Theodore and Matilda have fallen in love with each other, and, more importantly, that they are both in love for the "first time" (73). The lovers encounter their first major conflict because Theodore is still only a peasant, and so he must first make himself worthy of her by becoming a knight. His speech is interrupted by "a clap of thunder" that prevents Matilda from replying (73). Previously, their conversation had been "interrupted by [a] deep and hollow groan" when they were discussing Manfred, "the Prince of Otranto" (73). With hindsight, readers can surmise that these interruptions are forms of objections from the ghost of Alfonso who seeks to remove the usurper Manfred and restore the rightful heir to Otranto, but Theodore and Matilda do not yet know the truth of Theodore's ancestry and thus his suitability as a lover. Before Theodore and Matilda can be together, Theodore must uncover the truth about his heritage. The conflicts separating the lovers do not end with this question of ancestry, however. Added to this complication that keeps the lovers apart, Matilda believes Theodore to be in love with Isabella, and Isabella has herself fallen in love with her rescuer. Furthermore, Isabella's father decides he wants to marry Matilda.

This novel reveals the common motif in the classic Gothic that one must be sure of the self in order to give the self because characters, unaware of their true ancestry, often believe themselves unworthy of love. While there is a focus upon the self in the classic Gothic, this self is related to external factors of ancestry and the perception of the lover's suitability, rather than an internal conflict. If the sins of the father are revisited

upon his children, one must uncover and resolve these sins before giving oneself over to another in a romantic union. The multitude of complications Walpole contrives to keep the lovers apart culminates with the physical death of Matilda, stabbed by her father because he mistook her for Isabella whom he believes was meeting her lover, Theodore.[65] Having learnt of his true ancestry and right to the throne, Theodore desires to be wed to Matilda, even though she lies dying: '"Since she cannot live mine…, at least she shall be mine in death!"' (103). Thus, Matilda's death is not a failure but a way of permanently ensuring that she, as the love object, will always be possessed by the lover. After an undisclosed amount of time, Theodore marries Isabella because she is the only one with "whom he could indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" (106). Even though death separates them and Theodore marries another, his and Matilda's love is immortalized because Isabella, who has become interchangeable with Matilda throughout the novel, serves as a substitute for Theodore's dead lover. The implication thereby arises that Isabella has ceased to be wholly herself, having given over herself as a substitute for Matilda. Thus, the theme of doubles through the representation of substitute lovers arises as a result of the refusal to mourn fully the lost love object and instead to prolong his/her presence through melancholic mourning. Marriage constitutes an appropriate ending to the novel because it restores order and, in such novels, is framed as a welcomed alternative to the Gothic narrative.

[65] In Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, Lorenzo similarly finds himself separated from his lover, Antonia, when the villainous monk, Ambrosio, stabs her after raping her. Their love, too, is immortalized through her death, despite the lovers' permanent physical separation. Lewis further perverts Ambrosio's desire for Antonia by revealing Ambrosio's desire as incestuous, when Antonia is revealed as his sister.

In contrast, as David Shumway highlights, marriage during modernity "increasingly freed from its social obligation…came increasingly under the pressure of ever-greater personal expectations" (23). Thus, the literature produced during modernity represents the often confusing attitudes toward and expectations of romantic ideology. General shifts in historical attitudes toward love and evolving expectations about love's culmination in marriage explain the predominance of discussion about romantic ideology during modernity. After the more rigid gender expectations of the Victorian period that promoted female virginity and purity, premarital flirtations and relationships were more commonplace during modernity (Szreter and Fisher 168). The First World War altered attitudes toward female purity and resulted in greater mobility for women. During modernity the premarital phase for women represented a period of "freedom" compared to the "future of hard work and domestic struggle" (169). While marriage was regarded as restricting women's mobility and freedom, sexual attraction was given greater value as companionate marriages became the norm (Simmons 142). Passion thus became an important characteristic of romantic ideology and, because marriage was considered a choice, there was a radical rise in divorces (Shumway 22); however, marriage remained the appropriate and primary expression of love (23).

Glaspell, Loy, and Barnes do not parody love, passion, sex, and marriage in the ways that, for example, Stella Gibbons does in *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932) by highlighting a narrative of female confinement that strips women of their agency and autonomy before proceeding to deconstruct the Gothic conventions and language of

confinement.[66] Neither do these authors extol and celebrate romantic ideology like the romance novels of E. M. Hull, such as the popular novel *The Sheik* (1919). Instead, these women explore the pain and loss associated with falling in love, the expectations and constraints enforced by romantic ideology, and the institution of marriage as the culminating expression of love between heterosexual couples. Because these authors express the emotions and experiences of pain and loss, the conventions and language of the Gothic frame their discussions and provide a kind of coherence to their vision of love. These writers ultimately interrogate romance as a narrative that provides coherence and stability to experience.

"[T]o love you must be free": Self-Knowledge and Romantic Ideology

In *The Morning is Near Us*, Susan Glaspell highlights the connection between the Gothic and romantic ideology and how the narratives of history and romance are intertwined. Anxiety about one produces anxiety about the other, which is why Modernists, who are frequently concerned with the narrative of history, repeatedly fail to envision successful romance. Modernism's general failure to and resistance against providing narrative closure and resolution are intensified by the lack of closure and resolution in historical and romance narratives. Glaspell's overlooked novel focuses upon Lydia Chippman, a woman who was sent away from home by her father when she was not yet sixteen, and her emotional response to returning to her family's now abandoned and decaying ancestral home. Lydia desires to uncover the family's secrets

[66] See Avril Horner's and Sue Zlosnik's *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (101-104).

and fantasizes that this knowledge will provide her with the truth about who she is. However, she finds that the knowledge she seeks is much more complex than she has fantasized.

From the opening of the novel, Glaspell calls upon Gothic conventions and language to establish a mournful tone to the novel. The family house has been left to Lydia by her father, whom she believes died many years ago. Lydia's brother, Warren Chippman, having not heard from his sister about her inheritance of the house, is more than happy to be rid of the property by fittingly donating it to the Church for use as a cemetery. Warren desires the house and its history to become a cemetery, believing that this will bury the family's secrets for good. However, in the opening pages of the novel, readers witness Warren's constant battle to repress the past, a battle he will inevitably lose because "[t]he past rises up to devour any attempt to begin anew: the present is fully possessed by long-ago traumas" (Edmundson 71).[67] Later in the novel, readers discover that beyond Warren's own attempts to repress the past, institutional law—as represented by Judge Kircher—and patriarchal law—represented by Lydia's father—have also repressed knowledge of the family's history. Such forms of repression are traditionally

[67] According to Martha Carpentier, "Glaspell shows that to repress the past is to be controlled unconsciously by it. Without self-knowledge the individual does not have freedom of choice, cannot 'reject and accept—adjust, assimilate,' cannot live in the fluid present" (143). While reality cannot be based upon a repression of language, Glaspell's novel argues that reality can neither be constructed by language—that having called John her father does not make him her real father. Instead, Lydia muses

> It wasn't facts she sought—only facts in-so-far as they could open into the *feeling* that had caused them to be. The facts of another's life do not illumine. Only when we know the heart can we know that life. Only the feelings that made the days can light them. To understand would release her, she had thought, and she could then meet the days still there for her—living, not with part of herself, but whole. (231)

Lydia desires to uncover the facts of the past only insofar as they will help her to understand her not-real father's feelings toward her. In other words, she needs full disclosure of the facts in order to understand who she *could be* but those facts will not necessarily determine who she *will be*.

Gothic and, yet, Glaspell modernizes them by also exploring the difficulties experienced by those undertaking to repress information. Furthermore, Glaspell goes beyond merely using epistemological crises to create conflict that separates two lovers and explore its effects upon the conventional romance narrative, which lies at the heart of Gothic narratives; instead, she explores the psychological impact of such epistemological crises upon the lover's self and her subsequent inability to fall in love. Thus, Glaspell links Lydia's quest for selfhood to her failure to fall in love, exploring the ghosts within Lydia that have prevented her from fusing with another. In doing so, Glaspell reveals how love, reshaped by modernist concerns, constitutes a Gothic narrative.

