

**The Haunted House in Mid-to-Late
Victorian Gothic Fiction**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the composition and contents of this thesis are entirely my own.

Ilse Marie Bussing

DEDICATION



*Para Gala y René,
con todo mi amor y agradecimiento.
De no haber sido por su compañía,
esto no hubiese sido posible.*



I wish to thank my supervisor, Penny Fielding, for her unwavering patience and guidance throughout the writing of this thesis; her accurate suggestions and criticisms helped shape this thesis into what it has become.

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Finally, the unrelenting support of my parents and my family, René and Gala, has been invaluable, both to me, and this project.



This thesis addresses the central role of the haunted house in mid-to-late Victorian Gothic texts. It argues that haunting in fiction derives from distinct architectural and spatial traits that the middle-class Victorian home possessed. These design qualities both reflected and reinforced current social norms, and anxiety about the latter surfaced in Gothic texts. In this interdisciplinary study, literary analysis works alongside spatial examination, under the premise that literature is a space that can be penetrated and deciphered in the same way that buildings are texts that can be read and interpreted.

This work is divided into two main sections, with the first three chapters introducing theoretical, historical and architectural notions that provide a background to the literary works to be discussed. The first chapter presents various theorists' notions behind haunting and the convergence of spectrality and space, giving rise to the discussion of domestic haunting and its appeal. The second chapter examines the Crystal Palace as the icon of public space in Victorian times, its capacity for haunting, as well as its ability to frame the domestic both socially and historically. The third chapter focuses on the prototype of private space at the time—the middle-class home—in order to highlight the specificity of this dwelling, both as an architectural and symbolic entity.

The second section also consists of three chapters, dedicated to the “dissection” of the haunted house, divided into three different areas: liminal, secret, and surrounding space. The fourth chapter examines works where marginal space, in the shape of hallways and staircases, is the site of intense haunting. A novel by Richard Marsh and stories by Bulwer-Lytton, Algernon Blackwood and W.W. Jacobs are analyzed here. The fifth chapter is a journey through rooms and secretive space of the spectral home; works by authors such as Wilkie Collins, J.H. Riddell and Sheridan Le Fanu are considered in order to argue that the home's exceptional compartmentalization and

its concern for secrecy translated effortlessly into Gothic fiction. The final chapter addresses an integral yet external part of the Victorian home—the grounds. Gardens in works by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Margaret Oliphant, M.R. James, and Oscar Wilde are inspected, proving Gothic fiction’s disregard for boundaries and its ability to exceed the parameters of the home.



Why should it be so difficult to describe the experience of architecture? We see, touch, and move among buildings, just as we see, touch and move among the other objects in our world. Surely then to describe architectural experience is to describe the basic processes of perception.

Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*

My thesis addresses the central role of the haunted house in mid-to-late Victorian texts. It argues that haunting in fiction derives from distinct architectural and spatial traits in the Victorian home. These design qualities both reflected and reinforced current social norms, and anxiety about the latter surfaced in Gothic texts. In this interdisciplinary study, literary analysis works alongside spatial examination, under the premise that literature is a space that can be penetrated and deciphered in the same way that buildings are texts that can be read and interpreted.

Numerous theorists have examined notions of the spatial junction between literature and architecture that are undoubtedly relevant to my own study. I shall refer to some architectural, literary and interdisciplinary studies that have attempted to answer how one goes about reading a house, how a house in fiction can be interpreted, and how a haunted house, represented in Gothic fiction, may be deciphered. We must first address the issue of readability or the home's suitability as a space that can be interpreted, a topic that has been fruitfully approached by the discipline of architecture. In "Home Making: An Architectural Perspective" (2002), Lynne Walker addresses one of the main points that will be discussed in my thesis—the notion that a house can be read as a metaphorical and symbolic structure. The objective of Walker's analysis is "to

consider how ideas and assumptions about social relations around gender, class, and “race” get translated into domestic space, embodied in the home, and represented in its spatiality” (823). Moreover, architect Suzanne Crowhurst’s engaging article “A House is a Metaphor” (1974) superbly delineates the way in which the domestic sphere can be read, under the premise that, like literature, the home is a text that has the capacity to communicate: “architectural design is a medium for meaningful communication. The range of messages that can be expressed by the physical environment is limitless, since everything that man can experience can be translated into an environmental metaphor” (35). Because architecture implies communication, Crowhurst insists that it is possible to “‘read between the lines’ [of a building] with the eyes of a poet, an artist or philosopher”(35), and I would add, a literary critic. Crowhurst details essential concepts that must be employed in the reading of any type of home: boundaries, territories and orientations. Of the first, she says: “boundaries tend to convey messages about how the individual or group relates to outsiders” (35). These might include the walls between rooms or the external borders, such as the wall or garden fence of a home. Concerning territories, Crowhurst claims that these “tend to convey messages primarily about who the person or the group is” (35); for instance, when the predominant emotions are nurturing, “the territory may be comfortable, inward oriented, warm” in contrast to aggressive and defensive emotions, which generate impervious structures. With regard to orientations, this critic believes that “orientations can express the degree to which one looks outside oneself for stimulation and to the degree to which one is open to influence from outside the immediate family system” (36). An example of this, which contrasts radically with the type of orientation that the Victorian home displays, as will become clear later, is the case of houses in Venice or in medieval alleys, “with windows opening directly onto the street and facing each other almost within arms lengths,” which “suggest direct and intense involvement between family and life in the street” (37). According to this author, all three of these factors, boundaries, territories and orientations, are present, but vary from household to household. My objective is

to read a specific dwelling—the middle-class Victorian home—and to employ some of the notions suggested by Crowhurst and other architectural theorists in order to reach this home's social and affective fabric.

In addition to works like Walker's and Crowhurst's, there are numerous studies that also address the readability of the home from a specific branch of architectural study—the phenomenology of architecture—and its emphasis on the way in which a person experiences space through sensations. The seminal work in this field is, of course, Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), which I refer to in depth in the first chapter of my thesis. This intimate and, as its title conveys, poetic rendition of the home, influenced later phenomenological works that I take into consideration in my analysis, such as: Norberg-Schulz's *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980); Alan Holgate's *The Aesthetics of Built Form* (1992); and *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture* (1994), by Holl, Pallasma and Pérez-Gómez. The relevance of this topic is confirmed by the numerous and recent publications on the subject. However, it is essential to note that the topic of the home's readability was as pertinent during the nineteenth century as it is today thus coinciding with the emphasis placed on domesticity and the home in Victorian fiction, and with the abundant depictions of haunted houses in Gothic literature of the time. Vernon Lee, prolific aesthetic critic and writer of supernatural fiction, was responsible for promoting the notion of empathy in Britain, which had been intensely discussed in Germany from the 1860s as the concept of *Einfühlung*. This phenomenological and rather complex concept insisted that there was a reciprocal relationship between space and the person that was experiencing it, and that just as a space could affect the individual, the latter could externalize or reflect their own feelings on to space. These nineteenth-century aesthetic notions, as well as current phenomenological ideas, confirm architecture's interest for the exploration of the topic of space and sensations, and for the possibility of reading a home, a view that is especially relevant to my own study.

But in order to read a house, other critics note that a single, architectural approach does not suffice. Though she is an architect, spatial critic Lynne Walker, recommends an interdisciplinary approach to this kind of study, arguing that as a material, social, and historical product, the home is the assemblage of several intertwined factors: “it is clear that it is no longer possible to speak of architects’ understanding of the home without reference to interdisciplinary approaches and discourses outside architecture” (831). Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach is especially important because of the home’s evolution through time: “the concept of the home, produced at intersection of language, space, and social dynamics, is not fixed but changing over time” (831). In my study I also argue that as a fusion of social, historical, and spatial elements, the home cannot be read successfully by employing a single disciplinary angle.

This is why it is also important to consider how literature itself has approached the idea of reading a home, specifically the home in fiction. In “Reading the House: A Literary Perspective” (2002), Kathy Mezei and Chiara Briganti note how the reading of the house is an ubiquitous concern for literary studies and literature in general: “the house—and architecture—have served as foundational, powerful, and recurring analogues throughout the history of literary interpretation: thus, Walter Pater proposes the term *literary architecture* (1903,20), Henry James his *house of fiction* (1934,46), Gaston Bachelard *the poetics of space* (1994), and Edith Wharton her *House of Mirth* ([1905] 1987).” (837,838). Comparative studies like Ellen Eve Frank’s *Literary Architecture* (1979), for example, note how the habit of comparing literature and architecture, and of wishing to read a certain architecture “extend[...] from Plato to Samuel Beckett” (9). In *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (1989), Philippa Tristram concentrates on the eighteenth century and on Britain specifically, in order to link the rise of the novel with that of the English house:

from the beginning the house and the novel are interconnected, for the eighteenth century, which saw the rise of the novel, was also the great age of the English house. Because the novel is invincibly domestic, it can tell us much about the space we live in; equally, designs for houses and their furnishings can reveal hidden aspects of the novelist’s art. It is no accident that many

Although my study focuses on the Victorian period, and not the eighteenth century, like Tristram, I believe that the home's design and its furnishings can reveal important facts; but instead of looking at what they might reveal about the novelist's art, I turn my attention to what the home's makeup might reveal about the society that engendered it. While some cultural studies focus on deciphering the symbolism of furnishings in homes, like Adrian Forty's *Objects of Desire: Design & Society 1750-1980* (1987), others concentrate on a particular area of the home, in order to examine what that space is able to transmit about the social and historical context that shaped it. Examples of this type of analysis include Michael Waters's *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (1988), and Catherine Alexander's "The Garden as Occasional Domestic Space" (2002), which I will be referring to during my analysis of the grounds around the haunted house in fiction. Another engaging examination of a particular site in the Victorian home is *The Victorian Parlour* (2001) by Thad Logan, who also maintains the readability of the home, as his "book examines the middle-class Victorian parlour as a material artefact and as a subject of representation" (xiii).

A third type of assessment of the home takes us directly to the focus of my own analysis—the reading of the haunted house in Gothic fiction. The last section of my first chapter outlines how recent critics evaluate space in Gothic settings, and how some of them focus specifically on the spectral dwelling. For instance, *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992), written by architect and architectural critic Anthony Vidler, includes a brief analysis of passages in fiction and their portrayal of uncanny space. In this study, Vidler approaches the topic of haunted domestic space through Freud's *unheimlich*; although I inevitably refer to this psychoanalytical notion in my study, I do so briefly, and it is not the main formulating concept in my thesis. Articles like "Secrets of the Forbidden Chamber: Bluebeard" (2000) by Tivadar Gorilovics, and Jerrold E. Hogle's "The Restless Labyrinth: Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel" (2004),

dedicate their attention to recurrent Gothic spatial tropes such as doors, chambers and labyrinths in haunted space. Like them, I look at particular architectural elements of the middle-class household, to see how haunting can emerge from a particular design, and to see how the Victorian home reworks recurrent Gothic themes. Barry Curtis's engaging study *Dark Places: The Haunted House in Film* (2008) examines visual texts where the protagonist is the haunted house. Curtis's accurate observations about the depiction of the ghostly house contribute enormously to my own discussion of the topic, especially because of his detailed account of the spatial implications of the dwelling's troubled condition. Lastly, recent works like *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (2010), update the topic of the haunted house by turning their attention to the present and its haunted spaces. Christine Wilson's "Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and American Haunted House Narrative" and Bruno Lessard's "Gothic Affects: Digitally Haunted Houses and the Production of Affect-Value," both in this collection, address the haunted house within very specific contexts. Studies such as these, despite addressing a different historical and cultural context than mine, invariably aid me in formulating my own approach to the spectral house, and in considering how the middle-class Victorian home generates its Gothic, spectral reflection.

My thesis is divided into two main sections, with the first three chapters introducing theoretical, historical and architectural notions that provide a background for the literary works to be discussed. The first chapter, "Containing Haunted Space: The Haunted House," addresses two concepts that are key in my overall study—haunting and space—and most importantly, the convergence of the two within the domestic sphere. I begin by addressing the concept of haunting, its theoretical and psychoanalytical origins in Abraham and Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel* (1978) and in Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993). In following chapters, I apply Abraham's and Torok's contributions on the phantom and the concept of *transgenerational communication* to the discussion of a revisiting past, in the fiction of the time.

Derrida's concept of the specter and his work on secrecy also contribute enormously to my analysis of selected tales. After addressing the general concept of haunting, I move on to the examination of haunted space, mainly through the lens of architectural phenomenology. I reflect on Gaston Bachelard's seminal work, *Poetics of Space* (1958), as well as texts by contemporary critics which discuss the topic of sensations and perception in architectural space, such as Juhanni Pallasma's *The Eyes of the Skin* (2005) and Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny* (1987). I carry these notions of senses and space further by connecting them to another phenomenological concept—sensuous architecture—or built space that has the capacity of stimulating its inhabitants or visitors in an intimate and physical way. I mention that this concept was extremely relevant to fin de siècle theorists who explored haunted space, such as Vernon Lee, coinciding with the abundant depictions of seductive spectral houses in fiction. Lee's contributions to the topic, as well as contemporary criticism, shed light on what I argue is an essential part of haunted space—its ability to entice characters into a sensual voyage through its troubled yet appealing structure. This notion is at odds with a narrow understanding of the haunted house as a merely frightening or repellent structure. I end this chapter with a sketch of what current Gothic studies have proposed in regards to the figure of the haunted house; the purpose of this is first, to prove the relevance of the topic in current Gothic analyses, and second, to shape my own proposal concerning the haunted house, at times coinciding with existing takes on the subject, and in other instances, contesting them.

The second chapter, "Surveying Public Space: The Crystal Palace," analyzes the building of the Great Exhibition of 1851 as the most important public building of the nineteenth century; as such, it illustrates Victorian elements but it also points to what is to come with modern art and times in general. I argue that because this emblematic building was designed by Joseph Paxton, originally a gardener and great hothouse designer of the nineteenth century, there are spatial and figurative implications that stem from its greenhouse-like essence, such as the issue of display,

control (of the environment) and urge to collect. I cover physical and architectural aspects of the building, in order to prove that the Crystal Palace is a symbolic space capable of generating powerful sensations and illusions that enthrall its visitors. I consider modern works dealing with the phenomenon of this structure, from social and architectural perspectives, such as *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (1999) by Auerbach and *The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition* (2002) by Hobhouse, as well as nineteenth-century sources, such as articles from *The Times*, which document the effect of the building on its contemporary visitors. I argue that this building's structural transparency generated illusions of honesty and a "fairy-like" ambience, which put forth positive ideas about the event and about Britain's "honest" and truthful nature as a world power. Nevertheless, later I discuss how, despite this illusion, anxieties about Britain as a society and its imperial status eventually came through, both in discourse and in space, and in visual mediums such as cartoons and floor plans of the exhibit. The discussion of the Crystal Palace provides a wider social picture and historical platform that frames the analysis of the focus of this study—the Victorian home. The Crystal Palace was a seminal building that, by virtue of its public status, transmitted general ideas about society and architecture. Many of these notions, such as the division between the public and the private, translate effortlessly into the canvas of the middle-class household; therefore, considering their presence in a building whose public status offers us a large-scale structure that generates synecdochal correspondences in the private home, paves the way for a better understanding of them in the home.

If the Crystal Palace is the iconic public space of the nineteenth century, the Victorian home is the prototype of private space of its time. Whereas the Crystal Palace presented a perfect image of the empire's strength through a public building, the Victorian home portrayed a flawless picture of the building block of such a society—the family. The third chapter, "Infiltrating Private Space: The Victorian Home," highlights the importance and specificity of the Victorian home, both as an

architectural and a symbolic space. I begin with a historical explanation about the evolution of the British dwelling, from house to home; from being a *house*, a place where working and living, the outside and the inside converged, the nineteenth-century dwelling turned into a *home*, a highly-compartmentalized space meant to be a shelter from the outside world. I examine the dynamics of the Victorian home, and the way in which it embodies domesticity, a nineteenth-century concept that grew into shape together with the dwelling that was tailored to house it. This section pays particular attention to classic architectural works on the Victorian household: Robert Kerr's, *The Gentleman's House* (1864), J.J. Stevenson's *House Architecture* (1880), and *The English House* (1904) by Hermann Muthesius. I also consider equally important household management literature, a Victorian phenomenon in its own right, in order to "read" the middle-class home; among these are numerous articles appearing in women's magazines. Moreover, I include social-history studies that chronicle the dynamics of the Victorian household from social and gender perspectives, like *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999) by John Tosh and *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (2003) by Judith Flanders. I argue that the home's spatial topography and design embody the superbly complex social dynamics of the middle-class household. Thus, in "Unveiling the Victorian Home," I examine certain architectural traits and design elements that reveal a concern for privacy and control over the inhabitants of the home. Furthermore, I pay close attention to the "centripetal aesthetics" or the inward and defensive pull of the Victorian household, towards a safe family nucleus, and away from an outside constantly advertised as dangerous. I argue that this reclusive and introverted home in real life was the perfect stage for supernatural occurrences in fiction, and that the domestication of Gothic fiction of the time is not coincidental, and is in fact due to the Victorian household's peculiar architectural essence.