Glaspell intensifies the Gothic atmosphere of Lydia's home town by setting it against the modern towns and cities Lydia has spent most of life in. But, ultimately, the novel reveals that, despite the distance between these other locations and her home, Lydia has carried this Gothic atmosphere and narrative within her. While the majority of the novel takes place in a small town, Lydia has led a cosmopolitan and adventurous life, spending her school years with her Aunt Jennifer in Cincinnati and later "gadding around" the world because she was banished by her father from her home (118). This banishment has caused Lydia to feel disconnected from her self and unable to fall in love. While she feels "fortunate" to have "seen a good deal of the world," Lydia concludes that "she was always living other people's lives" (51). She reflects on how her former lover, Henri, called her a "fraud" and expressed his disappointment that, despite looking like she has '"hidden fires,"' she is '"cold,"' '"guarded"' and '"withdrawn"' (49). He explains to Lydia that she '"might live with one hundred men and… [still] never give"' herself (50). In this exchange, Henri confronts the alterity of Lydia; she will always be

radically alien to and disconnected from him, and therefore unable to achieve the fusion of selves that epitomizes the pinnacle of romantic ideology. Henri's comments lead Lydia to confront the alterity of herself.

The question arises, then, if Lydia's self remains alienated from her lover, does the text present a viable alternative to conventional romantic ideology? When a woman asks her "'Why don't you have affairs?"' Lydia knows that "something deeply herself denied her this"' (207). She expresses a commitment to conventional romantic ideology when she decides "it is better to be lonely than be second-rate in love" by having affairs (207). Thus, she appears to desire first-rate love, despite recognizing her inability to obtain it while alienated from herself. Interestingly, in deciding not to have affairs like the other women she encounters on her travels, Lydia unconsciously chooses an alternative path to her mother, Hertha, who did take lovers because she only ever felt '"brother[ly]"'love toward her husband, John Chippman (281). John explains to Lydia that Hertha '"wasn't herself with other people. She—she held back"' (278). Lydia, then, has unconsciously replicated her mother's behavior by remaining alien, ghostly, to lovers, even though each woman chooses a different response to this alienation.

With her not-real father's confessions about the past at the end of the novel, Lydia begins to understand how she has been suffering from the transgenerational haunting generated by her mother's '"horror"' over her marriage to a man she only ever considered a brother and her subsequent shame over her extramarital affairs, which Lydia's presence

is a testimony to (281).[68] Thus, Glaspell's novel explores the relationship between transgenerational haunting and the failure to achieve romantic fulfillment, as does Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Unaware of how her mother's experiences have shaped her, because she does not have conscious knowledge about her family's past, Lydia is unable to fall in love and experience love like her father did with Hertha. Glaspell's novel reveals a commitment to the possibility of first-rate love but contends that this love is dependent upon a number of factors: knowledge of the self before it can be given over to another, and a commitment to completely giving over the self (207). Lydia's regrets about and musings upon her failed love affair with Henri reveal its dependence upon these factors: "to love you must be free—free of the things that had always held her to herself" (207). Unable to give herself because she fears "being discovered when [she doesn't] know what there may be to discover" (208). Lydia's fears suggest she feels as if she is a ghosted version of herself, and, moreover, that there is something dark and sinister within her.

Unlike the ghost of Catherine Morland from *Wuthering Heights*, the dead or half-dead cannot love in *The Morning is Near Us*. Placed in dialogue with Spielrein's vision of love, what begins to emerge in Glaspell's novel is a paradox: love and the ability to fall in love require self knowledge because one must know the self before being able to give it over and surrender it to the lover; however, giving oneself over to a lover results in

[68] With the phrase "transgenerational haunting," I refer to the work of trauma studies that has examined the process through which traumatic histories are passed unconsciously or consciously onto subsequent generations. See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, who begin to develop the way in which children reveal the "phantom" effects of traumas experienced by their parents. Also see Gabriele Schwab's *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*.

the death of the self. Lack of self-knowledge is configured in Gothic term, and, thus, it is fitting that Lydia chooses to move back to her family home because the house lies next to the dead, adjoining an ever-encroaching cemetery. The novel depicts the paradoxical desire to "call back the dead" (192), while recognizing that '"The dead do have to be buried"' (80).

Exploring the nature of loss in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler contends that the self undergoes some kind of change when it experiences the loss of an object (22). Butler argues that one asks oneself "Who 'am' I, without you?" (22). Lydia Chippman's experience of romantic love is complicated by this very question, as it pertains to her familial identity. When one regards love as resulting in the loss of the self, the question "Who 'am' I, with you?" also arises Lydia has struggled with these very questions since her banishment as a teenager, asking who am I without my father, and, therefore, who am I with you? Lydia does not know the answers to these questions. She has only "lived—loved—with part of herself" (208). The text configures her in phantasmatic terms—half dead and half alive, buried in the past like the bodies buried next to her home. She desires to discover herself and to fall in love, but questions her ability to do so: "How could [I] say, 'Something is wrong with me and you will find that out and not want to love me. I would tell you what it is…but I do not know myself"' (208). This admission makes the intensity of Lydia's trauma clear: she feels unable to connect to others, particularly on a romantic level, and fears letting a lover into her self because she does not, in fact, know herself. Lydia cannot achieve the culminating experience of romantic love, when one merges or fuses with another,

because she fears the self within.[69] Glaspell reveals the ways in which historical and romance narratives through which one orients oneself in life are intertwined, and, thus, Glaspell's protagonist is depicted as profoundly haunted by the past she does not understand because this past also prevents her from inserting herself into a romantic narrative. Moreover, the desire for but failure to fully access alternative histories disrupts romantic ideology. In other words, a successful romance narrative depends upon a stable and coherent version of history.

Desiring the transformation Spielrein discusses, the text depicts Lydia as redirecting her libidinal energy toward her father. Lydia's desire, then, unconsciously replicates her mother's and not-real father's own quasi-incestuous union. Lynne Pearce finds this type of union typical in general of the "children of aberrant sexual unions" who "seek to repeat—and finally lay to rest—the mistakes of their forebears" (86). Lydia melancholically mourns the loss of her father and refuses to release him because, for her, he holds the answers to the family's history that she so desperately desires. Indeed, her very motivation for returning to her family's home is to uncover secrets and to challenge the epistemological crisis that has constituted her life and which she attributes to her inability to fall in love.

Warren's insistence, then, that "she can't live out there alone—right at the edge of the cemetery. You might as well be *in* the cemetery" ironically taps into the very reason why Lydia chooses to return (19). Lydia feels that she must uncover and then reconcile herself with the past in order to *live* again; otherwise, she will continue her haunted

[69] See Marilyn Friedman's "Romantic Love and Personal Autonomy" (164), and Richard White's *Love's Philosophy* (58).

existence in which she has not been free and has instead "always [been] held to herself" (207). Believing her father to be dead, Lydia gives what self she has to give over to the ghost of her father, which she summons through her investigation into her family's history. Given that she believes her father to be dead and that he actually lives as if dead, intentionally isolated and confined to an existence in a mental institution, Lydia does summon him back to life.

Lydia continues to direct her emotional energies toward her father despite learning that her banishment was the result of her mother's actions. She refuses to see the real tragedy that she functions as a double of her mother—both women are separated from their families and plagued with questions about their families' histories and fate. Hertha, concealing her true identity from those outside of the family, struggled to connect romantically with another. Even though Hertha knew who she was and where she came from, she lacks knowledge about the fate of her family, and, moreover, she refuses to disclose her history to others. These factors separate her from love: "I like him, but he wants me to be his *girl*, but how could I, when he doesn't even know who I am?" (166). Lydia's inability to succeed at love therefore replicates her mother's own difficulty. While Lydia wishes her mother had "told" her about her past so they would not have both been "so alone," she fails to realize she is following the same path as her mother (163).