The second section of the thesis also consists of three chapters, dedicated to the "dissection" of the haunted house, divided into three different areas: liminal, secret,

and surrounding space. As I mentioned previously, I will employ the background notions addressed in the first three chapters to look carefully at how the various areas of the haunted house function in selected mid-to-late Victorian Gothic texts. The fourth chapter “Traversing Liminal Space: Hallways and Staircases in the Haunted House,” examines works where marginal space, in the shape of hallways and staircases, is the site of intense haunting. The first setting that I address is Satis House in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860-61). My analysis focuses on the staircase that Pip travels through in the company of Estella, and its capacity to generate powerful feelings of attraction and intimacy. In the analysis of Richard Marsh’s *The Joss*, I concentrate on the issue of confinement, and on how it is specifically linked to and generated by the corridors that are portrayed. Moreover, I relate this sense of spatial incarceration to the domestic expectations placed on women at the time. In the following section, I analyze two stories, Bulwer-Lytton’s archetypal “The Haunted and the Haunters, or the House and the Brain” (1859) and Algernon Blackwood’s “The Empty House” (1906), in which the characters’ movement is mainly limited to the thoroughfares of the haunted house, as they avidly investigate the home’s geography and its dark past. Finally, I take a look at W.W. Jacobs’s short story “The Toll-House” (1909), and to its interpretation of a persistent Gothic trope—the labyrinth—and see how it translates into Victorian domestic design. I argue that in all of these works, liminal regions are the spaces through which characters initially explore the haunted house, and that their voyage through these inaugurates and augments their interest for the dwelling. Therefore, despite the feelings of incarceration, disorientation, or fear that are generated within these lengthy but confining areas, protagonists still feel the need to move further into the troubled dwelling.

After traversing the marginal corridors and staircases of the haunted home, characters inevitably reach the destination that is usually portrayed as the nucleus of haunting, a room that functions as the repository of a secret that weighs heavily on the home. Chapter Five, “Unlocking Secret Space: Rooms and Doors in the Haunted

House,” is an expedition through three types of spectral rooms: those that contain secrets; those that mutate in frightening ways; and finally, those that have been infiltrated by corrupting entities. The logic behind this classification maintains that the various chambers represented in fiction reflect genuine anxieties present within the household. Thus, concerns over privacy and secrecy surface as rooms that conceal a shameful secret, as in the case of the Myrtle Room in Wilkie Collins’s *The Dead Secret* (1857); the unhealthy chamber that holds a malignant ancestor, in Margaret Oliphant’s “The Secret Chamber”(1876); and the haunted room that refuses to remain shut, in J.H. Riddell’s “The Open Door” (1882). Rooms within hotels, such as those in Algernon Blackwood’s “A Case of Eavesdropping” (1906) and M.R. James’s “Number 13” (1904), manifest worries about the growing popularity of the hotel industry, and its new type of impersonal space, no longer shaped by the family unit. Lastly, the fear about home infiltration surfaces in tales that feature ineffective barriers, in the shape of the faulty windows in two M.R. James stories, “The Mezzotint” and “The Ash-Tree” (both published in 1904), and of a useless door, in Sheridan Le Fanu’s classic *Carmilla* (1872). In these stories and novella, atavistic creatures and even a vampire manage to infiltrate the most intimate of spaces in the household, the bedroom. As in the other analyses, I consider specific design elements of the house—in this case windows and doors—as well as spatial qualities of a particular room—the bedroom—in order to understand how the Gothic takes advantage of the home’s topography and magnifies it in order to intensify its eerie effect.

After discussing characters’ voyage through the liminal passages of the home, and into secretive, hermetic rooms, we then step outside of the home, and into the grounds of the haunted house. My sixth and last chapter, “Exploring Surrounding Space: The Grounds around the Haunted House,” addresses this external yet integral part of the Victorian home which is clearly present in the haunted house of fiction. This chapter shows that space enveloping the Victorian home is haunted first, because it is a continuation of the home, featuring the same social anxieties that result in spatial

qualities that support this condition, and second, because the grounds are a liminal area, acting as a barrier between the impervious home and the dangerous outside. Furthermore, the relative inefficacy of this border because of its low walls or hedges, turn it into a prime area for haunting. I examine the grounds featured in Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Margaret Oliphant's "Earthbound" (1880), concentrating on the outer reaches of the garden, composed by shrubbery and walks leading dangerously away from the home, arguing that they function as ideal stages for covert and illicit activity. My analysis of M.R. James's story "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," (1911) does not take into consideration a specific area of the grounds; rather, it concentrates on a type of garden aesthetic—the formal garden—as a figurative setting that mirrors an equally formalistic and moralistic way of life and home. Horror in this story emerges from this excessive insistence on formality, but also from the presence of darker forces that ultimately challenge the sustainability of such a rigid lifestyle. In my final analysis, I look at how the gardens portrayed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) are haunted by fin de siècle preoccupations. I present a study of the evolution of the garden in this work, beginning with an Edenic setting that soon develops into a much darker locale, with the capacity to enter and tarnish the home, thus mirroring Dorian's corruption. I also consider diverse garden subtexts that shape the grounds of this novella, placing special emphasis on the Arts and Crafts garden, a style that, like Wilde's work, straddled the late Victorian period and the beginning of a new era, thus conveying worries about an imminent modernity and the breakdown of established borders. In fact modern architecture, represented by the disintegration of physical barriers in fin de siècle works, and announced in a prophetic and eerie way by the aforementioned Crystal Palace, would come to be known precisely for this disregard for borders and compartmentalization.



Chapter One

Containing Haunted Space: The Haunted House

Haunting cannot take place without the possibility of its internal eruption and interruption within and as a condition of a familiar, everyday place and space. By the same token, there is no space or place which is not available for the event of haunting.

Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings*

This chapter considers some of the principal notions behind the concept of haunting as well as the repercussions of this condition on space. Furthermore, this analysis looks closely at domestic spectrality, by acknowledging the seminal and intimate work on the home by Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958), as well as contemporary architectural and phenomenological analyses. The latter are clearly influenced by Bachelard's legacy, but at the same time, they provide new angles of study based on technical and architectural knowledge, thus resulting, in a sense, in a new poetics of the home. Having established the home's potential for haunting, this chapter will then introduce the notion of seduction into the spectral home scenario and put forward two ideas: first, that some buildings are capable of appealing strongly to the senses and to desire; and second, that the domestic sphere, as an intimate nucleus of the family, is one of these highly seductive spaces, and that under this light, the haunted house of fiction cannot be seen as merely frightening or repellent. Lastly, I will mention how Gothic studies and its critics have recently approached the issue of the spectral household, in order to establish how my proposal will follow or differ from their studies.

I would like to begin the discussion on haunting by tracing the essence of the condition through a close look at the terms “to haunt” and “haunting.” The first characteristic that both notions share is that of repetition or regular visitation. “Haunting,” for instance, is defined as “b. customary resort; frequenting” (O.E.D.) and “to haunt” is “3. to resort to frequently or habitually”(O.E.D.). The second common denominator between the two is that of place. “To haunt” is defined as “to frequent or be much about (a place) and “haunting,” in the definition above is described in terms of “frequenting,” a constant visit to a site. These descriptions, then, call for a location for this kind of event *to take place in*; without a place or space, haunting would simply be impossible. A third concept that I would like to mention is that of the entities who/which do the appearing. Dictionary entries offer numerous possibilities for that which frequents or haunts a place. For example, “haunting” is the “visitation by fears, suspicions, imaginary beings, spirits, etc.” (O.E.D.), while “haunt” presents even more candidates for these eerie visits: “transf. and fig. Of unseen or immaterial visitants. a. of disease, memories, cares, feelings, thoughts” (O.E.D.). The last phrase is especially intriguing, since it opens up the possibilities for haunting; at the same time, most haunting agents share the quality of being “unseen,” thus augmenting the anxiety surrounding this condition. The last issue deriving from these entries, and which I believe to be valuable for my analysis deals with the notion of how haunting affects the characters that experience it. One of the explanations for “to haunt” is the presence “of imaginary or spiritual beings, ghosts, etc.” who “visit frequently and habitually; with manifestations of their influence and presence, usually of a molesting kind” (O.E.D.). Whoever or whatever is doing the haunting, then, has an *effect* on people or characters. One of the main objectives of my study is to evaluate how haunted space affects or influences characters who move through it.

The analysis of these definitions sheds light on my work. I will be considering the role of the haunted house in fiction and I have chosen to do so mainly through the lens of spatial analysis. I will see how a place can be haunted by considering notions of visitation, thus of compulsive return –in the case of public, but mostly domestic spaces. The meanings considered also allow me to include numerous entities that are capable of haunting a space, ranging from memories, to cultural anxieties, to supernatural ghosts present in fiction. For instance, in the public space which I have chosen to analyze, (the Crystal Palace), I will consider Victorian fears arising from intense industrial competition; in the domestic space that I have selected (the middle-class Victorian home), some of the entities doing the haunting take the shape of extreme notions of privacy and anxieties about disease. Furthermore, while examining literature of the time, I will consider how Gothic fiction interprets its fictional ghosts that frequent the haunted house. My analysis, offering spatial tours of haunted spaces, takes the greatest advantage of this notion, which insists that the spectral demands a place or space in which literally, to take place.

Jacques Derrida and psychoanalysts Torok and Abraham are the established theorists behind the notion of haunting and the spectral. Let us begin with Jacques Derrida. *Specters de Marx* (1993) concentrates Derrida's notions of haunting. In it, he proposes that deconstruction is a radical derivative of Marx's legacy. Here, he proposes *hantologie* (*hauntology* in English), a term which plays against *ontology* (study of being). Instead of focusing on the study of being, Derrida proposes the study of the ghost, as that which hovers between life and death, absence and presence. This figure enables Derrida to question the veracity or solidity of a present, which, for him, is plagued by uncertainties that ultimately betray our belief in an unquestionable reality. Hauntology appeals to deconstructive critics because it connects similar themes (haunting, ghosts, the supernatural) to processes of destabilization that are present in texts and literature in general. My study benefits directly from hauntology in that the latter claims that ghost stories are "the mediation in fiction of the encrypted, unspeakable secrets of

past generations” (Colin Davis). Hauntology, then, offers a way to approach literature, especially Gothic fiction, by suggesting that texts are conductors of past secrets that keep frequenting the present. In my case, this resurfacing of information enables a modern reader to get a glimpse of some of the anxieties and fears that pursued the Victorian middle class; these recurrent worries can be interpreted as generating the haunted aspect of the house in Gothic literature. My study does differ from one of the major tenets of Derridian hauntology –the notion that the ghostly does not depend on a location. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Preen note “Derrida’s insistence on haunting as a temporal, rather than spatial, phenomenon, where the ghost is not tied down to an idea of physical location” (xi). Contrary to this last assertion, my study not only approaches haunting from the angle of space, but sees the latter as an inbuilt quality of haunting, and as such, one that cannot be dismissed and substituted entirely by issues of temporality.

I would like to look closely at two other aspects of hauntology which are particularly relevant to my study. The first one is Derrida’s notion of the *specter*. For him, the specter is a deconstructive figure that upsets certainties by its ambivalent nature: the specter is neither dead nor alive, present or absent. According to Derrida, the specter must be spoken to or interrogated so that we can share in the dynamics of secrecy. This leads us to the second point, that of the secret. For Derrida, we should interrogate the ghost not so that it discloses a determinate content, rather to initiate a “productive opening of meaning” (Colin Davis). Furthermore, he associates this opening of meaning or dialogue with the ghost with literature in general; Derrida, then, favors an ongoing and complicit relationship with the ghost based on secrecy; however, I still argue that despite this suspended meaning, a text still manages to present elements from the past that can be disclosed by present readers. Thus, the haunted spaces that I will be considering are texts that tempt characters and modern readers to get involved in a tantalizing relationship that is derived from, on the one hand, wishing to unveil awful but appealing “truths,” and, on the other, wanting to preserve secrecy and an atmosphere of ongoing suspense.

Interestingly, Derrida's work on hauntology is in itself haunted by the ghosts of psychoanalysts Torok and Abraham, whom Derrida avoids mentioning yet who added so much to the notion, both theoretically and clinically.¹ In *L'Écorce et le noyau* [*The Shell and the Kernel*] (1978), Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham contribute to the field by proposing the concept of *transgenerational communication*. But in order to comprehend the concept, we must first turn to their definition of what they called, instead of Derrida's specter, a *phantom*. This figure is the presence of a deceased ancestor in the person's Ego, and it hinders the revelation of secrets from the past. Another way, in which the phantom differs from the specter, is that the former does not return from the dead to openly reveal a secret from the past; instead, the phantom is a liar, intent on confusing the listener so that the secret will remain buried. Abraham and Torok still believe that one should speak to the ghost in order to exorcise these shameful family secrets and eliminate the pernicious effects on the living. Unlike Derrida, who stresses secrecy as the goal of this communication with the specter, these theorists call for a definite disclosure of the family secret to put an end to the anxiety of the descendant who is carrying around this secret (even without fully realizing it). Abraham and Torok's work has been applied to therapeutic practice and the managing of trauma and family secrets. Besides their use in clinical applications, these notions have been adopted by literary critics who wish to explore issues of secrecy and ancestral curses; these topics, of course, abound in Gothic tales dealing with cursed family lines.²

Derrida's and Abraham and Torok's work on hauntology offers interesting tools with which to approach Victorian spaces and fiction. Their notions (of the specter and phantom) will enable me to consider the Victorian ghosts that haunted public,

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1. In *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), Nicholas Royle comments on the fact that Derrida does not mention Torok's and Abraham's work that would contribute so much to hauntology; Royle also identifies differences between Derrida's *specter* and the psychoanalysts' *phantom*.
 2. See "Sins of the Father" in Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996); "Haunted Houses I and II," in Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

private and fictitious space. Furthermore, the issue of secrecy ties in to the notion of privacy, which I will show to be a highly esteemed value for the Victorian middle class. I will show how, because privacy had become such a cultural fixation, secrecy and the tension resulting from it propels characters in literature to move in space in a certain way. Having established that these public and private spaces were, like the haunted house of fiction, ultimately haunted spaces, it is possible to consider how secrecy is dealt with within these spaces. I will show how the Crystal Palace created illusions that, like Abraham and Torok's phantoms, wished to deceive and keep ugly or inconvenient truths from surfacing. In the chapter dealing with the Victorian home, I will consider how architectural and symbolic characteristics of the house itself contributed to privacy and secrecy. Finally, in the most haunted of spaces, the haunted house of selected Gothic texts of the time, I will traverse space in order to see how characters are drawn and seduced in particular ways, depending on the area of the house (and type of space) which they are crossing. Derrida's, Abraham's and Torok's findings on haunting clearly contribute theoretical notions to my analysis of haunted space in Gothic fiction.

Phenomenology of Haunted Space

I have discussed how haunting, ghosts, and secrecy are significant issues to address while considering architectural and literary spaces. Now, I would like to delve into the concept of haunted space with the help of the field of phenomenology of architecture. This discipline might be best described as the joint effort of art-critics, architects and psychologists, specializing in the perception and effects of a built form on those who experience it. This preliminary description of the phenomenology of architecture will become clearer as this section progresses. I will discuss two specific topics that apply to my study and that have been addressed by the field in other occasions –*genius loci* and domestic haunted space.

The term *genius loci* comes from the Latin “genius of the place,” “genius” being “the tutelary and controlling spirit similarly connected with a place (O.E.D.). This concept gave rise to a prolific philosophic and artistic tradition which continues to this day, but the term itself dates back to a Roman belief claiming that every being (including people and places) had its guardian spirit, or genius, who would give them life, accompany them, and exert an influence over their character. Two works will help me to illustrate the notion of *genius loci* as well as other notions that are constantly evaluated by the phenomenology of architecture: Norberg-Schulz’s *Genius Loci* (1980) and Holgate’s more recent *Aesthetics of Built Form* (1992). Both authors claim that the phrase “spirit of place” is used for rural, unspoiled places, whereas “sense of place” is applied to domestic places. When considering rural or domestic places, Norberg-Schulz embarks on a lengthy discussion of the concept and its application to a place. He insists that the issue is of utmost importance for the study of culture and philosophy, since, as Martin Heidegger expressed in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” (1951), dwelling and being are undoubtedly connected.³ Moreover, “since ancient times the *genius loci*, or “spirit of the place” has been recognized as the concrete reality man has to face and come to terms with in his daily life” (Norberg-Schulz 5). He insists that man is surrounded by tangible phenomena (trees, monuments, etc.) as well as intangible ones, such as feelings, and that it is the role of the architect to visualize this essence that derives from all these elements in order to create a meaningful place.

Norberg-Schulz and Holgate also discuss some concepts that will prove useful in my own discussion of space: place, space and character. Phenomenological texts often omit a clear definition of these, but I wish to provide brief explanations for the

3. In this essay, Heidegger discusses the inextricable relationship between dwelling –*bauen*– and building –*wohnen*– by suggesting that these terms share the same root in old German; in turn, “build” and “dwell” in English come from this same German root. Because of this etymology, Heidegger argues that dwelling and building were originally seen as one and the same. For this reason, the author is resentful of architecture and proposes, instead, a return to this original relationship, where man’s needs and his manner of dwelling, and not a professional, determined the way in which a house was built.

terms, since I will be referring to them later on. Even though space and place are used as synonyms of each other, Norberg differentiates them: “Dwelling therefore implies something more than shelter. It implies that the spaces where life occurs are places, in the true sense of the word. A *place* is a *space* which has a distinct character” (Norberg-Schulz 5 emphasis added). Once again, it is inevitable to bring Heidegger into the discussion, because his ideas clearly influenced those of phenomenologists like Norberg-Schulz. For Heidegger, a place happened or was born out of people’s use of it. In other words, a place is a space that is special, determined by people’s experiences. Furthermore, place can be better understood in terms of nouns (house, barnyard), whereas space is usually discussed through the use of prepositions (above, under).

The other important term is character, and according to Norberg-Schulz, whereas ‘space’ refers to 3-dimensional organization of the elements that comprise a place, ‘character’ points to the general ‘atmosphere’ which is the most encompassing property of any place. Moreover, character is usually illustrated with adjectives (peaceful, barren). Holgate begins his discussion on atmosphere or character by stating two general points: that buildings have “character,” and that people’s reaction to them is both intellectual and emotional, and that one cannot separate the two. The author claims that one cannot argue against the fact that everyone experiences a reaction to the surrounding space: “The fact that we all in some degree experience feelings of claustrophobia and agoraphobia indicates the very real way in which architectural space may affect us [...] Such feelings are very often projected on to inanimate objects” (90). Furthermore, Holgate draws attention to the fact that, when moving from one space to another, these feelings also vary; in other words, in the progression of space within a building, people experience emotions which keep changing as they leave or enter different areas. The feelings that arise may be pleasant or unpleasant, depending on several factors. For instance, “features that impede movement, imagined or real, are liable to be seen as ugly. He thus considers that at the end of a long nave there should be an altar which provides directional impetus” (Scott qtd. in Holgate 91).

The issue of character is of special significance to my study because the main goal behind the spatial analysis of the haunted house is to see how *space* (and the domestic *place*) possess a certain *character* which exerts an influence on characters. Furthermore, character is the manifestation of a place's *genius loci*: "character is determined by how things are, and gives our investigation a basis in the concrete phenomena of our everyday life-world. Only in this way we may fully grasp the *genius loci*" (Norberg-Schulz 10,11). Appreciating the general atmosphere of the haunted house is a previous step before setting out to measure how it affects its visitors or inhabitants. Lastly, character suggests the issue of presence, something which fits perfectly with the notion of ghosts and haunted spaces: "Any real *presence* is intimately linked with character" (Norberg-Schulz 14 emphasis added).

Another section from Holgate's work that I would like to address has to do with feelings about physical security and structural stability. The author stresses the fact that "our need for security is a basic component of our psychological response to structures"(102) and that people unconsciously or consciously judge a structure's strength and stability when they walk into it. Since most observers are not structural engineers or architects, they judge the situation through their intuition and sometimes become anxious even when there is no real danger of a collapse. In fact, Holgate cites how some faux structural elements have had to be added to buildings just to provide observers with the illusion that the structure is stable. In my spatial tours of public, private and haunted spaces, I will explore how characters are faced with the illusion of a seemingly safe home but which in fact is rather fragile and unstable.

Place, space and character are useful terms when discussing symbolic space. So are the notions of stability and illusion. Despite their peculiarities, these terms are clearly intertwined and all work jointly, around the notion of *genius loci*. In turn, the concept of *genius loci* clarifies the relationship between being and locality: "It is common usage to say that acts and occurrences take place. In fact it is meaningless to imagine any happening without reference to a locality" (Norberg-Schulz 6). It would

be impossible to anchor being and happening without a sense of locality. My study centers on this sense of locality of an architectural place within a literary space. By focusing mainly on the middle-class domestic household as a unique *place* and as a haunted *space*, my analysis strives to grasp its *genius loci* in order to get a glimpse of aspects of Victorian culture that literally haunted the middle class.

Before Norberg-Schulz, a Victorian theorist –Vernon Lee– contributed immensely to the study of *genius loci* and to its presence in literature. Vernon Lee (pen name of Violet Paget) (1856-1935) was a prolific aesthetic and literary critic and author of short stories and travelogues. Like Norberg-Schulz, she named one of her works *Genius Loci* (1899). Even though it is a travel account, this text explores her fascination with experiencing the spirit of place of sites that she visited. Her Gothic fiction, such as the collection of short stories, *Hauntings* (1890), and several of her aesthetic treatises, also explore the presence of an atmosphere (and its ghosts) that envelop and affect characters. Some of her numerous treatises focus on the notion of genius, and its relation to the past and haunting. Lee’s essay “Puzzles of the Past” that appears in the collection *Hortus Vitae* (1904) examines the way in which, by experiencing a place’s *genius loci*, we fabricate and long for a nostalgic past. Lee stages her discussion with a visit to a run-down building. She tries to imagine elements that might have adorned this building, like portraits of great-grandparents “painted by Reynolds or Raeburn, delightful persons whose ghosts we would give anything to meet” (193). Memories of this imaginary past, or “ghosts,” as she calls them, are a tricky business, she admits: “their ghosts; aye, there’s the rub. For their ghosts would have altered with posthumous experience, would have had glimpses of the world we live in and somewhat conformed to its habits” (193). In other words, Lee’s ghosts may only remain as such if they stay in an imagined past and not reach out towards the present. Furthermore, these ghosts come from a past that we have fabricated: “It is not what we think of as the Past –what we discuss, describe, and so often passionately love– a mere creation of our own?” (193). They can be sensed and felt by grasping

the *genius loci* of a locality. Therefore, for Lee, this sense of place can be understood in terms of a nostalgia for an imaginary past. In my work, I argue that nostalgia can be a dangerous thing when invited into a home; unleashed within the home, nostalgia creates the perfect character, or atmosphere for haunting.

Bachelard's Haunted Home

Having developed the relationship between *genius loci* and haunted space, I will continue with the main emphasis of my study –domestic, haunted space. In order to prove the importance of domestic space for the phenomenology of architecture and for my study, I will rely on the work that has become a cornerstone in phenomenological studies, *La poétique de l'espace* (1958) [*The Poetics of Space*] by Gaston Bachelard. In the introduction of his work, Bachelard compares his task as a phenomenologist to that of an admirer of poetry; in both building and poetry, “we read images and these “take root in us” (xxiii). Bachelard explores this claim throughout the book, as he remembers and relives the memories of his childhood home, while insisting that we should all experience domestic space in this nostalgic and intimate way.

The possibility of a disturbed domicile is supported by several elements that arise in this melancholic tour of the home. The first is that of intimacy and shelter. Bachelard claims that the house “is body and soul. It is the human being’s first world. Before he is “cast into the world [...] man is laid in the cradle of the house” (7). Furthermore, the author equates this sense of being sheltered with a primal instinct that we still experience; this feeling of “well-being takes us back to the primitiveness of the refuge. Physically, the creature endowed with a sense of refuge, huddles up to itself, takes to cover, hides away, lives snug concealed” (91). This animal instinct that we retain in a place we call home, then, is inevitably haunted by an ancient desire to cover, hide and conceal, a fact that may easily relate to an *unheimlich* space, and in our case, a haunted house.

Another aspect of Bachelard's childhood home that triggers spectrality is the importance of dreams and the past. First of all, Bachelard points out how the home, apart from sheltering people in a basic, primitive sense, also shelters dreaming and dreamers: "the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace" (6). Furthermore, Bachelard connects dreaming and day-dreaming to remembrance in the following way: "In order to sense, across the years, our attachment for the house we were born in, dream is more powerful than thought. It is our unconscious that crystallizes our remotest memories" (16). As a phenomenologist, Bachelard uses the verb "to sense" (an attachment for the house), thus emphasising the role of the senses and perception in this intimate connection. He also favors dreams and the unconscious as opposed to rationality, as preferred conductors of memories. Because Bachelard stresses the significance of dreams and the past, one may safely view his house as a space inhabited by remnants of the unconscious and from another time, as a space populated by Derrida's specters or Abraham's and Torok's phantoms: "To inhabit oneirically the house we were born in means more than to inhabit it in memory; it means living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it" (16). Because of the filters of memory and dreams, inhabiting this house is inhabiting a "house that is gone," an enchanted space that exists but as something which is no more. Moreover, this magical space is easily transformed into a haunted one because of the urge to return to it. At this point, we might recall that one of the definitions of the verb "to haunt" presented terms such as "frequenting" or "customary resort." Bachelard mentions this return to the home as a significant issue: "For not only do we come back to it, but we dream of coming back to it, the way a bird comes back to its nest [...] This sign of *return* marks an infinite number of daydreams, for the reason that human returning takes place in the great rhythm that reaches back across the years, and, through the dream, combats all absence" (99). Once again, words like "dreams," "years" and, "absence" remind us that Bachelard's domestic space is haunted by a

returning visit to the past, by a desire to witness a presence that refuses to become an absence.

Bachelard's home also resembles the haunted spaces of my study because of the production of illusion. On the one hand, these spaces all present themselves as being safe and stable; on the other, a sense of unease arises from the realization that this stability is illusory and might crumble. Bachelard talks about the house being like a nest and says: "A nest –and this we understand right away– is a precarious thing, and yet it sets us to daydreaming and security" (102). In another section, he discusses another image, that of the "shell-house" as covered in enamel, as a real fortress. Like the nest-house and the shell-house, these public but mostly private spaces wish to be interpreted as sites of nurturing, as havens, but also as impenetrable fortresses. Like Bachelard's metaphoric houses and daydreams in general, the false sense of safety is, in reality, fragile. In later chapters, I will analyze how security is undermined by suspicions that the Victorian world was not as sheltering as it appeared to be. Both the Crystal Palace's impenetrable but fragile glass encasement and the impervious Victorian home could indeed be penetrated by unforeseen visitors. The last chapters will explore how these uninvited guests take numerous shapes and wander freely within the haunted house.

Apart from the idea of illusions and space, Bachelard's work brings up one more point that I would like to discuss. Experiencing intimate space is ultimately a bodily and passionate action: "But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway'" (Bachelard 14). This phrase is linked to the phenomenological notion of *Einfühlung* or empathy,⁴ which was ardently explored by the aforementioned

4. *Einfühlung* can be roughly translated from the German into the English as "feeling-in" or "feeling-into," but was coined as "empathy" by American psychologist Edward Titchener (1867-1927) in 1909 and popularised in aesthetic circles by Vernon Lee. Empathy might be partly defined as the identification of a person with an external object by reacting intellectually and physically to it, and ascribing to this object

critic, Vernon Lee and by theorists before her. But for now, I would like to comment on Bachelard's remark in regards to its relationship to haunting. His concept of our relationship with a home from the past highlights not only its intimate and indelible nature, but also its physical aspect. Domestic space haunts us because it is "physically inscribed in us;" as such, it is impossible to shed the need to keep returning to it, to keep inhabiting it; we have to inhabit in it *because home perpetually inhabits in us*. The physical experience is so engrained that we still have the reflex to "climb the first stairway." But this constant return is not wearisome, and cannot be reduced to "habit:" "The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies which do not forget, with an unforgettable house" (15). This "passionate liaison," then, brings us straight to the issue of attraction. Not only is Bachelard's domestic space haunted, it is also seductive: "There does not exist a real intimacy that is repellent. All the spaces of intimacy are designated by attraction" (12). I argue that, like Bachelard's notion of home, the haunted spaces that I will explore, especially the haunted house, seduces. Many literary studies have centered on fear and terror/horror as the main emotions that characters experience in these haunted houses.⁵ I do not rule out the

feelings or attitudes present in oneself. This concept develops from a long philosophical tradition, including Immanuel Kant's contributions that questioned the nature of beauty and offered the conclusion that pure beauty was the beauty of form. The term "form," however, was interpreted in several ways, but there was a particular path that would lead to the concept of empathy: form as the vehicle for the expression of emotion and feeling. Apart from its relationship to Kantian philosophy, *Einfühlung* was more closely related to the nineteenth-century German tradition of the symbolism of form, or *Formsymbolik*. The symbolism of form was a branch of study analyzing the meaning derived from certain forms, a concept which would culminate in the twentieth-century notion of the archetypes (universal symbols) in the mythological and anthropological fields. According to architect and critic Harry Mallgrave, "symbolization and its sometimes elusive doppelgänger—*Einfühlung*, or "empathy," were the twin poles of this new direction" (17); this "new direction" meant the tendency to consider the role of subjective feeling in how form was perceived. The concept of empathy is still widely discussed by architectural phenomenologists and scholars concerned with aesthetics, and is an interesting theoretical tool that can be readily applied to haunted space; unfortunately, it falls outside the scope of this study.

5. The seminal work on the topic of fear, terror and horror is, of course, Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973). In Terry Heller, *The Delights of Terror: An Aesthetics of the Tale of Terror* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), the author does discuss the pleasures derived from reading tales of terror, but she does so through a reader-response and psychoanalytic perspective, and not through a spatial one that I propose.

significance of these feelings in that context, but instead, I propose that the main force that compels characters to enter and travel through the haunted house is seduction. Despite fear (or perhaps because of it) characters are drawn to explore this space, and to experience the tension that arises from the dynamics of secrecy and the promise of unveiling awful but desirable “truths.”

The impact of Bachelard’s notions can be waged by simply browsing through bibliographies of phenomenological and architectural analyses of the house. A contemporary critic that has built upon Bachelard’s poetic treatise on the home is Anthony Vidler. He has contributed to the study of phenomenology and hauntology in works like “The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime” (1987) and *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992). Even though I have chosen not to approach space in Gothic fiction from the main perspective of the *unheimlich*, Vidler’s work coincides with my analysis because it privileges the haunted house as a site of haunting, and it considers the way in which it appears mostly in Romantic literature: “The house provided an especially favored locus for uncanny disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits” (*Assemblage* 7). Vidler mentions Bachelard’s notions of nostalgia and Freud’s concept of the *unheimlich* as the main tools in his detailed examination of the house. However, he does not stray from the conventional view of the haunted house as just being *heimlich/unheimlich*. What I am proposing is that the haunted house, apart from being *unheimlich*, is mostly a seductive space. Despite (or because) of being frightening, the haunted house appeals, and it does so because of its architectural, spatial and symbolic qualities. My analysis of the haunted house differs from Vidler’s work mainly because of his claim that “no special effects of design can be guaranteed to provoke an uncanny feeling [...] the buildings that have acted as the sites for uncanny experiences have been invested with recognizable characteristics” (*The Architecture of the Uncanny* 11). I believe that a certain architecture can actually be uncanny or

seductive because of unique effects of design. Along the same lines, Vidler believes that “there is no such thing as an uncanny architecture, but simply architecture that, from time to time and for different purposes, is invested with uncanny qualities” (*The Architecture of the Uncanny* 12). Chapter Three of this thesis runs contrary to this argument and explores how architectural and symbolic characteristics of the Victorian home *do* create a haunted space; the house is not merely invested (by observers) with qualities which make it haunted, or as Vidler would say, uncanny; its architectural essence generates this spectral character.

Experiencing Sensuous Architecture

Phenomenology of architecture has always addressed the issue of the sensuality of space in one way or another. Sensuality is the next logical step in the discussion about senses and perception, and about the relationship between the human body and the architectural one. In this section I will comment on how sensory perception and spatial empathy may explain how characters react towards haunted space and how this experience is ultimately an intimate, thus sensual one. Furthermore, I will argue that the notion that haunted space is seductive can be successfully applied to Gothic fiction by considering three topics that architectural theory often addresses –the role of darkness, architecture as a link with the past, and movement throughout space.

For this section, I have chosen to concentrate on topics offered by Christian Thomsen in *Sensuous Architecture: The Art of Erotic Building* (1998) and Juhani Pallasmaa in *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (2005). Thomsen insists that it is possible to explore the sensuality and erotic qualities of architecture, as long as the latter is “an architecture of the senses.” The author explores sensual spaces of the past, addressing residences in Europe, the torture chambers of the Marquis de Sade, and erotic components of bathrooms, towers and grottoes, among others. He celebrates an architecture capable of satisfying all senses, and one that is not limited to scientific or mathematical calculations. His enthusiasm culminates with a “Manifesto

of Erotic Architecture,” which provides some intriguing quotations. In the other work, *The Eyes of the Skin* (2005), architect and architectural theorist Juhani Pallasma claims that most contemporary architecture illustrates a poverty of the senses because of modern favoritism of sight over equally important elements such as touch, taste, smell, and hearing. The author denounces this ocularcentric tendency, which, in the western world, can be traced back to the Greeks; instead, Pallasma proposes an architecture resulting from a close relationship between architects and their context, where the body and its responses are considered, and where all of the senses are respected. This acknowledgement of the senses, Pallasma suggests, will inevitably result in an intimate experience capable of overcoming the uneasy feeling of detachment that is all too common in contemporary architecture and culture in general. Both of these works’ celebration of a sensory and sensual architecture contribute enormously to my project by demonstrating how the relationship between haunted space and characters cannot be reduced to the terrorific, and how it must embrace the seductive and erotic qualities of architecture.