While the two women function as doubles of each other, the perverse tragedy of the novel is that Lydia will never serve as a satisfying replacement for Hertha: '"[John] has something….He lives with *her*. He doesn't want anything else to intrude"' (190). Unlike Theodore in *The Castle of Otranto* who replaces his lost love object, Matilda, with

Isabella, John refuses to replace Hertha. John questions Lydia's ability to understand the degree of his feelings for Hertha, explaining to her:

> 'There wasn't anything else then. It filled the world—it *was* the world. I loved her and that was my life and my life wasn't anything else….When you love—like that, when it *takes* you—and nothing else—' He was trembling and couldn't go on. (278)

Such descriptions of love mirror the feelings expressed by Catherine Morland and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Catherine declares, "I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being" (80). Catherine's explanation of the love Heathcliff and she share, and John's love for Hertha express the romantic cliché of two souls merging through the process of love: "he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (79).

While Lydia desires first-rate love, John's kind of love '"doesn't seem the right kind of love"' to her (190). Warren insists, however, that '"It's his kind of love. It was his kind of love through most of his life'" (190). Lydia questions John's type of love because she perceives it as having kept him (and Hertha) from being able to love others, romantically and filially. John's love is dangerous because it is too consuming, like Catherine's and Heathcliff's, and Lydia concludes that John's love for Hertha has led him to "buil[d] walls around him and [he] couldn't be reached" (197). He has preserved Hertha within him by remaining so faithful to her memory that he cannot express love to others and prefers to exist as if dead rather than have his love violated by the presence of others. While this kind of love has given *Wuthering Heights* its iconic status within the

romance genre, Glaspell questions its all-consuming quality. Ironically, despite desiring first-rate love, Lydia

> think[s] love shouldn't wall us in, [but] should open us to life. This love was for a woman long dead. To Lydia it seemed only living moments could keep your loved one in life. Memory. With memory alone you cannot live. (198)

Lydia fails to realize how she has replicated the behavior of her father, for she, too, has refused to relinquish the lost object and has confined herself, keeping herself from experiencing a fulfilling romantic union. In refusing to give up the past and knowledge of it, she invests all of her emotional energy in her father and understanding why he did not love her. Not until she sees her father does she "really underst[and]—We all live alone" (216). Even though she has gotten a second chance with her father after discovering he is in fact still alive, she cannot "touch" him, "and this was more lonely than the grave" (217). Lovers are, thus, continually represented as confined and within Gothic terms that emphasize this confinement.

Lydia's thoughts lead to a moment of profound grief and perhaps the most modernist moment of the text:

> But something was dying in her: a faith in which she had always lived; the faith we could reach one another—that dear faith that out of the loneliness that is each one of us we can reach the loneliness of another. We *touch* there—in our common loneliness she would have thought, and that may be out closest touch….But she knew. How she could not possibly have said. Knew she could not reach. Weak with sorrow and a stark wonder at what she had come to know—something inexorable revealed to her. (217-8)

Lydia does not know how she has come to the knowledge she has, but she has recognized the isolation that shapes human relationships. Of course, such a realization proves too nihilistic, too painful for Lydia to retain fully. Therefore, she ultimately chooses to repress this knowledge in favor of the fantasy of connecting with her father at the end of the novel, and Glaspell insists that the cycle of haunting will continue through the characters of Diego and Koula, non-biological siblings, who perversely serve as doubles for Lydia's non-biological sibling parents, John and Hertha Chippman. While at the end of the novel, Lydia relinquishes her quest for the past, she refuses to release her father as a love object. Instead, she chooses to believe that her renewed relationship with her not-father has the power to deliver her peace. Through Lydia's misrecognition, Glaspell does not provide a vision of an optimistic future in which Lydia finds a successful romantic union.[70] Lydia feels as though she will "never be lost again" and, yet, while she holds her dying father's hand, it is "not her name he spoke before his lips were sealed. Hertha was the name to which he gave his last breath" (296). The novel closes with a confirmation of John's unrequited love for Hertha. Thus, Glaspell subverts the trajectory of the classic Gothic novel romance plotline as she presents and remains committed to the alterity of "lovers."

[70] Martha Carpentier, in *The Major Novels of Susan Glaspell*, calls the ending "happy" (150), but is it? In the final moments of the book, having earlier in the novel felt that the real trauma of not knowing about her past was her recognition that "[w]e live alone" (216), she now feels that "it wasn't facts [that] brought the light. It was those deep stirrings of the human heart….[A]nd[,] as she considered his unfailing love[,] she felt so very close to life" (296). Uncovering all of the above takes Lydia two hundred and ninety-six pages, and yet she is still left with questions at the end of the novel: "all that remained to be known was locked away now, and for good. Facts not yet told would go with this other father to the grave" (295).

While Glaspell depicts the success of romantic fulfillment as predicated upon knowledge of the self but leaves the reader with the image of "all that remained to be known was locked away now, and for good," she appears conflicted about the viability of romantic fulfillment (295). One can speculate that this conflicted attitude arises out of the knowledge that in finding the self one only has to surrender it to another. While Lydia exists as if half dead through her obsession with the past, inhabiting a decaying house that is surrounded by the dead, and remains unable to give herself over fully to a lover, the alternative, as represented by John's all-consuming love for Hertha, is no more rewarding. The question arises, then, how does one maintain the sanctity of the self and achieve romantic fulfillment?

Grieving the Death of Romantic Ideology

The avant-garde writings of Mina Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" and "Songs to Joannes" express a paradoxical but profound desire for romantic fulfillment coupled with a striking anxiety about the possibility of achieving such romantic fulfillment, because love negates the autonomy and agency of the individual self. Furthermore, Loy challenges the principles of romantic ideology that there is one unique beloved, that love is eternal, and that love is pure because it is "morally good" (Ben-Ze'ev and Goussinsky 4). While expressing the difficulty of giving up on love, in challenging these principles, Loy demonstrates the destructive and sinister qualities of romantic ideology's affect upon women, and, thus, she politicizes romance. Andrew Smith, in "Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic," analyzes the similar politicization of love in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of*

Seven Stars and usefully connects this politicization to the Gothic by revealing how Malcolm Ross's love for Margaret "*produce*[s]" the Female Gothic narrative of confinement and "domestic tyranny" (81). In Loy's "Songs to Joannes," the Female Gothic and romance no longer function as independent narratives, but, they are, instead, inscribed within each other and indistinguishable. In other words, to fall in love is to undergo a Gothic narrative. Loy reveals, then, that romance, as a narrative via which individuals make sense of their lives—or are expected to in the case of women—is dangerous.

While Loy's call to action against romantic ideology derives from her specific brand of feminism, she simultaneously expresses the anxiety and fear, even, of unshackling oneself from romantic ideology. This is evident when, in her "Feminist Manifesto," she asks "are you prepared for the Wrench?" (153). Loy demands, "Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not—seek within yourselves to find out what you are," and she rejects "Parasitism, & Prostitution—or Negation," the only options offered to women (154). In order to avoid such limiting options, Loy contends that "Women must destroy in themselves, the desire to be loved" and they must defy the "superstition" that that there is something "impure in sex" (155-6). Such a vision of free love was, however, extremely difficult for Loy herself to achieve, and she articulates this difficulty and anxiety via the language and conventions of the Gothic in her poetry, which subvert romantic ideology by envisioning the ideal union of two lovers as quasi

deathly and the self as haunted by the ghosts of former lovers.[71] In 'Songs to Joannes" she asks, if one deconstructs the romance narrative, in what way is knowledge of the absence of this romantic union felt and mourned, and what are the effects on how one experiences life outside of this narrative?

"Songs to Joannes" evokes the Gothic tradition in its elegiac tone and use of the language of the grotesque. Drawing together criticism on Loy's use of elegy and the grotesque produces a useful avenue for approaching Loy's "Songs to Joannes," one that reveals how the language of the grotesque emphasizes the physical '"sting' of grief."[72] Furthermore, I wish to highlight the importance that Loy places upon both the physical and psychic experiences of love. Loy's elegy is one that explores the physically and psychically traumatic effects of a double bind—the desire for love *and* fear of that love. The language of the grotesque is important for Loy because of the physical expression of love via sex, and Loy's desire to disassociate the emotional act from this physical expression.