Both Thomsen and Pallasmaa are very clear to indicate the need for architecture to acknowledge all senses, not just sight. Pallasmaa states: “In this essay I proclaim a sensory architecture in opposition to the prevailing visual understanding of the art of building” (Pallasmaa 39), while Thomsen claims that the arguments presented in his book are meant to “encourage architects to find their way back to a language of the senses” (7). Moreover, for both scholars, the link between the senses, perception and sensuality is the body. Thomsen expresses this idea in the following quotation: “It is through the senses, the long-range senses of seeing and hearing, and the close-up senses of smell, touch, and taste, but also skin-sensation, pain and pleasure, that the human body perceives and experiences the world. The brain processes sensual experience and then encodes it intellectually and emotionally” (7). Pallasmaa seconds this opinion, claiming that “every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory, qualities of

space, matter and scale are measured equally by eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle” (41).

It is clear that the body processes the information of the surroundings gathered by all senses. But there is yet another link between senses, the body and sensuality. The connection lies in the fact that both human beings and the architectural structure have bodies of their own and it is through these that they are able to interact with each other: “the body constitutes the interface between people and architecture. It is not for nothing that since time immemorial we have referred to the ‘build’ of a body and the ‘body’ of a building” (7). In a similar manner, Pallasmaa claims that “there is no body separate from its domicile in space, and there is no space unrelated to the unconscious image of the perceiving self” (40). Therefore, Thomsen, Pallasmaa and numerous phenomenologists recognize both the anthropomorphic quality of architecture and the close relationship between the bodies of space and of the human beings that experience it.

But how exactly are these bodies attracted to one another? Thomsen suggests that people feel an impulse to reach out towards the surrounding bodies: “Eroticism allows us to extend all our sensual feelers, as it were, and the same is true of the interplay of attraction *between bodies of architecture and human bodies*” (Thomsen 7 emphasis added). This attraction might also be understood in terms of intimacy and domesticity, as in the following remarks by Pallasmaa: “There is a strong identity between naked skin and the sensation of home. The experience of home is essentially an experience of intimate warmth” (58). This idea about the private warmth experienced at home mirrors Bachelard’s nostalgic treatment of the home. Whether the attraction between the human and architectural bodies is approached from the angle of eroticism, or whether it is dealt with in terms of domestic intimacy, one thing is clear –the fact that both spaces and people possess bodies, automatically enables them to participate in the dynamics of attraction.

Throughout my study, I will pay close attention to how this spatial and human attraction functions. Furthermore, in the chapters dealing with the haunted house in

fiction, I will apply these phenomenological notions in order to see how this intimacy between space and characters takes place in a Gothic context. The theoretical notions that I believe to be especially relevant to the haunted house are: the role of darkness; space as a link to the past; and the characters' movement through space. According to Pallasmaa: "Deep shadows and darkness are essential, because they dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous, and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy [...] The imagination and daydreaming are stimulated by dim light and shadow" (46). Like Bachelard before him, Pallasmaa invokes the power of dreams within the home; most important, though, is the fact that because this dark space favors the unconscious and the oneiric, "tactile fantasy" and other sensual elements are allowed in. Thomsen discusses the sensual role of darkness in certain houses, (specifically those in Provence and Tuscany): "because from out of their darkened interiors they issue vague promises, full of secrets" (11). Even though darkness is not a main topic that I will be addressing, one cannot avoid seeing how it is a necessary element of the Gothic haunted house. Furthermore, I am more interested in how the haunted house is seductive because of what Pallasmaa calls interiors that "issue vague promises" and that are "full of secrets."

The other issue that deserves to be covered when talking about sensuality and haunted space is the pleasure derived from a link with the past. I have carefully examined the issue of the past previously, in the section dealing with Bachelard and Lee, for the most part. I have not addressed it in relation to sensuality, however. In a highly provocative image, Pallasmaa examines how the home is invested with sensual properties because of the transmission of the past to its current inhabitants:

The surface of an old object, polished to perfection by the tool of the craftsman and the assiduous hands of its users, seduces the stroking of the hand. It is pleasurable to press a door handle shining from the thousands of hands that have entered the door before us [...] The door handle is the handshake of the building. The tactile sense connects us with time and tradition: through impressions of touch we shake the hands of countless generations. (56)

Pallasmaa's remarks recreate Lee's when she discussed how, upon entering an old building, we were immediately tempted to recreate a past complete with ghostly ancestors. But what is particularly interesting about Pallasmaa's words is his inclusion of pleasure in this action of remembrance.

The last issue related to sensual or erotic space is the way in which people move through this pleasurable space. The field of architecture in general (not just phenomenology of architecture) has always been concerned with issues of spatial flow and the way in which people are directed while moving within a structure. The relationship between visitor/inhabitant and the structure is neither a passive nor static one:

There is an inherent suggestion of action in images of architecture, the moment of active encounter, or a 'promise of function' [...] As a consequence of this implied action, a bodily reaction is an inseparable aspect of the experience of architecture. A building is encountered, it is approached, confronted, related to one's body, moved through, utilized as a condition for other things. Architecture initiates, directs and organizes behaviour and movement. (Pallasmaa 63)

These last remarks show us how one cannot approach the study of a space as a matter of stasis; one must always evaluate how a given structure generates reactions in people and how it propels them in space. One of the main arguments that I will present in the chapters dedicated to Gothic fiction is that characters move differently and experience varying sensations depending on the area of the house which they are exploring; this is the reason for "dissecting" the house into different areas and chapters. The "Erotic Manifesto" provided in Thomsen's book contains quotations that can be directly applied to my study of spatial flow and movement within the haunted house:

Erotic architecture plays with surfaces, layers, materials, with visual stimuli, symbols and the functions of sexual attraction between bodies, skin, surfaces and interiors. Its playfulness is expressed in a contradictory interplay of veiling and unveiling, of covering up and opening out, of luring in and fending off, of exterior and interior. (13)

I believe that the kind of tension that Thomsen and other critics assign to sensual or erotic space may be applied to haunted space. I am particularly interested in this game of "veiling and unveiling," of "luring and fending off." I argue that this issue

is extremely useful when approaching the way in which characters move through the haunted house. In the following quote, also from this manifesto, the game played by erotic architecture has the following characteristics: “It rouses cravings and satisfies desires. It prefers states of suspense and protraction to the direct fulfillment of a function” (13). This last quotation fits perfectly with the issue of haunting that I addressed initially. In my study I will prove how haunted space and seductive space can be one and the same, and how they coalesce into the ideal scenarios for haunting: the Crystal Palace, the Victorian middle-class household and, of course, the haunted house of Gothic literature.

Domestic Spectrality and Gothic Studies

Recent Gothic theorists have manifested a keen interest in the features and role of the haunted house in fiction. It is worth noting how these critics build upon phenomenological and psychoanalytic notions similar to the ones discussed previously, and how they propose original angles of study. The objective is to provide a sketch of domestic haunting from the perspective of recent (last twenty years) Gothic theory, which will later facilitate an approach to the haunted house in Gothic texts.

Even though Barry Curtis’s compelling analysis, *Dark Places: The Haunted House in Film* (2008), favors the visual and not the literary text, it offers numerous ideas that are extremely relevant to my study, because of its emphasis on the spatial and on movement throughout haunted space. For instance, like the phenomenologists that I have discussed, Curtis insists on the inseparable relationship between haunting and space: “‘Haunting’ has always been associated with place and it mobilizes the distinction between place and space by introducing unregulated and irrational spatial supplements” (13). The idea about unregulated supplements is especially intriguing, and it coincides with my study in that I address the peculiar aspects about a home in fiction that function as symptoms of haunting. Julian Wolfreys is another theorist

that maintains the insoluble link between haunting and space. In *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (2002), several Victorian texts are studied from the haunted, Gothic perspective. In the introduction, Wolfreys emphasizes the link between the domestic and haunting. In the following quote, he even claims that the most effective haunting takes place in a home:

The spectral effect thus needs structure, within which its efficacy assumes maximum disruption. The act of haunting is effective because it displaces us in those places where we feel most secure, most notably in our homes, in the domestic scene. Indeed, haunting is nothing other than the destabilization of the domestic scene, as the place where we apparently confirm our identity, our sense of being, where we feel most at home with ourselves. (Wolfreys 5)

I am interested in the connection between being and domesticity that Wolfreys, like Norberg-Schulz, and Heidegger before him, have discussed. I will address the “destabilization of the domestic scene” by examining Gothic fiction, which I consider a privileged site of disturbance. Also, in his introduction, Wolfreys insists on the need of locality in order for haunting to take place: “the phantom or the spectral is not alien to the familiar space, even if it is other, but is as much at home within the architectural space as we are” (7). Adopting this notion, I will inspect architectural space as a familiar, thus spectral dimension.

Together with an appreciation for spectral domesticity, Gothic theorists often refer to the rich and intense rapport between the haunted home and its occupants. Robert Mighall, for instance, provides a compelling image that encapsulates the relationship between characters and home in Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*: “if buildings can ‘ooze’ with human memories it is only fair that long-dwelling inhabitants should acquire architectural maladies” (86). This symbiotic relationship between occupant and dwelling heralds the presence of seduction within the home, also addressed by architectural theorists that I have mentioned, and a key element in my study. Curtis, for example, picks up on the enthralling pull that the haunted house exhibits in film: “it is often its anthropomorphism and idiosyncrasy, that tempts its new owners or investigators up the drive, or path, to its door. There is a conspiracy between

the grandeur and narrative complexity of the house and the aspirational susceptibilities of those who are attracted to it” (32). In this scenario of complicity, the house exerts its irresistible pull on the visitors, but these in turn seem to receive something in return, at the very least, the need to be desired and summoned into an enticing interior. Furthermore, Wolfreys takes this idea a little further and proposes that the promise of a revelation is what makes the journey through a haunted home titillating: “the very promise of revelation is in itself seductive; it speaks to a desire, and recognizes in its articulation the movement of that desire in search of the secret terror” (xiv-xv). My study also sees seduction as a key ingredient in the haunted-house formula, and one that can only be comprehended after addressing the powerful connection between the home portrayed and the characters that move within it. Adopting the notion that the home and its inhabitants mirror and absorb each other’s maladies, later I address the features of the middle class Victorian home that embody its occupants’ anxieties, and the way in which these individuals are possessed by the home’s diseased architecture.

There is a strong tendency in Gothic studies involved with the haunted-home trope to locate this literary phenomenon in time, specifically within the nineteenth century. In *Gothic* (1996), Fred Botting mentions the shift in locale from the classical, eighteenth-century fiction to the nineteenth-century “homely Gothic:”

A major shift as in North American, was evident in the domestication of Gothic styles and devices within realistic settings and modes of writing. The architectural and feudal background, the wild landscapes, the aristocratic villains and sentimental heroines, were no longer, in a thoroughly bourgeois culture, objects of terror. Domestic, industrial and urban contexts and aberrant individuals provided the loci for mystery and terror. (123)

Curiously, because the haunted home itself inhabits within the nineteenth century so comfortably, some analyses, like Curtis’s, note the spectrality of this timeframe and its ability to possess renditions of the home: “the *mise en scène* of the haunted house film is overwhelmingly possessed by the spirit of the nineteenth century. Theorists have suggested that a shift of emphasis between the visual and the other senses took place at that time” (Curtis 25). But this engaging explanation about the conjunction

between the nineteenth century and the rise of film and new ways of employing senses, coincides with, but does not address the haunted home's overwhelming presence in literature. Several theorists ascribe this to a combination of social-historical factors that turned the spectral home into the protagonist of Gothic fiction. One of the contributing elements that is most widely discussed is the rise of domesticity; critics have noted how the highly regulated environment fostered by this notion generated anxieties that became manifest in fiction: "Victorian Gothic is marked primarily by the domestication of Gothic figures, spaces and themes: horrors became explicitly located within the world of the contemporary reader" (Byron, Punter 26).

Another factor that is often addressed, although not in direct relation to the haunted-house trope, is the emergence of spiritualism. I would like to argue that spiritualism did not stimulate the presence of the haunted home in literature merely because of its belief in the supernatural or in real-life hauntings; rather, what spiritualism principally did was to underline the connection between the domestic and haunting, because of its home-centered activities, such as table-rapping and séances. One could say that spiritualism brought haunting home, both in real life and in literature, displacing the sites that eighteenth-century Gothic fiction had favored, such as medieval and religious structures. One of the consequences of this is that the home and its objects, especially those employed in a séance, could embody and suffer from this condition: "ghosts became closely associated with the animation of tables, chairs and cabinets" (Curtis 97). Another way in which spiritualism was to blame for the rise of the spectral home in fiction was through its adoption by the middle class and by women. As I will discuss in the next chapters, both of these groups were central in the development of nineteenth-century domesticity, and their involvement in spiritualism would certainly have an effect on the literature of the time and its haunted domesticity. In *The Table-Rappers* (2004), Ronald Pearsall explains that when the American spiritualist Mrs. Hayden first brought spiritualism to Britain in 1852, "the middle classes took her to their hearts [...]. Initially, spiritualism was a parlour pastime" (Pearsall 29 2004 ed.). Not only were the

middle classes involved. Now the person in charge of the household –the wife and mother– took a special interest in spiritualism, allowing it to infiltrate her sacrosanct home and become a “parlour pastime.” In an engaging article “Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the nineteenth-century Specter,” Jennifer Bann argues that because spiritualism and the ghost story emerged simulatenously, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the movement’s belief in a powerful ghost capable of displaying agency shaped the portrayal of apparitions (and their active hands) in fiction. Bann compares the formerly passive and limited ghosts from stories written during the 1840s, such as *A Christmas Carol* (1843), to assertive ones in tales of the 1880s, like Riddell’s “Old Mrs. Jones” (1882). Bann ascribes this shift in the nature of ghosts to the spiritual movement’s emphasis on fully materialized and active apparitions, capable of floating around and moving objects while the sitters sit down holding hands, at the mercy of the spirits’ antics. What I would like to address in regards to spiritualism and Gothic fiction at the time is their mutual concern for domesticity, and their consequent role in formulating the *unheimlich* home; after all, as Bann notes in her article, “in contrast to its otherwordly teachings, spiritualism began in suburbia” (665).

While some theorists are interested in locating the haunted house in time, and in noting its thriving existence during the nineteenth century, others focus on locating it in space. In *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999), Robert Mighall examines the places and spaces of Gothic Fiction, from a historicist perspective: “the principal aim of this study is to offer an historicist alternative to the psychological, ontological, and ‘symbolic’ approaches which dominate criticism of the Gothic” (xix). In my study, a historicist approach works alongside spatial analysis and theory, in order to address design as well as socio-historical features of the middle-class Victorian home. Mighall’s “geography” of fiction explores diverse categories of spaces created by the Gothic. In “Mapping Gothic London,” for instance, he examines the emergence of an urban Gothic, nurtured by the rookeries and labyrinthine streets of London. In

Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle (2004), Andrew Smith discusses what he terms the “urban jungle,” from the perspective of anxiety about degeneracy. In one of his chapters, he inspects “how London appears as a gendered space in the work of male authors”(11), such as De Quincey, Wilkie Collins and Dickens. Moreover, in the recently published *Haunting in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2010), Rosario Arias’s “Haunted Places, Haunted Spaces: The Spectral Return of Victorian London in Neo-Victorian Fiction,” argues how the nineteenth-century portrayal of London, haunted by the discourse of hygiene and sanitation, as well as by the sinister portrayal of the Thames, has a ghostly presence in some examples of neo-Victorian fiction. Like Mighall, Smith and Arias, several other scholars have focused on how Victorian haunted space surfaces in the topography of the city.

Other critics that have mapped the Gothic in literature and in Victorian society have focused on “domestic Gothic” and even “suburban Gothic,” which are topics more akin to my project. Glennis Byron and David Punter note the “domestication of the Gothic,” which was “partly the result of its appropriation by the sensation novel [...] sensation fiction focuses on the bourgeois world and is characteristically preoccupied with domestic crime and disorder” (26). These critics propose that, in addition to the emergence and popularity of sensation novels after the 1860s, the Gothic is domesticated in equal measure by the ghost story, since “Victorian ghost stories typically centre on the irruption of the supernatural into the familiar [...] the mundane everyday world” (27). Furthermore, in “The Ghost Story,” Julia Briggs highlights the architectural residence of Victorian Gothic fiction by noting this style’s predilection for portraying family life:

from the outset, Gothic writing had displayed a marked tendency to represent the family as a source of danger, even as a model of false consciousness [...] characteristic Gothic fictions represented the family, not merely as failing its individual members, but as a source of dangerously secrets, even of literal skeletons in the cupboard. (127)

While addressing the domestic and family-centered Gothic, some scholars turn their attention to the issue of the ancestral curse and its move away from castles, as in

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and into a more modern (yet equally troubled) home, as in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) or Dickens's *Bleak House* (1854). In other words, Gothic critics often remark how Victorian Gothic fiction, while clearly favoring the domestic as a stage for the supernatural, often employs Gothic tropes that recur from earlier works, thus proving this mode's disregard for temporal and other sorts of boundaries. In Chapter 5 I will explore the topic of family secrecy and its repressive and oppressive presence in the homes of fiction, while referring to works that depict enigmatic rooms. Nevertheless, instead of discussing the topic of the sins of the father revisiting and cursing a home and its ghostly potential, I focus instead on the spatial aspects about these homes that foster an ideal haunted situation. In her recently published "Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and American Haunted House Narratives" (2010), Christine Wilson similarly addresses the topic of space as being key in deciphering the haunted house. Even though Wilson examines contemporary American literature and discusses its connection to environmental issues, like my study, she not only addresses space, but also the intricate relationship between the disturbed house and its inhabitants, through the notion of place attachment and its sinister companion –possession.

In the following chapters I will acknowledge and at times modify or entirely contest some of the notions that Gothic scholars have contributed towards the rendering of spectral space, particularly the haunted home, in order to argue that the latter is shaped by socio-historical factors and in equal measure, by its organic, architectural self; furthermore, my study maintains not only that the home's design is shaped by cultural forces but that the house's architecture has the power to shape and influence its inhabitants' lives, in life as well as in fiction.



Chapter Two

Surveying Public Space: The Crystal Palace

Much has been written on the birth and growth of the event that has become an icon of the Victorian era, the Great Exhibition of 1851. Numerous authors have meticulously recorded information about the main players in the committees that founded it, on Prince Albert's key role, on Henry Cole as its astute publicist, and on Joseph Paxton's heroic status, as the self-made man and designer of the building for the exhibition. The main objective of this chapter, however, is not to retell well-known facts about the event and to present statistics on ticket sales, numbers of visitors or exhibits; rather, my focus is on the building itself—the Crystal Palace—and its identity as a space rich for interpretation. In particular, I will explore the function of the exhibition as spatial spectacle, capable of doing two things: engaging with its visitors in such a way as to create sensations of awe and wonder; masking cultural and social anxieties under a veneer of spatial and discursive “transparency.” I argue that both of these spatial accomplishments invest the Crystal Palace with a sense of the “architectural uncanny,” discussed in the previous chapter; if one looks under the illusory and fairy-like surface of the event and the building itself, one stumbles across elements that were meant to remain hidden from the Victorian public, but that inevitably surfaced then—to a certain extent—and now, through this particular analysis. The aim of this discussion in the general context of the thesis is to analyze how a public space can be as equally disturbed as the haunted house that will be discussed later; nevertheless, due to an essential difference between the public and the private in both structures, it is impossible to address haunting in the same way. The objective, however, is to pave

the way for the later discussion of the haunted house, mostly by providing a social and historical context that will frame the middle-class home and its relevance in Victorian times, as well as its consequent appearance in Gothic fiction.

In order to prove the Crystal Palace's capacity to produce illusions and gratify sensations, I will consider its physical and symbolic aspects, including: the link of the building's design to hothouses, issues related to transparency, the significance of the use of iron in the structure, as well as the distinct feelings experienced by the visitors due to the fairy-like quality of the building, and the diffuse border between the interior and exterior. Furthermore, I will address the issue of how this edifice's capacity to generate illusions led to stirring the emotions of its viewers, inevitably leading to desire and seduction. I argue that the Crystal Palace is one of the most influential buildings of its day not only because of its innovative design but primarily because of its ability to produce intense sensations in its past visitors and contemporary critics, who are still enthralled by its fantastical and ghostly presence.

To begin our discussion about this edifice, we must first consider a basic notion—the Crystal Palace is a textual building or a built text. The Crystal Palace is what Heidegger and other phenomenologists would call a *place*, since it is a space that has a distinct character, and one that is determined and marked by people's experiences. Because of the magnitude of the event that it hosted and its influence on Victorian culture, the Crystal Palace retains a symbolic charge that survives in spectral fashion today. This symbolic site can be approached through the issue of production and perception of sensations. Despite the abundance of theorists dealing with the concept of spatial analysis, I have chosen to focus on the findings of two critics: Richard Lucae, a nineteenth-century architect and academic, who was one of the first to consider the sensations generated in vast spaces, and Michel Foucault, who, as well as writing extensively on various philosophical and social themes, delved into issues of space.

In 1869, Richard Lucae, a Berlin architect and later an important academic, delivered a lecture entitled “On the Meaning and Power of Space in Architecture”¹ which would mark the beginning of a modern discussion of the psychological effects of vast structures that were appearing throughout Europe. In this lecture, he described the sensations that he felt when visiting large train stations, classical buildings, and the Sydenham Crystal Palace.² One of the topics that Lucae addressed in his lecture was that of, what I would call, the architectural sublime (he does not use the term). Both Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke and other philosophers had thoroughly discussed the concept of the sublime during the eighteenth century,³ and had focused their discussion on people’s responses to this feeling (whether it be in the presence of something beautiful or fearsome). However, their discussions privileged examples of the sublime in nature,⁴ with some references to buildings, especially cathedrals. Richard Lucae employed the concept of the sublime but in order to apply it to the built environment that he visited and experienced. When walking through the Pantheon, Lucae recorded his reaction in terms of an almost mystical sublimity: “we become forced into a kind of self-communion, although the uniformity of the space has a somewhat soothing effect on our feelings [....] Here a force overcomes us, of which

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1. From “Über die Bedeutung und Macht des Raumes in der Baukunst” [On the meaning and power of space in architecture] (1869), trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave in Mallgrave’s *Architectural Theory* Vol. 1 (Oxford:Blackwell Publishing,2006).
 2. The original Crystal Palace was disassembled and transported to Sydenham Hill in 1851. These buildings share obvious similarities in the sensations that they generated but they also differ, especially in their dimensions; the building at Sydenham Hill was significantly larger than the original structure.
 3. Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), where he discussed the possibility that intense emotion, ugliness and fear are capable, as is beauty, of generating feelings of the sublime. Immanuel Kant’s *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) further defined the concept by listing different kinds of sublimity.
 4. German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) and British artist J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851) illustrated the concept of the sublime in Nature, which was discussed by Burke, Kant and other philosophers. Their paintings depict awe-inspiring landscapes, and in the case of Friedrich, individuals who are in the midst of these overwhelming surroundings.

we know not what it wants with us” (Mallgrave 559). Lucae’s last sentence proves the difficulty of describing the complex sensations that he was feeling. It must be noted that the sublime, along with the uncanny, is in a category of terms that escapes a final definition, since these are concepts dealing with individual psychological and physical responses that are difficult to describe. Furthermore, in the religious building of St. Peter’s, Lucae explored the relationship between the glance and the sensations: “Freely the glance wanders through the wide arches of the church nave, bringing itself to a point of blissful consciousness as we experience always anew the wonder of the space that opens itself here” (Mallgrave 559). Lucae’s words, dealing with the complexity of the sublime of the built environment and with the role of the “glance” as he called it, are precursors to the modern discussion of spatial analysis.

Lucae’s accounts are extremely valuable when taking into account the discussion of space during the nineteenth century. The critic and philosopher Michel Foucault, on the other hand, contributes greatly to this discussion because, being distanced by time, he is able to analyze certain elements that a Victorian critic inevitably missed. The Foucaultian concept that I would like to discuss is that of heterotopias. In his lecture entitled “Different Spaces,” Foucault gives a brief introduction of the history of space, from medieval times to modern times. He claims that there are two types of places: *utopias*, which are perfect or inverted versions of society that are fundamentally unreal, or *heterotopias*, which are realized utopias. I argue that the Crystal Palace may be considered a heterotopia, a built and tangible utopia of the nineteenth century. According to Foucault, such a site “begins to function fully when men are in a kind of absolute break with their traditional time” (182). At the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, Britain and the western world in general were experiencing such a break. The Crystal Palace is a crystallized attempt to hold on to a reality which is slipping—it is a “perfect” version of a British and Victorian society which was at the pinnacle of its strength as a political and industrial power; being at the summit, however, implies being able to foresee the inevitable descent, and the Crystal Palace was a built effort

to delay or completely deny this. Another characteristic which qualifies this building as a heterotopia is its affinity to the museum and the library. Foucault says that “the museum and the library are heterotopias that are characteristic of western culture in the nineteenth century” and that these places share “the idea of accumulating everything, the idea of constituting a sort of general archive, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place” (182).⁵ The Great Exhibition was a display, but overall, a collection that gave rise to an amazing impulse to collect even more, whether through the newborn science of statistics, or through further exhibitions.

The last concept related to heterotopias that I would like to address is that, according to Foucault, there are two types of these sites and that they differ in their relation to the space around them: “Either the heterotopias have the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory [...] Or, on the contrary, creating a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged and muddled”(184). The Crystal Palace is a heterotopia of the second type, a real space that is portrayed as perfect. The haunted house, however (the counterpart of the Crystal Palace in my overall study), fits the description of the first kind of heterotopia, a “space of illusion that denounces all real space.” Even though the haunted house is not a real-life built structure, it does live and exist as “reality” through fiction. Furthermore, the haunted house seeks to denounce a reality that the real space wishes to hide under a mirage. The Crystal Palace, however, is an example of this real space that hides certain elements of Victorian society through strategies of deceit. In order to analyze the Crystal Palace as a place of illusion, I will now address several of its spatial characteristics.

5. Thomas Richard’s work *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993) gives a detailed account of the Victorian obsession of recording and archival activity as a means of maintaining a slipping grip over Britain’s territories.

Before addressing the design of Paxton's masterpiece, one must understand how it was deeply rooted in his previous plans for hothouses. In his rise from gardener to self-taught architect, his creations would always be linked to his trial-and-error experience derived from the construction of glasshouses and to his observation and close link to nature. George Chadwick remarks about the direct relationship between Paxton's hothouses and the Crystal Palace: "the same roofing system, the same method of enclosing the sides of the building, the same conception of a framework and a covering, the same principles of roof drainage through the hollow structural columns, the same slatted floor; the only difference is one of size" (114). Furthermore, because he was first a gardener, Paxton developed a significant structural idea—a ribbed system—after observing the underside of a *Victoria regia* lily and testing its structural capacity. In the greenhouse that he built to house this lily, Paxton applied his ridge-and-furrow roof which he would later patent and utilize in the Great Exhibition building.

Apart from these structural and design elements, the Crystal Palace is also a descendant of Paxton's greenhouses in other more engaging ways. First, these structures were covered with glass to protect the plants in the inside from the elements, let sunlight in, and keep heat and humidity from escaping. Hothouses were designed for people who wanted to see these plants in a pleasant environment, regardless of the season or weather conditions, both as a hobby and as another way of entertaining and socializing. The Great Conservatory, Paxton's masterpiece of a hothouse in Chatsworth, was a symbol of status. "Great Men" such as the Duke of Devonshire would enjoy these hothouses on their own, but would also make a point of inviting important personages so that they might witness the splendor of the place, thus enhancing their position in society.

Queen Victoria and her entourage visited the Great Conservatory in 1843, something which is not often discussed but which clearly mirrors the royal inauguration

of the Crystal Palace in 1851. The sight must have been magnificent for the visitors, since the group rode in open carriages through the building which had been illuminated by 12,000 lamps. The Duke of Wellington declared that he had seen many wonderful things in his travels “but never did I see so many magnificent a *coup d’oeil* as that extended before me” (Chadwick 98). Like the Crystal Palace after it, this structure seemed to have a mesmerizing effect on the eye; the reflection and play of the 12,000 lamps on the glass must have been a bewitching thing to behold and must have created a “fairyland” which was later intensified in the Crystal Palace. This magical ambiance was related to a sense of evanescence, generated by the fact that this type of building was destined to have a short-life.⁶ The notion of inevitable disappearance must have been present at least subconsciously in the minds of the beholders of both the Great Conservatory and the Crystal Palace, and it contributed to this concept of a transient fairyland.

Another characteristic of a hothouse is the issue of regulation or control. On a superficial level, temperature and humidity are regulated from within, while the elements and their potentially negative effects are kept outside. Hothouses are the creation by man of an artificial environment in order to enjoy nature in a controlled and comfortable fashion. In the Crystal Palace, an artificial environment was also created, one that locked some aspects of nature inside (trees and sparrows) while recreating a comfortable and safe environment for its visitors. The Great Conservatory, like the Great Exhibition building after it, was essentially a giant bubble; in both buildings the main objective was for visitors to *see* something which was being exhibited and to do so safely. The matter of safety, of course, implies restriction or limitation of certain aspects, and in this sense both buildings acted as shields against both natural and other types of elements. By acting as bubbles, however, these exhibition buildings could

6. The Great Conservatory was torn down in 1920 and the Crystal Palace was disassembled in 1851 and later moved (and modified) to a site in Sydenham Hill, where it also did not last long, since it burned down in 1936.

also generate a stifling environment that was produced as much by a lack of fresh air as by the attitude that had created them—a belief in the need to keep things out.

On June 27, 1851, *The Times* published an article about Paxton's petition to maintain the Great Exhibition building in Hyde Park and to modify it in order to become a winter garden. The writer of the article claims that part of the public was not interested in the permanence or modification of the building because: "the Crystal Palace is a colossal greenhouse, or 'blue house' as somebody has called it, is as much a condemnation as it is a fact." While elaborating his proposal, Paxton "has chiefly in his eye those purposes to which the gardens and conservatories of our aristocracy or of the nation have hitherto been applied." Calling the Crystal Palace a greenhouse was something of an insult for Paxton, who at this point wanted to be perceived as a serious architect, not merely a builder of greenhouses. Gardener, builder or architect, one thing stands—there always was a connection between the designer's greenhouses and the structure for the exhibition. Within both buildings people had to be protected from rain and from the cold, but also from unwanted guests. Both edifices offered the promise of a magical place without a winter, a place forever suspended in time, but one which was inevitably sheltered and even stifling. We will later see how this stifling, claustrophobic environment is one of the main factors shaping haunted space within the Victorian home; furthermore, I will also draw attention to a feature within the home—the bay window—which embodies the same concern for protection from the outside that was so apparent in Paxton's hothouses, including in the most monumental of all—the Crystal Palace.

An Ode to Transparency

Paxton's years of experience while developing hothouses culminated in the design for the exhibition, where he successfully employed materials that he had been experimenting with for years—glass and iron. These two elements have obvious

characteristics, derived from their physical properties, but a closer look at them, especially in the context of the Crystal Palace, renders them symbolic. Consisting of 293,655 panes of glass which cover an area of 900,000 square feet, the building is a monument to glass. The significance of this material is also supported by the name that the building acquired due to the bewitching appearance that has been discussed in the case of Paxton's greenhouses. The most striking quality of glass in the building and in general is its transparency.

It is unavoidable to equate transparency with honesty and truth. It is inescapable, then, to associate this massive crystal structure with these ideals: "Here is a building of clarity, transparency, and no deceit" (McKean 32). While the process of construction for the Palace was taking place, a Mr. Frederick Sang wrote to *The Times*, in order to give his opinion about painting the iron parts that would be used in the building. His words touch upon this subject of transparency through the sincere use of materials. Mr. Sang insisted that the iron be painted in a pale bronze instead of any other color that would stray from the nature of the material; the ideal thing to do, of course, would be to not even paint the iron, but due to corrosion, that was out of the question. He clearly supports the concept of honesty in architecture: "I took the liberty to suggest on the principle of truth in architecture, that the metallic character of Mr. Paxton's clever handiwork should not be destroyed *by covering it with any colour or colours misleading the mind with respect to the nature of the material*" (4 Jan. emphasis added). Mr. Sang's comments illustrate John Ruskin's architectural position which was circulating at the time of the Great Exhibition, especially because *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was published in 1849, just three years before the exhibition. In the "Lamp of Truth" within *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), this Victorian art critic had insisted that materials should be represented as they are and should perform the function for which they were intended (a beam should support and not merely act as ornament, for example). Ruskin divides these "architectural deceits" into three types and stresses that they should be avoided at all costs: "1st. The suggestion of a mode of structure or

support, other than the true one; as in pendants of late Gothic roofs. 2nd. The painting of surfaces to represent some other material than that of which they actually consist (as in the marbling of wood), or the deceptive representation of sculptured ornament upon them. 3rd. The use of cast or machine-made ornaments of any kind” (Rosenberg 124). Mr. Sang’s suggestion about the use of iron in Paxton’s building is clearly based on the second premise by Ruskin, presented above. But in the Crystal Palace, the concept of transparency was not limited to a penetration of light through the glass and the “true” use of iron⁷; it also pointed to an attitude about veracity and clarity in general. The main message seems to be that within its clear frame, the Crystal Palace has nothing to hide; transparency is both visual and moral. This “truthful” structure gives the impression that it presents its exhibits and its visitors as they are.