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[71] In *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, Carolyn Burke calls Loy's poem "a peculiar kind of war poetry" and argues that Loy's contemporary readers would have picked up on her "double associations," such as '"humid carnage'" to evoke both the act of sex and WWI (208). Furthermore, Burke, interestingly, uses the language of the Gothic herself, when she analyzes the poem's closing line, "Love — — — the preeminent litterateur" (207): "Although the woman tried to dismiss romance as a self-enclosed system, the last line retreats the sequence's tendency to circle back on the past—just as, earlier, its haunted conditionals mimed her obsession with what might have been. In this one-line afterword, language winnows down to ironic sparseness, and what goes unsaid outweighs what it is possible to say" (207).

[72] In "Playing with Elegy: Mina Loy's Poetry of Mourning," Anita Helle explores the intersection of Loy's poetry with the elegiac tradition, concluding that she "mock[s] elegiac ceremony while retaining a bodily attachment to the 'sting' of grief" (337). Helle's article focuses upon the process of grief, the after-effects of the loss of a lover, whereas I wish to resituate the discussion of elegy within romantic ideology during the process of love and the painful striving for but simultaneous rejection of the complete union with the other. In *Modernist Articulations* Alex Goody opens her chapter "Carnival Bodies, the Grotesque, and Becoming Animal" by discussing the intersection of gothic modernist and grotesque articulations, but her discussion of Loy focuses upon the normalization of grotesque consumerist cultural practices and '"mongrel' identity" rather than these articulations' relationships to romantic ideology (176-7).

The difficulty of Loy derives from her playfully unstable and inconsistent syntax, vocabulary, and meaning. "Songs to Joannes" oscillates between inconsistent positions, from revulsion and pessimism to desire and hope, and she uses both ironic and non-ironic voices. One should read this oscillation as the result of different chronological and psychic moments in the speaker's history in which she simultaneously grieves for and rejoices in the breakdown of romantic ideology. The process of grief or mourning is not linear; the mourner does not consistently progress forward on an unwavering path from a state of devastation to full recovery, from grief to the completion of the mourning process. The grief process Loy's poem depicts involves multiple leaps forward and bounds backwards, and various setbacks and digressions; it is a process that the speaker is deeply conflicted about. Through this oscillation between various positions and stages of grief, Loy attempts to depict the nature of loss in both the thematic and structural components of her poem. Coming to the realization that love leads to the death of the self and should therefore be given up is not an easy process. The loss of love needs to be grieved.

In Sigmund Freud's canonical essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), Freud argues that when we grieve a loss, we have two options available to us: mourning and melancholia. Mourning functions as the healthier response to loss, according to Freud, because the process allows us to relinquish our lost love object and transfer our libidinal energy onto a new love object. Melancholia, in contrast, represents the unhealthy response to loss because it leads to a fixation on the lost object and a refusal to give it up (leading to emotional and physical illness). Furthermore, according to Freud's rendering

of melancholia, we often do not even fully know what it is that we have lost, and, consequently, one cannot relinquish what one does not know.

Since Freud's seminal work, numerous theorists have revisited and revised his work, particularly with the goal of identifying political efficacy in the pathology of melancholia. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* begin by taking up Walter Benjamin's distinction between historical materialism and historicism, defining the former as "a creative process, animating history for future significations as well as alternative empathies," while "describing the latter process as an encrypting of the past from a singular, empathetic point of view: that of the victor" (1). Historical materialism retrieves and recognizes those "image[s] of the past" which "threaten…to disappear irretrievably" under the pressure of repression (255). Benjamin calls for readers to come to know the multitude of alternative histories that are often silenced by hegemonic discourses. Melancholia enables historical materialism to triumph by refusing to let the alternative histories of the past disappear.

Carla Freccero, in turn, views melancholia through the traditional Freudian model and is therefore dissatisfied with the foreclosing possibilities of the affective state that she argues seeks to entomb the other in the self and thereby silence its voice (71). [73] Like Freud, she fears that not knowing is tied up with the experience of melancholia. Freccero emphasizes, however, that while melancholia "is also a response to trauma,…it is a response that will *not* acknowledge the trauma or loss and seeks instead to hush the voices or to 'understand' or master them with meaning and discourse" (emphasis mine 71).

[73] See Freccero's final chapter, "Queer Spectrality," in *Queer/early/modern*.

Taking up the topic of loss in *Sovereignties in Question*, Jacques Derrida proposes a more favorable understanding of melancholia. He argues that the "'norm'" of mourning "is no more than the good conscience of amnesia. It allows us to *forget* that to keep the other within oneself, *as oneself*, is already to *forget* him. That's where forgetting begins. So *there must be* melancholia" (160).[74] Derrida therefore cautions us against the process of forgetting or burying the dead normalized by Freudian valorizations of mourning rather than melancholia, depathologizing the term so that melancholia becomes a productive affective state in which the past is no longer repressed or forgotten but is remembered *without* "inhabit[ing]" or possessing us (Freccero 80). Similarly, many recent revisions of melancholia emphasize and celebrate what they perceive as its resistance to forgetting. For example, Eng and Kazanjian argue that

> [u]nlike mourning, in which the past is declared resolved, finished, and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present. By engaging in 'countless separate struggles with loss, melancholia might be said to constitute, as Benjamin would describe it, an ongoing and open relationship with the past—bringing its ghosts and specters, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present. (4)

Melancholia, then, may be a necessary—even healthy—reaction to a traumatic experience because it protects the psyche by temporarily shielding one from direct knowledge of the trauma—the loss encountered. And, rather than simply burying the experience by undergoing a mourning process for what one has lost, through melancholia one remains in dialogue with the experience, thereby able to incorporate the experience

[74] See Jacques Derrida's *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (160).

into one's subjectivity. In other words, to forget one's lovers, to bury them and romantic ideology, is to risk effacing parts of the self through the process of repression and therefore to risk repeating the mistakes of the past.

Loy's "Songs to Joannes" enacts this productive form of melancholia by focusing on the female experience of romantic ideology and love. The preservation of autonomy and agency was particularly problematic for women who, because of early twentieth-century attitudes toward gender roles, were expected to sacrifice their identity to their male lovers during the process of romantic fulfillment. Loy experimented with a wide variety of types of romantic relationships in her own life, from her conventional but unsuccessful marriage to Stephen Hawes, and later Arthur Craven—whom she married and intensely grieved the loss of when he disappeared—to her unconventional affairs with F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini. The problem of love for Loy is characterized by both the painful longing for conventional romantic fulfillment—and its ideal expression of fusion—legitimized via institutions of romance and love, and the simultaneous rejection of and awareness about the devastating effects upon the female self encountered within conventional romance. Loy expresses this danger when she writes,

> we might tumble together
>
> Depersonalized
>
> Identical
>
> Into the terrific Nirvana
>
> Me you — you — me (58).

Loy's poem envisions the figurative death of the lovers through their depersonalization and the collision (or fusion) of their individuality. These lovers become both indistinguishable from each other ("Me you") and interchangeable ("you—me"). Loy utilizes the painful and paradoxical paradigmatic possibilities of "terrific" as something that is both frightening and exciting and magnificent. She further moderates our understanding of this "terrific" experience and unconsciously gestures toward Spielrein's conceptualization of the simultaneous destructive and transformative effects of love when she takes advantage of the syntagmatic relationship between "terrific" and "Nirvana." "Nirvana" denotes the Buddhist "realization of the non-existence of self, leading to cessation of all entanglement and attachment in life; the state of being released from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth" (*OED*). Loy thus questions the ethical nature of love, appearing torn between the fantasy of its romantic possibilities and the reality that strips one of individual identity.