Glass is a transparent substance which is both hard and brittle. This seemingly straightforward observation reveals contradictions in the nature of glass that contribute to the analysis of the Crystal Palace. It is not difficult to see how this edifice, composed mostly of glass, could be seen as a magical wonderland but one that was also fragile and destined to be short-lived. We might recall that in the previous chapter Holgate comments on how people are disturbed by the portrayal of structural instability. Furthermore, the fact that glass has contradictory properties enables one to question and deconstruct the issue of clarity and the role that it played in the Crystal Palace. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault discussed how controlling “transparency” can actually be, when he discussed the effect of the panopticon and surveillance in the penitentiary system. In this building,⁸ the unseen or internalized gaze is the main tool

7. The iron structure was in fact painted in various colors: blue, yellow, red, and white. These colors were chosen not to hide the materials, but rather to differentiate and separate space. Interestingly enough, the colors did not seem to distract its observers or to hide the iron, since the building was always referred to as an iron and glass construction.

8. The panopticon was a type of building modelled by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1787. It consisted of a ring of cells around a central tower where a person in control could see but not be seen by those within the cells. It emerged from the disciplinary society, which, according to Foucault, followed one of torture and punishment.

in the exercise of control and power. In the preface of his work on the panopticon, Bentham introduces and defines this new type of edifice and clearly states that it may house prisoners, workers, students and “madmen.” In this definition, apparently dissimilar people are placed within the same category, but under the light of control and power, everyone who is institutionalized shares the need to be “corrected,” controlled, and ultimately, to be *seen*. Foucault discusses how visibility becomes key in this apparatus of visual control:

The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather, of its three functions –to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide– it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap. (Foucault 200)

Foucault brilliantly examines how a transparent space is actually more controlling than a dark dungeon. In it, any type of inmate is supervised constantly more by suggestion than by direct action: “the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon[...] the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so” (Foucault 201). This issue can be easily translated into the context of the Crystal Palace, a building whose most significant property was transparency. We must remember that the logical objective of the Great Exhibition was to present thousands of exhibits that numerous visitors could simply look at. The people who attended the exhibit, and not the objects themselves, became the focus of the display. What Foucault and other thinkers have suggested is that the gaze can be extremely controlling. The Crystal Palace could be seen as an ideal translucent space, but this quality soon turned blinding and the brightness turned into glare: “Utopian ideals, the purity of ‘nakedness’ doesn’t take long to become oppressive. Life exposed under a bell-jar soon runs out of oxygen (McKean 33). The life exposed in this structure is that of the Victorians and it is far more challenging to consider the elements that were not meant to be exhibited than those which composed the official event.

Figures 1 and 2 below have been placed side to side in order to compare the Great Exhibition building with an example of a penitentiary that employs the panoptic model. The architectural similarities are obvious, especially because both structures employ glass and iron, and an immense quantity of light floods the inside of the space. Because of this, both the visitors of the Crystal Palace and the prisoner in his cell are inside crystal envelopes devoid of dark corners, where they could potentially hide. Furthermore, in Figure 1, the prisoner is praying, and the visitors to the Crystal Palace, especially the

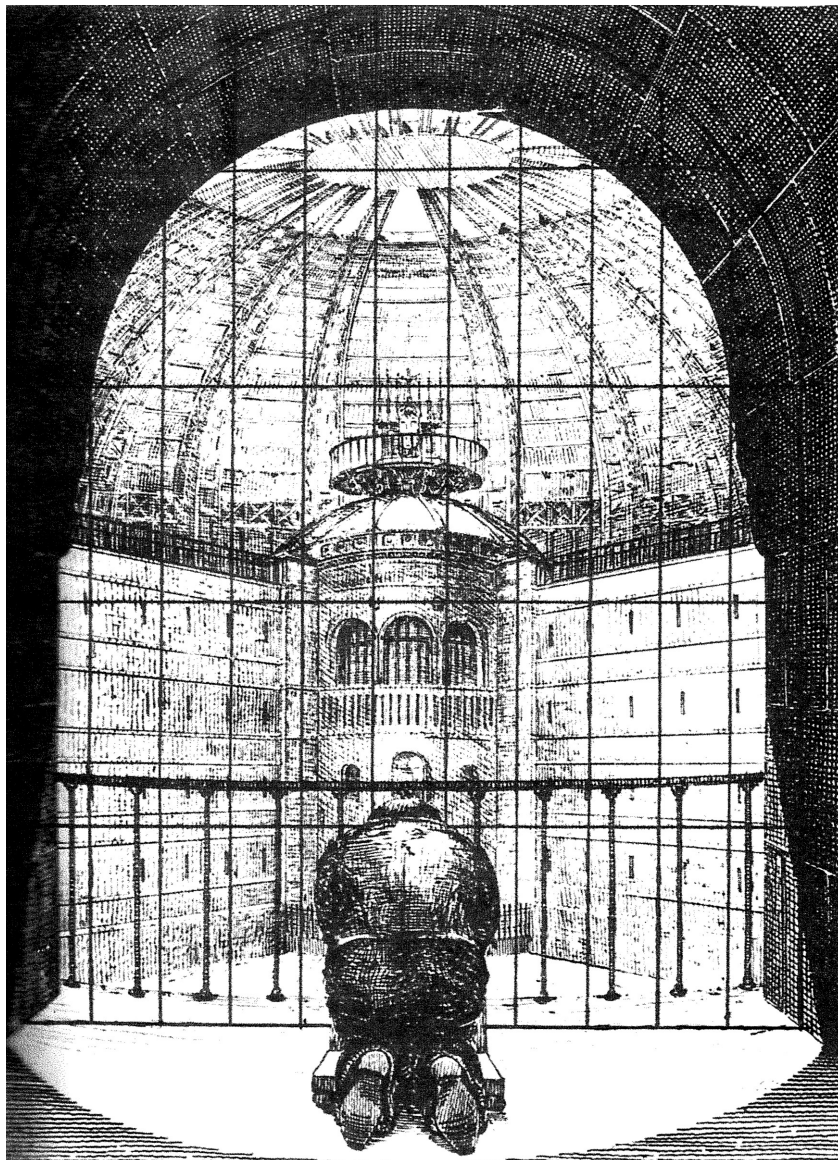


Fig. 1. N. Harou Romain. A prisoner in his cell, in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Penguin Books, 1977).



Fig. 2. Panoptic space within the Crystal Palace, in John McKean, *Crystal Palace* (London: Phaidon Press, 1994).

day of the opening, were overwhelmed by religious feelings because of the nature of the ceremony, but also because of properties of the building itself. At a symbolic level, one may interpret this prisoner's kneeling as an indication of his submissive position, one in which he is facing yet not looking directly at authority, at the omnipotent tower in the middle of the complex. The suggestion is that he is at the mercy of but not entitled to the gaze, which originates from the tower.

The situation of the visitors of the Crystal Palace was clearly not as extreme as that of the prisoner who is portrayed; however, surveillance is more effective when discreet. Upstairs galleries that went around the building actually did provide people

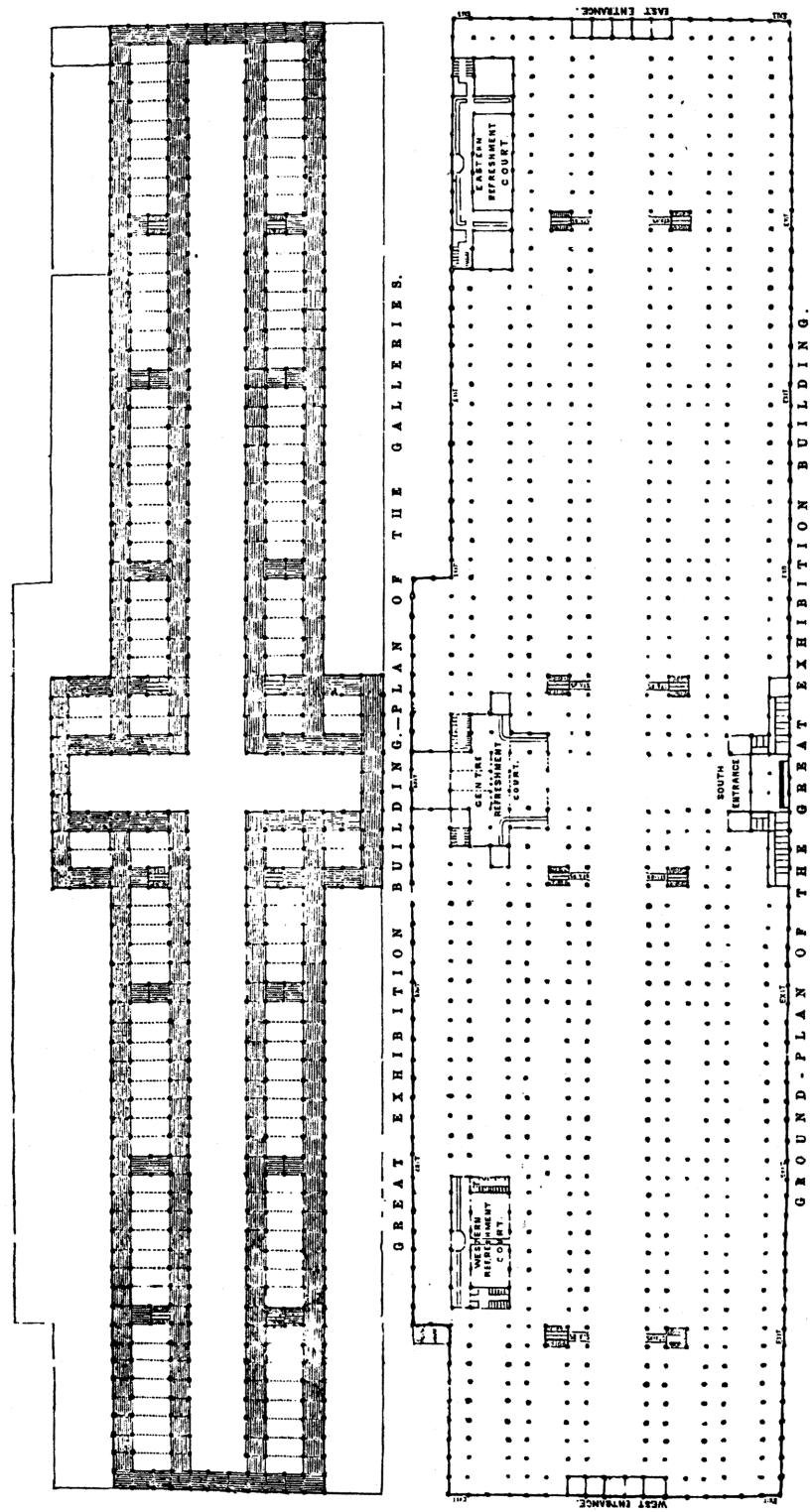


Fig. 3. Floor plan of the Crystal Palace from Corporation of London Library in George Chadwick, *The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton* (London: The Architectural Press, 1961).

with a chance to observe those who walked underneath, but even without these spaces, transparency in itself created a sensation of permanent scrutiny, of being seen but not being able to identify the source of the gaze. There was no central tower within the Crystal Palace, but its unprecedented transparency created a permanent state of surveillance; furthermore, we must remember the meaning of panoptic: “all-seeing (fig.) comprehensive, covering every aspect of a subject, all-encompassing” (O.E.D.). Both the prison and the Crystal Palace are panoptic buildings, the former because of its central tower and the latter because of its vastness and clarity, which allowed an all-encompassing view of the space. Furthermore, as Figure 4 will later prove, the people within the Crystal Palace came to be regarded as the most interesting and observed exhibits. This surveillance continues to this day, when modern critics still observe, as under a magnifying glass, and as if they were still alive, the visitors who once walked within this great building.

Iron: Supporting the Illusion

If glass was responsible for creating an enchanting yet fragile fairyland, iron was responsible for supporting such an illusion. Like glass, iron has certain physical properties which in turn generate more symbolic qualities. Its physical strength easily suggests Britain’s own power, both as an industrial and an imperialist giant. Because of its unprecedented importance in construction, iron also symbolized the literal growth of cities and the more idealistic values of improvement and “progress.” Last, but not least, iron was associated with the railroad, and once again, with connotations of growth, communication, expansion and imperial “unity” that went along with it.⁹ On a larger scale, the use of iron represented an innovative and efficient type of

9. According to the anthology *England in Literature* (Illinois: Scott Foresman & Co., 1985), “In 1848 English production of iron equaled that of the rest of the world combined. Much of this iron went into the spreading system of railroads. England opened the first stretch of commercial track in 1830. By 1839 there were 1,200 miles, and by 1850, 7000 miles” (438).

construction, but as a symbol, this mineral may be deconstructed in order to reveal elements of Victorian culture which were not meant to rise into view.

Astounding figures illustrate the importance of the use of iron in the entire structure.¹⁰ This edifice was an amazing feat and a new type of construction (one based on efficiency, the use of new materials, economy, and organization) was what really supported the accomplishment which came together as the Crystal Palace. Nevertheless, the role of iron and the revolutionary process of building in general brought about dire consequences. These negative issues, of course, were not included in any of the public speeches promoting the event. Neither the Industrial Revolution nor this building could have occurred without the raw materials that emerged from the mines. The Black country in the midlands of England was abundant in iron ore, limestone, coal, and sand and it was “the greatest iron providing area in the world at the time” (Tropp 84).¹¹ While the Great Exhibition was taking place, according to the Census of 1851, “over a quarter of a million men and boys labored in constant danger” (Tropp 84) in the mines in the Black Country and other parts of England, Wales and Scotland.

One could argue that some of the attendants of the exhibition were unaware of this harsh contrast, of the splendid vision of the Crystal Palace on the one hand, and the Hades of the mines where men, women and children toiled and died in order to produce the very stuff that supported the illusion behind the Great Exhibition. However, this argument is most unlikely, since both upper class visitors who owned some of these

10. The 19 acres of area which enclosed 33 million cubic feet of space were composed of 205 miles of Paxton’s patented sash-bars, 3300 iron columns, 2150 girders, and 34 miles of pipes.

11. In 1842, the Commission for Inquiry into the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines and Manufactures (1842) described the horrific condition of men, women and children (some as young as four) who would work and die in these underground labyrinths. The report was full of harsh testimonies: “Typical was the testimony of Margaret Leveston, six years old, a coal bearer in the East of Scotland, who makes 10 to 14 rakes [extensive journeys] a day; carries full 56 lbs. of coal.” Members of the House of Commons where it was read wept and passed the bill to improve some of the conditions, but the House of Lords objected to the bill “as an interference with the free labor market” which was one of the main driving forces behind the Great Exhibition of 1851 (Tropp 84).

mines as well as members of the other classes were aware of the existence of the mines and of some of the conditions within them. How aware people were and what they chose to do with this knowledge is a complex matter deserving another study. Still, one could argue that the Crystal Palace had the power to enthrall and to mesmerize its visitors and, ultimately, to make them forget, at least temporarily.

Without dwelling on the topic of the mines and the origin of the raw materials that constructed the Crystal Palace, it is still possible to consider the cost of building such a place; the process behind its building went incredibly smoothly, apart from a “minor” event, a strike in which glaziers were asking for a raise from four to five shillings per week. “This [the strike] was swiftly and effectively dealt with for Messrs Fox and Henderson could afford neither delay nor blackmail. The ringleaders were dismissed and the rest given the chance to go back to work at the old agreed rate” (Beaver 24). The Crystal Palace is a monument of matters “swiftly and effectively dealt with,” of the British Empire’s ability to “afford neither delay nor blackmail” from the classes that supported the Industrial Revolution and its imperialistic position in the world. In the same way in which the iron structure supported the illusion known as the Crystal Palace, large quantities of the mineral, along with the human cost behind mining these, supported the Industrial Revolution.

The Fairy Palace

Neil Parkyn lists the Crystal Palace as one of the world’s great public buildings and highlights its singularity by affirming that “it was instantly regarded as an icon of modernity, and many of its achievements remain unequalled to this day” (134). Not only has this building earned its place in the annals of world architecture, it had a significant and palpable effect on its contemporaries. The importance of the Crystal Palace cannot be attributed solely to the effective use of glass and iron or to innovative construction. Its success was based on its ability to trigger certain sensations in the

people who beheld it and to generate a particular, almost mystical ambiance. One of the most powerful effects that was created was the “fairy quality” of the building. The most famous remarks that highlight this are those made by Queen Victoria in her journal entries. Before the opening, the Queen records in her journal in February 18, 1851: “The sight of the Crystal Palace was incredibly glorious, really like a fairyland [...] From the top galleries the effect is quite wonderful. The sun shining in through the transept gave a fairy-like appearance” (Gibbs-Smith 17). On the same day of the inauguration, the queen remarks: “A little rain fell, just as we started; but before we neared the Crystal Palace, the sun shone and gleamed upon the gigantic edifice,” (Hibbert 84) pointing to an almost divine effect that pervaded the scene. Furthermore, in a letter dated 3rd May of 1851 to her uncle, the King of Belgium, the queen writes about her enthusiasm during the inauguration: “I wish you *could* have witnessed the *1st May* 1851, the *greatest* day in our history, the *most beautiful* and *imposing* and *touching* spectacle ever seen [...] Truly it was astonishing, a fairy scene [...] *You* will be astounded at this great work when you see it!—the beauty of the building and the vastness of it all” (Benson 384).

Other visitors to the exhibition coincided with Queen Victoria and her reaction to the palace. The German critic Lothar Bucher remarked about the atmosphere that was generated within the edifice: “To say that the spectacle is incomparable and fairy-like is the soberest understatement. It is like the fragment of a midsummer night’s dream seen in the clear light of day” (qtd. in McKean 29). Words like “fairy,” “magical” and “dream” pervade the commentaries of the day about the edifice, all pointing to the ability of the Crystal Palace to fascinate and enthrall both its Victorian visitors as well as the recent critics who are still drawn to it. But these terms also point to the illusory and evanescent quality of the building and of the Great Exhibition itself. Like anything belonging to the magical, Paxton’s glass buildings were never meant to stand forever. This knowledge, that from its conception, the building was meant to have a short life, was responsible for generating this feeling of evanescence that almost

all of the visitors seemed to have felt when stepping into the fairyland of the Great Exhibition. Gottfried Semper, a famous German architect (who collaborated in the design of part of the exhibit) discusses how evanescence seems to be a characteristic of a new architecture: “In our lively and active time perhaps what matters is to express the transitory needs that we feel, to express beautiful reality in a fleeting way, and to create works for themselves, for the living, instead of what the future may set for them” (Mallgrave 556). The Crystal Palace, harbinger of a “lively and active time,” of a modern era, could not be anything but ephemeral.

The Deconstruction of Interior/Exterior

Apart from being perceived as a fairyland, the Crystal Palace had another major effect on people’s sensations –it challenged their visual perception of what was inside and what was outside, and this brought significant implications. In Jean Baudrillard’s *Seduction* (1979), illusion is described as the main tool of seduction. Baudrillard talks of seduction as a spell and as artifice, and he illustrates the concept through the *trompe l’oeil*, a device of deception originating in painting; the term literally means to trick the eye (French, *tromper*, to deceive+ *le*, the + *oeil*, eye). Furthermore, since one of the meanings for illusion is: “4.a. sensuous perception of an external object” (O.E.D.), one may safely say that it is automatically linked to both the senses and to the pleasure derived from them. Moreover, since illusion promises pleasure, it is fundamentally linked to the process of seduction. I argue that Paxton’s building allures by tricking the eye and the senses, by presenting enchanting illusions, based on its “fairy” quality already discussed, and on its blurring of boundaries between its interior and the external world.

Upon witnessing the Crystal Palace, Richard Lucae, a nineteenth-century German critic said:

We are separated from nature but yet we are scarcely conscious of it; the barrier that separates us from the landscape is scarcely perceptible. If we reflect on it, it is as if one has poured air, as it

were, like a liquid; thus, here we have the sensation that the free air has kept its solid shape after the form in which it had been poured was again taken away. We find ourselves, so to speak, in a piece of sculpted atmosphere. (Mallgrave 560)

This poetic description proves how powerful the effect was of this crystal envelope on an audience who was simply not accustomed to spaces that challenged the fusion between the exterior and interior. Furthermore, Lucae stresses the feeling of being in the presence of sculpted air –the border between what is natural and what is art/artifice/artificial has also been crossed. Another source from the times confirms this unusual sensation; in the *Art Journal Catalogue* of the event, Mrs. Merrifield claims: “the effect of the interior of the building resembles that of the open air. It is perhaps the only building in the world in which atmosphere is perceptible ” (ii). The nineteenth-century audience was not used to witnessing or experiencing buildings mostly composed of glass, such as the ones that would later arrive with the onset of a new kind of architecture; the Crystal Palace was innovative in its play of the interior and exterior, generating unexpected and powerful sensations in its viewers.

This difficulty to determine what was internal or external was disorienting in general, and it was combatted in part by painting the structure in different colors (refer to Footnote 7) as a way of guiding the eye and giving some form to the building. Disorientation led to experiencing something so grand that its true meaning could not be put into words, only felt and experienced. After the inauguration, an article in *The Times* struggled to describe what was perceived by the palace’s first visitors but concluded: “It was felt more than what was seen, or what had been intended” (2 May 1851). The same newspaper published an article one day after the closing, and once again, words failed: “Words cannot do it justice, and fail utterly to convey the mystery and the grandeur thus embodied to the eye” (13 Oct. 1851). The last phrase “embodied to the eye,” presents a complex possibility –whatever is being described materializes or acquires a “body” through sight, not words. The surroundings can only be absorbed and measured through the senses (in this case sight), but they cannot

be fully explained by conventional oral or written means. This is congruent with the concept of the sublime, which continually escapes a concrete definition, since it is meant to be felt and experienced and not grasped through words.

The Masking of Anxieties through Discourse and Space

The interior/exterior topos is extremely useful when analyzing the Crystal Palace as an architectural landmark, and as a herald of what was to come in modern art in general. However, it is equally valuable to discuss this issue when considering the edifice as a text that houses particular discourses. The Crystal Palace presents the blurring between the interior and the exterior, but it also presents the image of the bell-jar, of the bubble. This fairyland, according to McKean, is “protecting within its glazed bubble, as if allergic to the mid-19th century industrial world outside –but protecting against what?” (4). The last question is precisely what the rest of this chapter will attempt to answer. Official discourse and topics such as peace and unified nation will be considered and questioned under the light of the prevailing fears that are also present at a subterranean level within that discourse. I will argue that the interior of this building housed official discourse but that it also attempted to keep out fears and anxieties that were clearly present but that would not fit nicely or properly into the exhibition: free trade was disguised by religious imagery, a feeling of British superiority was hidden under the promise of international solidarity, and Victorian society was presented as one big happy family, thus hiding obvious class distinctions and divisions. However, the great irony behind this, of course, is that this effort to stuff a seemingly transparent and honest space with things that were desirable also shed unwanted light on the fears and anxieties that were meant to stay outside of the exhibition. The Crystal Palace and its transparency actually functioned as a magnifying glass, allowing unsightly things to be seen in detail instead of not being seen at all. This, of course, points to what Vidler

has called the “architectural uncanny,” a space where repressed issues eventually float up to the surface and rear their ugly heads.

The visitors on the morning of the first of May of 1851 seemed to share a reaction of being in the presence of something mystical. Religious feelings abound in the remarks of those present that day. The queen herself recorded: “The glimpse through the iron gates of the Transept, [...] gave a sensation I shall never forget, and I felt much moved...” (Hibbert 84). *The Times* coincided with Queen Victoria in describing the event as a religious one: “There was yesterday witnessed a sight the like of which has never happened before and which in the nature of things can never be repeated [...] Above them rose a glittering arch far more lofty and spacious than the vaults of even our noblest cathedrals [...] some were most reminded of that day when all ages and climes shall be gathered round the throne of their Maker” (2 May 1851). The Great Exhibition was perceived as a sublime, religious event and the Crystal Palace was easily equated to a church. Both the ruler of the empire and great part of the world –Queen Victoria– as well as the supreme ruler – God– were present in the accounts of the inauguration.

The feelings of religious fervor and devotion felt at the opening of the event were generated to a great extent by the Crystal Palace itself: “The building itself was described in terms of church architecture –the nave, the aisle, and the transept”(Beaver 42). Furthermore, the proceedings contributed to the religious character; the event included the Queen taking her place on the dais, a great organ playing the National Anthem, Prince Albert speaking, and the Archbishop of Canterbury saying a prayer answered by a Hallelujah chorus. At the end, a procession took place, headed by the Royal Family. The inauguration was acted out and perceived as a religious act, a fact that was due to the proceedings, but mostly to the building itself: “Essentially it was a glass cathedral rather than a Crystal Palace” (Hobhouse 36).

A glance at the floor plan proves the striking resemblance of the Crystal Palace to a church, including the figure of the cross that is central in the design. As with any other great religious edifice, this glass cathedral managed to generate feelings of the sublime

in the people who entered it. An awe-stricken public would tend to be more receptive to the official discourse (or any being offered at the time), claiming ideals of peace and fraternity, for instance. In other words, this public would be more likely to focus on what *was* on exhibition and to ignore that which was hidden underneath. Perhaps the main element which was carefully “hidden” or disguised under the façade of the Crystal Cathedral was that of free trade.¹² Prince Albert, as the most visible promoter of the Great Exhibition of 1851, was an avid supporter of free trade, a fact which was often attacked by the opposition. In a speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet in London on the 11th of October 1849, meant to rally support for the exhibition, Prince Albert is very clear about his belief in free trade: “the products of all quarters of the globe are placed at our disposal, and we have only to choose what is the cheapest and best for our purposes, and the powers of production are intrusted to the stimulus of competition and capital (*The Illustrated London News*). The promotion of this economic model, then, was a clear objective even before the Royal Commission was formed.

Despite contradictory meanings that the building seemed to house, one might consider the possibility that the Crystal Palace functioned *both* as a glass cathedral and as one that embraced commerce and industry. The Crystal Palace was meant to promote industry and progress, but the element of free trade was hidden under euphemisms and mostly under a very convincing façade of religiosity. This gave its visitors a sense that the British empire had been granted a divine blessing to pursue its goals, including mundane economic ones. Later we will see how this conjunction between religious and financial objectives would be literally housed in the middle-class Victorian home, an enterprise led by the righteous mother and wife, and one

12. In his book, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Jeffrey Auerbach claims that “the Great Exhibition itself was a force of the creation of the Liberal Party, by disseminating liberal ideas both in its structure and organization and in its actual content” (31). Furthermore, Liberalism could be roughly defined as promoting: “individualism, competition, free enterprise and *free trade*, education, and parliamentary reform” (31 emphasis added).

which had a purifying effect on the father, when he returned from a competitive world that would often promote unethical economic practices.

The glass cathedral projected unto the Crystal Palace managed to hide the free trade cathedral, but there were other elements that were covered up by official discourse. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was promoted as an international event, a “peaceful” competition that would take the place of war. Once again, Prince Albert’s speech at the Lord Mayor’s Banquet (1849) sheds light on this situation:

we are living at a period of most wonderful transition which tends rapidly to the accomplishment of that great end to which indeed, all history points –the realization of the unity of mankind [...] The distances which separated the different nations and parts of the globe are gradually vanishing before the achievements of modern invention. (*The Illustrated London News* Oct. 11 1849)

The Prince Regent would forever be, in the eyes of some, a foreigner, and this idea of international unity would obviously benefit him. In short, the exhibition was a chance to create a healthy competition that would displace the need for war. In official discourse, the Crystal Palace was an edifice where peace and tolerance for other nations reigned; the palace was said to embrace exhibits and people from all nations and to recognize their unique contribution.

This idealistic desire to stage an international festival is overshadowed by international tensions that infiltrated the Crystal Palace. There was a nationalistic sentiment that transcended the good will behind projects such as the Great Exhibition, a fact vehemently expressed by one of the men most bitterly against the event –Colonel Sibthorp, MP for Lincoln. On the 4th of February, the Speech from the Throne discussed issues of manufacture and trade, and in the ensuing debate, Colonel Sibthorp clearly expressed his dislike of anything foreign (inevitably including the Prince Consort):

that fraud upon the public called a ‘Glass House’... that accursed building, erected to encourage the foreigner at the expense of the already grievously-distressed artisan. Would to God –I have often wished it– that a heavy hailstorm or a visitation of lightning would put a stop to the further progress of that work. Your property, your wives and families will be at the mercy of pickpockets and whoremongers from every part of the earth. (qtd. in Beaver 28)

It is interesting that the Colonel blames the building itself –not the event– for all that is pernicious. “The foreigner” in this quotation could obviously refer as much to foreign countries involved in the scheme of free trade as to the ultimate foreigner at the head of the Great Exhibition –Prince Albert himself. Despite his choleric remarks about the event, the day of the opening was imminent, and upon seeing the presence of the foreigners that he feared and hated in London, the irate Colonel remarked:

That miserable Crystal Palace [...] that wretched place where every species of fraud and immorality will be practised. Let them [the Commissioners] beware of man-traps and spring guns. They will have their food robbed –they will have piebald generation, half black and half white; but I can assure them that my arm will be raised to prevent such a violation. They might look for assassinations for being stabbed in the dark. (qtd. in Beaver 35)

The adjective “piebald” of course, provides us with a great opportunity to discuss the Colonel’s views about foreigners. Because the word is applied to a horse that has irregular blotches of black and white, one might safely claim that Colonel Sibthorp considered foreigners to be less than human. Furthermore, the word describes a mix of black and white, which in a sense is more revolting to the Colonel (than merely black), since the “white” has been polluted by the “black.” Furthermore, he is equating foreigners with “fraud,” a negative economic consequence, “immorality,” an offense against values, and “assassinations,” the ultimate threat against life, and in this case, the British way of life.

Some could argue that Colonel Sibthorp’s views on foreigners are rather extreme, and that they do not fairly represent the view of the majority at the time. Still, there are other sources which confirm that there were tensions in the relationship between Britain and foreign nations. The magazine *Punch* printed a cartoon entitled “The Happy Family in Hyde Park,” where Prince Albert and his “family” (other “white” people) are looking at a celebration inside the Crystal Palace, where an American Indian, a Chinese individual and a person wearing a turban seem to be on exhibit: “They are alien ‘others,’ on display as in a museum case or a circus cage, engaged in a bizarre and perhaps primitive dance. The British and Europeans, looking in, are separated from,



THE HAPPY FAMILY IN HYDE PARK.

Fig. 4. Observing the foreign “others,” in *Punch* (19 July 1851).

and literally defined by, those they are looking in, separated from, and literally defined by, those they are looking at” (Auerbach 159).

This and other *Punch* cartoons prove that this anti-foreign undercurrent, manifest in any culture in different ways, was definitely present around and inside the Crystal Palace. *The Times* also offered articles about the exhibition and the Crystal Palace pointing to nationalistic sentiments. For example, an article defending the participation of foreign jurors in the exhibit is at the same time a blatant promotion of English superiority; the piece tells how English and foreign fire-engines entered a contest: “In discharging a column of water perpendicularly, the fire-engine from Canada appeared to have a decided advantage, but when the pipes were held horizontally, its superiority

over English competitors was not sustained” (21 June 1851). Canada is worthy since it belongs to the empire, but the motherland is still superior. Various articles discussing the participation of other countries in the exhibition suggest that their presence was required not to present what they had to offer but to highlight English superiority, whether it is in industry, science or art. Charles Dickens, a defender of foreign presence in the exhibition, stated in *Dickens’ Household Words*, reprinted in *The Times*: “Our foreign visitors have neither burnt our houses nor endeavored to overturn our Government, nor run away with our daughters. They have behaved themselves peaceably and good-naturedly, and have borne with our little peculiarities amiably. Moreover, they have paid for what they have had, like honest men” (15 Oct. 1851). Dickens’ words reflect not only his solidarity and goodwill, but the characteristics of the sentiment against “the others” at the time of the Great Exhibition. Political and economic fears which were clearly felt by Colonel Sibthorp were shared to an extent by some of his less extreme contemporaries.

A close look at the floor plan of the building (Fig. 5) and the allotment of space to the different nations within it might prove very valuable, since it reflects notions of imperialism and superiority but also of anxiety about a potential downfall. As discussed previously, the building resembles a church simply by looking at its floor design, along with a north to south axis being called a transept and a west to east axis referred to as the nave. The northern entrance is called the Queen’s Entrance, and this is where the Royal Family’s dais was placed for the inauguration ceremony. The placement of the Queen (and her entrance) in the north may be perceived as a symbolic decision, suggesting England’s northern location in the map of the world and its superior status as an empire, in charge of giving a north to its territories. The transept splits the building into two distinct sections –on the west are the British and colonial exhibits and on the east lie the rest of the countries. British exhibits outnumber those representing its territories and its colonies are placed right next to the motherland. On a superficial level their location is logical, since they are part of the empire, but

Fig. 5. Floorplan of the exhibit: dividing the world, in *The Times* (2 May 1851).

at a deeper level they also seem to be guarding the borders between Britain and the rest of the world. After crossing the transept and continuing downwards towards the eastern entrance, one encounters Asian and other European nations. Curiously, the United States is placed at the bottom (next to the eastern entrance), as far away as possible from the British section of the building. At the time of the exhibit, the United States was a rising industrial and economic power in the horizon; its placement in this location might reflect Britain's anxieties about the young nation's competitive rise as a world power. Furthermore, since the United States was an ex-colony which earned its independence by force, its placement "at the bottom" of the floor plan could be viewed as a strong reminder that it was no longer "welcome" in the mother nation's family. The countries that are between the empire's exhibits on the west and those of the United States on the extreme east serve as a buffer to any threats that the new rising nation might represent to Britain. Within the Crystal Palace, this division of space for the exhibits of different countries supports the idea that, despite an effort to publicize the activity as an international and friendly venture, an undercurrent of tension between the British empire and other nations existed at the time of the Great Exhibition. The Crystal Palace, devoid of shadows and dark places, could not hide these nationalistic sentiments which took the form of articles, cartoons and floor plans.