In her exploration of adultery as ethical love in Modernist James Joyce's oeuvre, Janine Utell argues that

> the conception of the other in a love relationship as a desiring being, a desired being, *and* a being entirely separate from the beloved is essential to Joyce's representation of erotic relationships. In order to have a truly "ethical" love, it is necessary to acknowledge the separateness of the beloved, and the ultimately unattainability of the oneness that is so desperately craved. (67)

According to Utell, in Joyce's work, ethical love that escapes the containment of the beloved exists only outside of marriage and in extra-marital affairs (67). Loy's "Songs to Joannes" similarly envisions a "threshold," a boundary in which an ethical love exists but

struggles to remain within this ideal liminal space that maintains the separateness of the lovers. The abject images and grotesque language that Loy utilizes appear even more inhuman and monstrous because of the ways in which they obviously subvert the conventional and idealized language of romance. Romantic ideology and its discourse are grotesque and horrifying in "Songs to Joannes" as they take the form of a monstrous and repulsive "Pig Cupid," who is filled with the "Spawn of Fantasies," or all the classic conventions of Romance (53). Visceral and abject images—"saliva," "skin-sack" (53), "broken flesh" (54), "spermatozoa," "milk" (56), and "humid carnage" (57)—emphasize the physicality of Loy's vision of the "act of love" divorced from Romantic ideology and its language.[75]

With an ironic tone, Loy evokes Charlotte Perkins Gilman's seminal work on female confinement, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1899), to discuss the dangers of romantic ideology that propel women toward the roles of wife and "mother" (or "Parasitism, & Prostitution—or Negation," as she labels the roles in her "Feminist Manifesto"):

> But for the abominable shadows
>
> I would have lived
>
> Among their fearful furniture
>
> To teach them to tell me their secrets
>
> Before I guess

[75] Peter Quartermain argues that the poem "attacks romanticized sexuality as one of the principal means of subjugating women," and he discusses Loy's "reference[s] to body-fluids and to body-parts" (76). Furthermore, Quatermain argues that "Conventional love poetry, by metaphorizing the body, makes it impossible to be explicit about the body; obliged to metaphorize the world of feeling, it evades male and female sexuality. *Love Songs* sharply distinguishes the biological from the romantic, the physical from the metaphysical" (80). See '"The Tattle of Tongueplay': Mina Loy's *Love Songs*."

—Sweeping the brood clean out (55).

The "abominable shadows" here operate on multiple levels: they are shadowy women stripped of identity through the institutions of marriage and motherhood—the supposed culminating achievements of successful romance for women; they are psychic shadows within the poem's speaker who, on some unconscious level, resists this female trajectory; and, finally, they are the literature of terror, such as Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," which depicts the dangers of these institutions. Loy's speaker thus imagines that she, too, might have "lived/ Among" the material signs of motherhood—"the padded porte-enfant" with its "sarsenet ribbon"—as Gilman's unnamed narrator lives among the nursery relics in her attic room, desiring to know the "secrets" of the woman trapped in the wallpaper (54-5). Loy's image of a padded carrycot and the securing ribbons allude to the tools of confinement used to contain female hysterics. While Loy's speaker desires to be told the "secrets," this is meant to be read with an ironic tone, for it is she who knows the real secret and not them—they are confined by their "class," motherhood ("Manifesto" 154). Of course, as a mother herself, Loy saw the value in the experience,[76] but she argues that "Every woman has the right to maternity—Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex—" ("Manifesto" 155).[77]

[76] However, Loy was frequently separated from her children by choice. Her relationship with her children was unconventional, and this suggests that, like her attitude toward love, she was similarly conflicted about the experience of motherhood.

[77] Loy's arguments here highlight her commitment to Eugenics.

The "abominable shadows," or the "ghosts within," to refer back to Woolf's comment, haunt Loy's poem and represent the knowledge that romantic ideology has repressed and requires the continual repression of such knowledge if one is to insert oneself into the narrative of romance. Loy's poems are littered with ghostly images of fantasized and real lovers that reveal while she fears the annihilation of the self inherent in romantic ideology, she recognizes that the self also carries entombed within it all its former lovers that have not been laid permanently to rest.[78] Lovers, then, in Loy's poems are plentiful, and lovers after the first are not interchangeable for some lost, idealized, first-love (as seen with Theodore, Isabelle, and Matilda in *The Castle of Otranto*). Such a vision belies the very anxiety about romantic ideology and idealized love during modernity; that it is, as Utell suggests in her discussion of Joyce, unethical in the way it consumes the other, while one simultaneously finds it difficult to resist the compulsion toward fusion with another.

Loy represents the difficulty of rejecting romantic ideology, as the speaker remains haunted by the knowledge of what she has given up and simultaneously grieves this loss. Loy further plays with images of haunting and shadows when the speaker describes a lover's "pair of feet / [that] Smack the flag-stones / That are something left over from your walking" (55). The speaker's lover "got home…first," and she must and can only follow in his footsteps, retracing where he has walked (55). The speaker's desire is ghostly and not primary but only—perhaps even not at all—a secondary thought. Loy oscillates disorientingly between visions of romantic ideology and its effects and her

[78] For example, see Helle's discussion of Arthur Craven's ghostly presence in "Letters of the Unliving" (336). Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers, in *Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women 1910-1940*, argue that even by 1949, the date of this last poem, Loy was still haunted by the loss of Craven.

new vision of physical expression divorced from this constraining ideology. Thus, no sooner than having described her desire as secondary and haunting the male lover's, she then describes the "inseparable delight" (57). This oscillation not only reflects the warring selves of Loy's speaker as constructed by and resisting romantic ideology, but it also reflects the difficult and painful discovery of her vision of physical pleasure divorced from romance and its confining practices.

Part of the difficulty of the poem is that Loy's speaker runs up against the limits of language because what she envisions is both outside of the language of love and thus a new language must be discovered. Furthermore, such discussion resists the confinements of language because her vision is, in essence, inexpressible:

> Come to me There is something
> I have got to tell you and I can't tell
> Something taking shape
> Something that has a new name
> A new dimension
> A new use
> A new illusion. (57)

The process of melancholia is kept alive by the very difficulty of expressing what it means to love and the trauma Loy's speaker identifies as inherent in romantic ideology. The speaker suggests that while her vision of love may be more ethical, to use Utell's phrase, and seeks to free women from the shackles of their "desire to be loved," it is clearly not without consequences or dangers (155). In other words, this new vision may be merely another "illusion" and unobtainable. Loy's speaker continues to experience

doubt and this doubt haunts her, refusing to relinquish its hold, and, thus, the speaker remains within the cycle of grief. Paradoxically, however, in resisting linguistic definition and ensuring the continuation of the mourning process, this new "something" remains free and in a liminal state. It will not therefore become standardized, normalized, and, ultimately, another version of romantic ideology.

Loy reveals how the Female Gothic—with its emphasis on and interrogation of female confinement—and romance narratives are intertwined and inscribed within each other—that to fall in love within romantic ideology is therefore to undergo a Gothic narrative. After envisioning the destruction of romantic ideology, Loy's speaker expresses a profound anxiety about the effects of deconstructing romantic ideology, and her poem leaves the reader with the question: If the lovers do not meet in a union and obliterate in the death of the self, what does happen? This question is similarly taken up by Djuna Barnes in *Nightwood*. She explores in great depth the failure of union, but ultimately she also provides her readers with representations of the devastating effects of both a heteronormative and homosexual union.

'"Love, that terrible thing"'

In *Nightwood*, Barnes casts doubt on one of the principles of love that opened this chapter: love is pure because it is "morally good" (Ben-Ze'ev and Goussinsky 4). While Loy, too, similarly casts doubt on this principle and reveals deep anxiety about the possibility of deconstructing romantic ideology, she places emphasis on the effects romantic ideology has upon sexual expression and the need to find an alternative

ideological model.[79] Barnes's novel, alternatively, emphasizes the intense psychic pain of the experience of love and the pain lovers inflict upon each other. While Barnes based the novel on her relationship and breakup with her lover, Thelma Wood, and many of the relationships in the novel are between women, I read this novel as about the experience and effects of love in general. The contrast between heterosexuality and homosexuality arises out of the contrast between different forms of "love"—such as the "sacred" love Jenny describes—and romantic ideology (82). While Robin initially finds herself trapped by romantic ideology, following the socially approved path of marriage to a man and undertaking motherhood, her relationships with women are no less painful and they are still ensnared within their own version of romantic ideology, which reveals there is still a commitment to an "authenticity of love" (Pearce 150). In turn, the novel reveals that "Love of woman for woman" is not as "sacred" as Jenny believes; however, the problem in the novel derives not so much from who falls in love but from the experience of love itself. This is not a novel about the discrimination lesbian women suffer in heteronormative society—they are surrounded by those who do not fit within authorized versions of history, from Jews to cross dressers—but the trauma of love for all those who experience it.

Barnes wrote about *Nightwood*, "God knows who could have written as much about their blood while it was still running….I wrote it you must remember…when I still did not know Thelma would come back to me or not" (qtd. in Plumb 149). In light of her

[79] Djuna Barnes read passages of *Nightwood* to Loy: "Mina recalled, [*Nightwood*] poured over her 'with a sensation of beauty such as I never received from any unison of words.' But despite Mina's declarations of sympathy, Djuna spent more time with her lesbian friends, who, she explained, could 'really understand'" (Burke 368).

representation of the connection between love and pain—physical wounding, even—Barnes's novel calls into question the idea of love as a gift; instead, she explores and reveals the destructive results of taking love and the impossibility of holding onto love generated under these circumstances. Such a configuration of love, while it may initially be pleasurable, becomes painful, as one cannot force and maintain intimacy in this way. In *Nightwood*, the desired love object, Robin Vote, allows herself to be taken repeatedly but never gives herself over to complete union or fusion. Failure to do so and her inevitable rejection of her lovers causes them great pain and a crisis of identity because they regard themselves as incomplete without Robin.

Nora feels "outside and unidentified" and not part of "history" until she meets Robin (59). For Felix, Robin similarly offers the sense of place in a history he so desperately desires to be a part of. Not only does Robin bear him a child, thereby providing him with the "son" to carry on the Baron's lineage, "the 'great past,'" but Robin is also described as "the infected carrier of the past" (41-2). For the characters in the text who fall in love with her, she represents a history that will, if they consume her—"we feel that we could eat her"—enable them to access their "forefathers" (41). Robin, however, resists being totally consumed by lovers who only seek meaning and coherence in their experience of history. She defies her vows to Felix when she tells him '"I'll get out'" (53). She has been confined by his love/the gothic narrative, and, desiring escape, she leaves him. Barnes, thus, similarly explores the role of confinement addressed in the classic Female Gothic.

When Robin leaves Felix, he experiences not only the loss of his lover but also the loss of his self that Robin provided as "the infected carrier of the past." Marilyn

Friedman's feminist analysis in "Romantic Love and Personal Autonomy" highlights that the loss of the lover is often experienced as "a deep wound in the lover's ongoing sense of stable personhood" (164).[80] Such experiences of loss account for the melancholic tone of Barnes' novel and, specifically, Robin's lovers. Barnes represents the refusal to mourn the lost lover and the decision to hold onto her in some form as enabling the rejected lover to retain the only sense of identity he or she is now familiar with—the identity in relation to their lover.

Readings of loss, mourning, and/or melancholia are not new to discussions of *Nightwood*. For example, Victoria L. Smith, in "A Story beside(s) Itself: The Language of Loss in Djuna Barnes's Nightwood," calls *Nightwood* "a paradigmatic melancholic text" (196), and she uses Caruth to explain the difficulty of the text in that the trauma associated with loss is difficult to articulate (196). Smith argues that her "aim…is to show how Barnes counters 'unspeakable' losses in and of culture and history through a speaking or performance of those losses" (196). I will refocus Smith's discussions of melancholia and the unspeakable to explore representations of love and the inscribing of the Romance and Gothic narratives within each other; in other words reveal how falling in love is depicted as undergoing a Gothic narrative. Again, my goal is not to analyze the novel's representations of homosexual love or contrast this type of love against heterosexual expressions, but, instead, I want to examine how love, as a general experience, is articulated within Gothic terms and ultimately revealed as a Gothic experience.

[80] In *Love's Philosophy*, White explores the romantic ideology of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, arguing that Lawrence's "most reflective characters describe the loss of individual identity that the authentic experience of love must entail" (57).

Nightwood runs up against the problem of articulating love and the loss of love, particularly the deeply traumatizing effects of such loss. Once again one returns to Paul K. Saint-Amour's argument that the Gothic is driven by the question "what *is* that?," which exposes the uncanny brought on by an epistemological crisis. This text thus turns to the language and conventions of the Gothic in order to articulate its central concerns, from the "burial grounds" (55), "tombs" (61), and the descriptions of haunted houses (61)—spaces inhabited by those we have lost—to the quasi-death inducing experience of love alluded to through the similarities drawn between the dangerous consumptive and vampiric nature of lovers (95) and descriptions of spectral lovers who haunt (73).[81] The heart and the love it contains are "analogous in all degrees to the 'findings' in a *tomb*" (my emphasis 61). The effects of loss turn the living into quasi-ghostly, spectral figures that are unable and unwilling to relinquish their lost lover. Nora, for example, explains how she "'haunted the cafés where Robin had lived her nightlife,"' after Robin left with Jenny for America (166).

Robin Vote functions as the lost love object for a series of lovers: Felix, her husband; and her two female lovers, Nora and Jenny. The doctor understands the dangers inherent in an all-consuming love and cautions Nora to '"take action in your heart and be careful whom you love—for a lover who dies, no matter how forgotten, will take somewhat of you to the grave"' (156). The doctor understands that in leaving her lovers, Robin takes a part, if not all, of their identity with her because the type of love she inspires from others is an "insane passion" and a "terrible thing" (82). This image returns

[81] The vampiric quality of love is interesting given the emphasis on blood, blood lines, and infection in the novel.

one again to Emily Brontë's vision of Catherine and Heathcliff's consumptive relationship in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship takes on a vampiric quality whereby the lovers possess each other and Catherine is consumed by Heathcliff to the point of death. Catherine famously declares, "I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being" (80). She explains that "he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same" (79). In his revenge, Heathcliff explains to Catherine,

> You teach me now how cruel you've been -- cruel and false. Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy?...You deserve this. You have killed yourself.…Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart -- you have broken it; and in breaking it you have broken mine. So much the worse for me that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you -- -- O God! would you like to live with your soul in the grave? (158)

As discussed earlier, Lynn Pearce concludes that the "'long goodbye'" between Catherine and Heathcliff is "as intensely pleasurable as it is painful" (88), and it is similar to Barthes' *raviseement* (ravishment) in which the lover is consumed by the love object and "imagin[es] himself dead" (*Barthes's Reader* 433).

Robin's effect on her lovers is consumptive, haunting, and degenerative, and she turns her lovers into grotesque figures, specters, the undead:[82]

> Night people do not bury their dead, but on the neck of you, their beloved and walking, sling the creature, husked of its gestures. And where you go, it goes, the two of you, your living and her dead, that will not die; to daylight, to life, to grief, until both are carrion. (95)

While her lovers refuse to relinquish Robin, the text presents Robin as also refusing to let her former lovers go by her continuing to haunt them. The text explains this refusal as the fear of being forgotten, and, thus, Robin asks the doctor to "remember" her, as if she risks some form of death in being forgotten (129). Informing Felix of Robin's request, the doctor surmises that she "probably…has difficulty in remembering herself" (129). In other words, the Doctor diagnoses Robin as using her lovers to bolster her own fragile and inchoate identity. Robin is represented as feeding off her lovers and continuing to feed off of them even after she has left them; she refuses to be put to rest through the completion of successful mourning so that she may be remembered, and therefore her sense of self and her individual history will survive through the eyes and memories of the lover. The lovers' encounters with Robin are framed in the novel as deeply traumatizing, not just because they have lost their lover, but because through their relationship with Robin, their sense of individual identity and understanding of the nature of subjectivity are threatened. Robin's lovers, thus, become as equally dependent upon her for a sense of their identities because they have given themselves wholly to her during their affair.

[82] See Deborah Tyler-Bennett's '"Thick Within Our Hair': Djuna Barnes's Gothic Lovers," in *Gothic Modernisms*, for a discussion of Barnes' preoccupation with undead figures throughout her oeuvre that Tyler-Bennett contends is a result of the death of her own lover, Mary Pyne, in 1915.

Thus, the novel reveals, to use the words of Andrew Smith in his analysis of Stoker's *Jewel*, "love is truly neurotic because it indicates a pathologized desire to hang onto the object of desire," and I would add that *Nightwood* reveals the pathological desire to hang onto the love-object even after it has been lost (84).

Love as a pathological state is further reinforced in the novel by the presence of the doctor who treats those suffering from love as if a therapist. The nature of love with Robin as a traumatic experience emerges gradually, as the doctor helps each of his "patients" to come to know their trauma. The doctor explains to Nora,'"[w]hat we do not see, we are told, we do not mourn; yet night and sleep trouble us"' (95). The doctor tries to explain to Nora how what one does not consciously know is communicated via one's dreams. According to the doctor's reading of night, night is indeed a dark place in a figurative as well as a literal sense, for "[t]ake history at night….[I]t [was] at night that Sodom became Gomorrah… The dead have committed some portion of the evil of the night; sleep and love, the other. For what is not the sleeper responsible" (92-3). He continues to theorize that "[t]he sleeper is the proprietor of an unknown land" (93). This unknown land of those asleep taps into the unconscious and those parts of the self that are usually kept hidden beneath a shield designed to protect the conscious.

Nora eventually realizes the traumatizing effects her love for Robin has had when she explains that "the lover must go against nature to find love" because it requires dredging up knowledge of something that we should have left repressed and forgotten (166). In *Nightwood*, love, then, functions like dreams, revealing parts of the self usually kept hidden. Explaining the connection she sees between Robin and the family—"A relative is in the foreground only when it is born, when it suffers and when it dies, unless

it becomes one's lover, then it must be everything, as Robin was" (166)—Nora argues that love for Robin "is incest" (166). While ironic, given that this lesbian union cannot produce offspring, when Nora labels Robin "incest," she does clearly articulate the perverse nature of Robin and the unions she forms with others. The love Robin engenders from her lovers is dangerous because it inevitably causes one to confront the absence of self when Robin rejects and leaves them.

The doctor explains to Nora that she, Jenny, and Robin will gain "knowledge of each other they never wanted, having had to contemplate each other, head-on and eye to eye, until death" (107). Felix, under the instruction of the doctor, comes to realize that '"[t]he more we learn of a person, the less we know"' (119). Fusion with the other is thus dangerous because Barnes's vision of this intimacy produces an effect similar to Marlow's encounter with Kurtz. Such knowledge of the other, according to Barnes, is perverse, even though one may desire it and be compelled toward it by romantic ideology. Thus, Barnes suggests that despite romantic ideology's commitment to fusion, one should not desire it because it will paradoxically destroy the idealized image of the love object and negate the romance narrative's ability to provide cohesion and meaning to experience.

Robin, having gained too much knowledge of Jenny, begins to feel "alone" again and, at first, "wander[s] without design" (176). Her behavior drives her current lover, Jenny, to distraction, and Jenny accuses her of '"sensuous communion with unclean spirits"' (177). Jenny's idea of communion evokes her impression of women's love for each other as "sacred," but Robin has contaminated the cleanliness of this love by communing with "unclean spirits" (82). In feeling as if their love has been contaminated,

in losing the vision of purity and sacredness she has associated with their love, Jenny becomes "hysterical" and is "struck down" (177).

While Jenny grieves, Robin acts as if "possessed"—the chapter's title—and begins to hunt Nora down, sensing that Nora no longer haunts her. The roles are reversed and Nora witnesses an enactment of her own perverse desire played out between Robin and the dog. In "La Somnambule," Felix meets Robin and thinks that "Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human" (41). Robin, throughout the text, has been framed as bestial, grotesque, and monstrous in form. Nora has unconsciously predicted the closing moments of the text, when she surmised that

> there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her. Death went with them, together and alone; and with the torment and catastrophe, thoughts of resurrection, the second duel. (63)

Nora thus expresses the murderous and perverse impulses of the lover who must desire the death of the lover in order for traditional romantic union to be achieved.

In "*Nightwood*: 'The Sweetest Lie,"' Judith Lee labels Robin's behavior at the end of the novel as "a sacrificial act" (214).[83] Robin fully submits to the beast within her as her human self is annihilated. The beast within that possesses her, a classic Gothic motif that communicates fears about the nature of identity and the unknown depths within each human, must rise up and be released. The infection of the past must burn through her before she can be released from its control, but the experience of reuniting physically in the same space causes the women great physical pain: Nora's "body

[83] See Mary Lynn Broe's *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* (207-220).

str[ikes] the wood," and her dog fights with Robin, biting her, and Robin begins to imitate a dog, "barking also, crawling after him" (179). The scene is indeed "obscene," and Robin ultimately gives up, "weeping," (179-80). Susan S. Martins persuasively argues that in this scene the dog symbolizes how Robin has been perceived by others, as bestial, and how Robin's behavior represents how she perceives other's treatment of her, as possessive and predatory: "Thus ends the novel, with Robin's portrayal of Nora's desire for her" (122).

The doctor's earlier premonition of the course of Nora and Robin's relationship comes true: "Nora will leave that girl some day; but though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both" (113). The dog of the doctor's premonition and Nora's dog at the end of the novel thus symbolize the nature of Robin and Nora's desire for each other. However, the predatory nature of the beast (and Robin's love for Nora) is tamed in the closing moments of the text as Robin and the dog submit to each other: "she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees" (180). In their reading of *Nightwood* as Gothic parody, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue that the novel is "a serious turn turned comic" (*Comic Turn* 85), and the end of the novel reveals a sacrilegious act in which the boundaries between human and beast, and civilized and barbaric are elided in order to challenge "Modernity and its myth of progress" ("Unreal Cities" 236-7). While I am not inclined to read this scene (or the majority of the text) as Gothic parody, given the ending's representation of physical, emotional, and psychic pain that remains unappeased and unresolved, this text does, through interrogating the narratives of history and romance, reveal a "deep anxiety

about what it means to be human" ("Unreal Cities" 236-7). Furthermore, this scene challenges Jenny's idea that women's love for each other is "sacred" (82). This ending is horrifying because it reveals and concludes with the alterity of the other; the novel depicts a desperate desire for union but the inevitable resignation to its unattainability and exhaustion in the face of this desire.

Glaspell, Loy, and Barnes all explore the difficulty of achieving love, as defined by romantic ideology. Love, as defined by romantic ideology, constitutes a death of the self in its culmination, the fusion and subsequent death of the self. While romantic ideology, like history, provides a narrative that establishes an authorized trajectory to one's life and eases the anxiety felt about teleological uncertainty during modernity, these writers reveal the simultaneous pain of giving up this romantic ideology; the stability provided by romantic ideology is therefore grieved. Thus, these writers reveal that while falling in love is a Gothic narrative, to avoid love, as defined by romantic ideology, constitutes yet another version of a Gothic narrative characterized by melancholic mourning for what has been lost and the ensuing uncertainty felt over losing this narrative.

AFTERWORD

On October 30, 1938, the "War of the Worlds Broadcast" fooled many Americans into believing that aliens were invading the USA. The advertisement-free program created an immersive experience for listeners, but it did begin with a brief announcement from its director, Orson Welles, who explained that the following show was an adaptation of H. G. Wells's 1989 novel, *The War of the Worlds.* The adaptation employed a framing narrative that presented the program as a regular CBS music broadcast, and then a reporter's voice intruded into the show with those now infamous words, "We interrupt this program."[84] The program was then interrupted with increasingly frequency by a series of news bulletins and flashes, which reported the crash of an object in New Jersey. The voices of reporters and experts soon consumed the program to report that the object was a spaceship occupied by alien inhabitants who were attacking New Jersey and New York City with heat rays and poisonous gas. Despite Orson Welles's disclaimer offered in the paratext that this was an adaptation, many believed the show to be a report of real events. In *100 Media Moments that Changed America*, Jim Willis cites the many studies undertaken to study the show's impact. These studies reported that the show was heard by around 6 million listeners, of whom 1.7 believed the show to be real, and 1.2 million reported being "terrified" (68-9). This radio broadcast toward the end of the modernist period and the reaction the show caused reveal that something had gone awry with the distancing effects of classic Gothic framing devices. Furthermore, listeners' belief in

[84] Jim Willis notes that CBS agreed never to again use the phrase '"we interrupt this program"' "for entertainment purposes," due to the critical public response to this phrase and the show's presentation of this invasion as real, which caused significant hysteria (69).

such an invasion affirms an increasing acceptance of the gothicization of experience—that danger was imminent and that humans were not alone, whether they be surrounded by ghosts or aliens—in the public imagination, because many listeners readily accepted the information they heard as true, despite the lack of historical fact or examples to support the existence of aliens.

Framing devices from the classic Gothic allowed writers to create a recognizable and familiar environment in which it seemed logical and characteristic to then encounter other Gothic conventions; however, in revising these framing devices, Modernist writers elided the distance between these Gothic worlds and their readers' real worlds. In doing so, Modernists created the effect of and drew attention to the presence of the Gothic existing and transpiring within the familiar and everyday realities of its readers. Such a move serves to highlight the uncanniness, then, of the everyday world of readers that Modernist writers depict as characterized by a Gothic temporality and populated by ghostly figures and melancholic lovers. Therefore, the once familiar and everyday world of readers, as experienced through the narratives of history and romance, became Gothic. The paratext of the broadcast, in which Welles informed listeners that the program was an adaptation, was not effective in providing narrative resolution and closure, given that many believed an alien invasion was actually happening. Furthermore, the increasing gothicization of everyday life suggests that those living during modernity were not required to suspend their disbelief in ways that readers of the classic Gothic were required to in order to immerse themselves fully in the experience of fear that the texts' anxieties generated.

Today, one still sees the legacies of Modernists' revisions to the Gothic and its framing devices, as highlighted by the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, in the documentary style—also known as mockumentaries—of many horror movies that seek to heighten the audience's fears by presenting events as real and creating an immersive experience of watching the events exactly as they occurred, as if in a present moment of action.[85] Furthermore, in the case of the contemporary horror movie genre, texts take their cue from Gothic texts, such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, by presenting narratives as found documentation (found-footage).[86] This combination of the conventions and language of the Gothic with realism has, according to Gary D. Rhoades, strongly influenced the horror movie genre. Rhoades contends that while "Conventional wisdom in horror film studies suggests that a paradigmatic shift occurred in the 1960s towards more realistic horror….[A]n argument can also be mounted to suggest that the horror film has to varying degrees aspired to a kind of realism throughout its history" (Rhoades). My project serves as evidence for such a claim in the ways that it has examined how Modernists' employed the conventions and language of the Gothic to take advantage of their ability to generate and represent anxiety and fear, as well as how these Modernist writers simultaneously revised such language and conventions into "subtler means" to suit their realist impulses.

[85] Fitzgerald was also trying to create such an immersive experience during his experimentation with tenses and flashback sequences.

[86] For example, the found-footage movies *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), Spanish movie *Rec* (2007)—remade as *Quarantine* in (2008) for American audiences—Australian movie *Lake Mungo* (2008), and the recent popular *Paranormal Activity* series that began in 2007. According to Chuck Tryon in "Video from the Void: Video Spectatorship, Domestic Film Cultures, and Contemporary Horror Film," found-footage horror movies emphasize the "perceived threats to documentary authenticity, that TV, video, and the internet will undermine our grounds for interpretation and knowledge" (40).

While for those living during modernity Gothic horrors were everywhere from the way its inhabitants experienced the everyday *as* Gothic to the way its writers chose to represent these horrors by revising classic Gothic conventions and language, today there is renewed interest in the presence of supernatural elements and attributing certain events to such forces.[87] This investment arises for several reasons: a desire for entertainment in the vein of the classic Gothic that provides one with a good fright, and, in the vein of Agatha Christie discussed in chapter two, to produce texts with mass appeal by once again disguising the "real" anxiety beneath those malleable Gothic figures that operate as metaphors for the more discerning reader/viewer but do not intrude on the escapist experience for a viewer/reader simply looking for entertainment. For example, the popular 2007 movie *Paranormal Activity*, which revolves around a presence in the house of young couple, Katie and Micah, is shot documentary-style by Micah. The franchise also reveals how the interest in ghosts has not abated but, instead, that writers and filmmakers continue to revise this Gothic figure to suit the particular circumstances of the era. As the film builds suspense with its surveillance approach, the audience waits for something to happen onscreen and has to rely upon the cameraman's filming abilities to capture that something. Indeed, suspense is heightened by much of the scary action taking place off screen, not being fully or adequately captured by the cameraman. In this first installment, the audience never sees the "what" that terrorizes the couple. While

[87] See Gary D. Rhoades's "Mockumentaries and the Production of Realist Horror" for a discussion on "the desire to create realism in horror cinema" (n.pag). Scholars have also noted the continual presence of the Gothic in the everyday and its divorce from the supernatural in the years immediately preceding modernity, in the rhetoric of homophobia and the Red Scare of the nineteen fifties. For example, in "Monstrous Rhetoric: *Naked Lunch*, National Insecurity, and the Gothic Fifties," Fiona Paton argues that the nineteen-fifties was an "era when fear of communism and fear of homosexuality merged within the Gothic register of monstrosity and disease….This Gothic language was so pervasive that it permeated the discourse of ordinary citizens" (50).

Katie believes she has been plagued by unseen forces since childhood, the nature and motivations of this presence are left vague—no doubt because the filmmakers anticipated turning the movie into a series—and the success of the movie has since led to the production of two more in the franchise. The third installment intertwines classic Gothic law with its nineteen eighties spin. In the third movie, time literally folds back on itself via the VHS found-footage of Katie's and her sister's childhood, and the audience, in watching the backstory, watches history being uncovered, a history that was only alluded to in the first movie. Randy expresses conventional ghost law wisdom when he says that "it must want something…They don't just stick around for no reason" contrasted against the modern twist of a camera mounted on a fan pedestal to provide a rotating shot. Thus, the viewers discover the secrets of this presence and the family's history. Unlike its Modernist Gothic ancestors, however, *Paranormal Activity 3* provides the answers to the "what *is* it?" question—it is a demonic presence, which is "married" to young girls who then become part of its coven.[88] It is interesting to note that the movie makes use of revised romantic ideology in explaining how young girls are "married" to the demon. Furthermore, these movies do not represent love triumphing in the face of all obstacles, as Katie's parents, Dennis and Julie, both die.[89] The use of inverted pentagram symbols and a coven of women allude to the demonic nature of the presence and suggest that this demonic presence has evil intentions, and the audience therefore needs little more to feel satisfied that they now understand the origin and motivations of the presence, as the

[88] Paul K. Saint-Amour, in "Gothic Temporality and Total War," argues that the Gothic is driven by the quest to identify the cause of anxiety: '"what *is* this threat?"' and '"what *is* that?"'(*Gothic and Modernism* 209-10).

[89] Also, the first movie depicts a cohabiting couple and, in the third movie, Dennis is the girls' stepfather.

directors, Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, explain: '"People know a lot more about demonology than they realize. You actually don't need to show it. You just insinuate it and people are like, 'Oh yeah, that's going to be a séance later. I know how those work'" (Schulman).[90] The "what" is given a distinctly supernatural origin story and nature but is combined with the non-supernatural presence of the coven of women. These explanations, thus, provided the audience with a sense of narrative closure and resolution—or at least the illusion of resolution—at the end of the movie, uncharacteristic of the ambiguity and "lingering after-effects" in Gothic Modernism (*Letters* 309). While audiences in the twenty-first century feast daily on an even "richer feast of horrors" than our Modernist ancestors, these horrors contain a similarly imminent and pervasive quality to them. However, unlike Modernist authors, filmmakers today—at least those who desire commercial success—offer narrative resolution and alleviate our fear at the end of the movie.

Thus, while this project has redefined the boundaries and contours of Modernism, in doing so it has also simultaneously suggested a new history of the Gothic and its subsequent manifestations throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Furthermore, Modernism is revealed as a significant influence on and contributor to the contemporary Gothic and its progeny. Unlike Shorthouse and Aunt Julie at the end of

[90] In a 2011 interview, the directors explain how they capitalized on the knowledge they anticipated the audience would bring with them into the movie. The movie creators even took advantage of the acting careers of the actors who played the women in the coven: '"they each have played 'creepy lady' many times. Talk about being pigeonholed."' Furthermore, Joost explains how the movie collides supernatural and realist elements: '"It's a huge thing in this movie that now, not only are you afraid of a demon, you're also afraid of a bunch of people in cahoots with the demon'" (Ditzian).

Algernon Blackwood's 1906 short story "The Empty House," those in the twenty-first century would "look behind…to see" "IT" (31).

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