We have discussed how the religious appearance of the Crystal Palace sought to hide the free trade "cathedral," and how anti-foreign sentiments surfaced in the Great Exhibition, despite the efforts to conceal them behind an international exterior. An issue that will be considered next is how the ideal of a classless "family" attending the exhibit could not be farther away from the truth. According to John Tallis, an author of popular guides of the exhibit, "all social distinctions were for the moment merged in the general feeling of pride and admiration at the wondrous result of science and labour exhibited in the Palace of Glass. Never before in England had there been so free and general a mixture of classes as under that roof" (qtd. in Auerbach 128). Despite this utopian desire to erase boundaries, the issue of class remained; the hierarchies

of Victorian society were highlighted both by a fear of mobs and by strategies of separation of classes within the event.

There was a real fear of mobs in the London of 1851, stemming from events related to the Chartist Movement in England,¹³ and numerous other demonstrations by workers who demanded an improvement of their conditions. Outside of the Crystal Palace, this fear crystallized in the form of soldiers who could appease the masses, in case of any outbreak: “the capital was garrisoned with soldiers to deal with possible disturbances. A company of artillery was stationed in the Tower, while five cavalry regiments [...] and seven battalions of infantry protected the Park itself. In addition 6000 extra police were on duty in London” (Beaver 35). This fear translated into the interior of the Crystal Palace; *The Times* “cautioned that ‘when the masses take possession of the interior it will be well nigh impossible to see anything,’ and suggested that those readers with a spare five shillings who wished to see the interior should attend before ‘King Mob enters’” (Auerbach 128). The word “masses” suggests a large quantity of people, but one which is amorphous, mindless, unpredictable and dangerous; these “masses,” of course, were the working classes, and they were feared for the reasons mentioned above.

The Crystal Palace clearly translated the class divisions of society into the spaces within the exhibit. The matter of the ticket prices was perhaps the best indication that there was an attempt to keep different classes apart from each other. The first three weeks the price was of 5 shillings, the thought being that the upper classes would be able to see the exhibit before the working classes did, thus avoiding any “mobs” from getting in their way or, in the worst of cases, before they destroyed the exhibit. After the first three weeks, the tickets became accessible on some days, but the classes usually attended the exhibit only with members of their own group due to these price differences. However,

13. Chartism was a political, social reform movement (1838-1848) in England. It acquired its name because of the *People's Charter* of 1838 which demanded, among other things, the universal suffrage for all men over 21 and the right to a secret ballot.

after the initial month, there was a significant mingling of classes within the Crystal Palace; it is while looking at the different groups in the close presence of “the others” that one may analyze people’s preconceptions about class and society.

Several cartoons in *Punch* magazine attest to this reinforcement of differences; in the one below, entitled “The Pound and the Shilling,” the Duke of Wellington and some upper-class-looking ladies face a family who is dressed in the manner of the working-class. The two groups face each other and are at close proximity. A better look at the picture, however, reveals certain prejudices in the way that the two groups



THE POUND AND THE SHILLING.
“Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here?”

Fig. 6. An unlikely meeting, in *Punch* (14 June 1851).

were perceived. On the left stand the workers, and the characters on this side are portrayed differently than those on the right. A working man is standing in a somewhat defiant manner, resting his right hand on his hip and the other on the arm of an equally challenging man. The square angle of his elbow, his hat and even his features give him a sense of rigidity. Behind these two protagonists, there is a curious figure in the back who resembles a clown, and off on the other side there is a woman holding a baby; her features are nowhere as defined as those of the upper-class ladies on the right, but she seems to have a scornful look on her face. The children also present a contrast; on the left is a little boy with a dirty face and ragged clothes and he seems to be offering flowers to a miniature lady of a girl. The boy's face displays awe, bordering on a lack of intelligence. Above the children, on the right side of the equation, is the Duke of Wellington, standing like a heroic statue, and holding the arms of a couple of ladies. The two ladies are much more defined as individuals and "ladies" than the working-class woman; the former have eyes and they are looking peacefully and patiently at the group of the left, while the woman on the left is entirely devoid of eyes or a gaze. There is also another upper-class lady leaning on the lady in the front, curiously looking at the people on the left but also guarding herself against them. The message seems to be that the Crystal Palace did give the different classes the chance to converge under the same roof. Still, when these classes came into close contact, this only brought about the differences between them instead of effacing them. The two distinct groups of the cartoon are curious of each other, but they are portrayed differently: the ones on the left are caricaturesque or defiant, whereas the ones on the right are well-defined, benevolent and heroic. The statuesque rendering of the Duke of Wellington in the middle serves as an impenetrable barrier between both sides; standing with one foot in front of the other, he is protecting and blocking his "side." The text that accompanies the cartoon, "Whoever Thought of Meeting You Here?" is posing a question, which automatically gives the situation an ironic tone. Both groups are clearly aware of their differences and of the unrealistic notion of "meeting" or coming into close contact with each other in a situation outside this event. The Crystal Palace acted as a meeting

place for the classes, but instead of erasing boundaries, the event highlighted them, and instead of eliminating differences, it displayed them, inevitably creating feelings of unease, which are portrayed in the discussed texts.

I have examined the Crystal Palace as a body of glass and iron that can be read. The building that housed the 1851 exhibition is much more than a harbinger of modern times. The fascination that it created in its nineteenth-century spectators and in contemporary critics is largely due to it being a space and to its power of illusion and its ability to generate sensations. As an illusory and seductive space, this building Palace may be compared to a seemingly distant relative –the haunted house. If viewed through the lens of illusion and enthrallment, the Crystal Palace and the haunted house may be seen to share some characteristics while differing in others. The Crystal Palace is a public place whereas the haunted house belongs to the private sphere. The Crystal Palace is said to be transparent, open, and honest, whereas the haunted house is dark, compartmentalized, and, most importantly, haunted –full of secrets and reappearances. In the Great Exhibition building: “Glass walls and ceilings would, of course, never suit a place where dark secrets need be kept, but were perfect for an exhibition such the one housed in the Crystal Palace[....]This was a building without a basement, with no dark corners, with no past” (Tropp 55). Tropp, of course, is ironic in his last remark, since he also believes this structure was a mirage which could be deconstructed. Still, it is clear that, on the surface, the image of the Crystal Palace is opposed to that of a haunted house. The nature of the deceit in the Crystal Palace is based on *hiding* certain things beneath a veil of “transparency.” Later I will argue that the illusion of the haunted house consists on *revealing* reality despite a veil of darkness or the supernatural. Ironically, the Crystal Palace –the monument to transparency– hides, whereas the haunted house –the ultimate sight of darkness– reveals. Both edifices create different illusions that seduce the visitors who move within them. Nineteenth-century guests of the Great Exhibition of 1851 were easily convinced by the notion that things would remain the same, that Britain would keep reigning, politically and

industrially, and that its project as a nation was a clear, honest one. Nineteenth-century readers of tales of haunted houses indulged in the idea that their anxieties about the onset of modernity and its domestic and social implications could be blamed on the supernatural, on ghosts and curses, not on changing norms. What these readers were really encountering was the reality of social disintegration or at least its evolution, specifically as perceived in the dynamics of the household. Despite these differences, both edifices functioned as mirages, triggering sensations that ultimately seduced their spectators.

One of the most famous anecdotes about the Crystal Palace has to do with the imprisonment of sparrows that had flown into the trees and which were eventually enclosed within the structure. They were trapped once the roof panes were placed, and this presented a great problem to the opening of the exhibit, since *The Times* had jokingly mentioned that the sparrows' physiological activities would undoubtedly have a direct effect on Queen Victoria and her standing beneath them. Poison failed to kill them, and they had to be removed, but, obviously, they couldn't be shot because of the glass. The Duke of Wellington was called by the Queen in view of this emergency, and with the tranquility that characterized him, the Duke recommended: "Try sparrow-hawks, Ma'am" (Beaver 28). This image of sparrows infiltrating the space that they were meant to stay out of may be used to understand how the Crystal Palace was as much a deceit as its domestic counterpart. The sparrows, natural beings, threatened to reveal just how artificial (thus, based on artifice) the Crystal Palace was. The sparrows, despite being alive, functioned as ghosts, as reminders of a reality that lived and breathed outside the crystal illusion. These phantoms with a will of their own could not be controlled and exhibited as inert objects on display. Only one solution was possible—the sparrows had to go.



Chapter Three

Infiltrating Private Space: The Victorian Home

Besides, the history of the house is also the history of a culture, and the modern English house engages our attention largely because of the high level of culture it expresses

Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*

In the previous chapter, I discussed the Crystal Palace as the iconic public space of the nineteenth century. I read this building as a symbolic space capable of generating powerful sensations and illusions that seduced its visitors, arguing that these illusions attempted to hide any cracks that might possibly threaten the picture of Great Britain's economic and industrial prowess at a time of extreme international competition. This chapter, on the other hand, is dedicated to the reading of a different kind of building—the middle-class Victorian household. While the Crystal Palace illustrates how public space was managed during the nineteenth century, the middle-class home shows how private space was dealt with in an era when domesticity became a valuable commodity. The idea behind this progression is that, after a consideration of public and private spaces representative of the nineteenth century, the discussion will gradually reach the most private and haunted of spaces—the haunted house of fiction.

Like the household that I will analyze, this chapter is also compartmentalized. It is divided into two main parts, the first dealing with background information that will: show the evolution of the family dwelling, from a house to a home; discuss the stylistic context during the nineteenth century; reveal how, although there were different types of houses, one may still talk about a prototype for a middle-class household. This section

presents architectural and historical data that will pave the road for a symbolic reading of space. The second part of this chapter is about understanding the characteristics that make the Victorian middle-class home *a perfect candidate for haunting*. In other words, what qualities does the Victorian middle-class home have that make it a preferred setting for supernatural manifestations in nineteenth-century fiction? I argue that the household did not need to pass through the filter of Gothic fiction in order to become haunted, since its architectural and symbolic characteristics were already responsible for its haunted potential. Following chapters will explore how Gothic fiction takes advantage of these characteristics and magnifies the situation of the household, turning it into a haunted house. Nevertheless, for now, and in the second part of this chapter, I will concentrate on certain topics related to the characteristics of the Victorian home. I will look at how the “English” qualities of the home, mostly its isolation from the world, set it up for haunting. I will also discuss how issues of privacy and control generate what I call centripetal aesthetics, or an inward pull of the home away from the outside, which could generate feelings of secrecy and isolation. Furthermore, we will look at extreme compartmentalization and segregation of space and at the strong emphasis on concealing through the use of objects like screens and curtains. Lastly, I will show how anxieties about disease surface in the Victorian household, once again proving how a haven of comfort and domesticity might easily turn into a haunted house.

Paving the Way towards the Victorian Home

Genesis of the Home

The ideal of the home as a private refuge from the outside world did not spontaneously appear during the nineteenth century; rather, it came to be after a gradual evolutionary process spanning hundreds of years. The type of household and its internal dynamics had begun shifting much earlier in various cities in Europe with the rise of a wealthier merchant class. In order to fully understand how the nineteenth-century

dwelling became a *home*, one must first acknowledge its medieval origins as a *house* and its evolution from that time onward. The medieval house was a hybrid site for family and numerous individuals, for personal as well as for business transactions. As such, this house sheltered various people and did not exclude those who were not members of the owner's family; employees, servants, apprentices, extended family members, and frequent guests shared the same household with the owner and his immediate kin. The multifunctional nature of the house was clearly reflected in its internal design: "The public character of these houses is further underscored by the lack of separate rooms for these various activities. In most instances, the inhabitants lived, slept, and ate in large, open halls that accommodated different functions principally by the rearrangement of furniture" (Riley 11). As we will see later on, this description clearly opposes that of the nineteenth-century home, which is highly compartmentalized and which is replete with single-purpose furniture and ornaments. After the Renaissance, there was a gradual but clear tendency towards a new type of home that rejected openness in favor of privacy.

By the seventeenth century, European town dwellers were becoming increasingly wealthier, and this promoted a separation between the family and economic spheres, thus removing economic activity from the home. This disentanglement of the means of production from family life culminated with the nineteenth-century schism between public and domestic space:

By the early nineteenth century, the distinction between the private house and the public world and become so refined that it was thought to reflect various broader dualities as well, among them suburb and city, craft and industry, and nature and artifice¹. The literary critic Walter Benjamin came to see the nineteenth-century private house as not only separate from the public world but, more significantly, as a retreat from it. (Riley 11)

Whereas the Renaissance house had been *permeable*, in the sense that it sheltered people and activities belonging to the family and to a wider scope in society, the

1. Work at home, however, did not completely disappear from the nineteenth-century household; lawyers and doctors, for instance, still worked in an office connected to their house. Furthermore, even when men left their home to work, "feminine" domestic work took its place.

nineteenth-century home was an *impermeable* structure, which defensively regulated or completely repelled any activity and any person belonging to the outside world. This external environment was often portrayed as vile and ruthless because of its association to aggressive economic activity.

In the same way in which the hostile surroundings were separated from the haven of home, the interior of the house became increasingly segregated in both design and function: “the house was the physical demarcation between home and work, and in turn each room was the physical demarcation involving hierarchy [...], function” (Flanders 9). Medieval-hall residences were characterized by a mingling of people and functions, in a way that suggests that the internal/external dichotomy was not functioning as it did in the nineteenth century; this concept did not seem to be a strong governing force regulating and defining space within the medieval household. Apprentices and servants would share quarters with their masters not because an exceptional allowance or concession was made, but because they were simply not regarded as external members of the house.² The same can be said about economic activity—it was a part of domestic activity, and not alien to it in anyway. The nineteenth-century dwelling, however, became impervious to the outside and to some outsiders. The home, with its

2. During Medieval times and the Renaissance, apprentices and servants were part of the household to the point of sharing sleeping and living space with the owner and his family. In the nineteenth-century, the practice of apprenticeship was still significant, but “by the 1840s apprentices were more likely to be boarded out, or left to fend for themselves” (Tosh 18). In fact, this is the reason for the appearance of several associations that functioned as a “foster family” to them, such as the Young Men’s Christian Association, founded in 1844. The interior/exterior duality had become so accentuated that the label of outsider had befallen the apprentice, a character who had traditionally been regarded as belonging to the household. Servants were not ousted from the household for an obvious dependence on their services, but they were still separated from the family in clear and definite ways, through the demarcation of space. The servants now slept in a distinct area, in the ideal of cases in the attic or another separate area, but often in the kitchen when other quarters were not available. As significant as the sleeping quarters were the thoroughfares—the Victorian home boasted separate staircases and transit routes for servants and family, thus defining functions and limiting the contact between the two groups of inhabitants. The reigning idea was that in the same way in which the interior/exterior label had been successfully applied to the home and the outside world, it was now an effective way to distinguish people within the household and the space that each one was allotted. The apprentice, a former member or at least tenant of the household, could be banished, but the servants, the machinery behind domestic work, could not be extracted from the home; their presence, however, would now be regulated and circumscribed through new functions of space.

connotations as a shelter and haven had also become a site of division, strict regulation, and exclusion, affecting the people and activities within, as well as those outside of it. The description of *Wuthering Heights* (the dwelling in the novel of the same name) illustrates how an Elizabethan or late-Medieval dwelling appears anachronistic and uncivilized to Mr. Lockwood, Heathcliff's new tenant. Lockwood describes entering the hall—dated 1500—and noticing how “one step brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage” (3) and how what the inhabitants call ‘the house’ actually “includes kitchen and parlour” (3). Furthermore, when Isabella Linton enters the house, she asks for a secluded spot in which to take her dinner, or a “parlour,” to which the awful Joseph responds: “Parlour! Nay, we’ve noa parlours” (147). The floor-plan of this medieval-style hall goes completely against the highly separated spaces of the Victorian home, its emphasis on single-purposed rooms, and its preference for vestibular spaces that appear so natural to Mr. Lockwood (and so absent from Heathcliff's dwelling). The medieval layout of the domestic setting actually mirrors the uncivilized nature of the household, as Heathcliff admits to his tenant: “Guests are so exceedingly rare in this house, that I and my dogs [...] hardly know how to receive them” (6). Later, we will see just how far removed is this spatially and morally relaxed medieval setting from its Victorian descendant, and its moralistic and spatially rigid domesticity.

Apart from the rise of a wealthy merchant class, another factor contributed to this evolution of the household, from a permissive space to the segregated one of the nineteenth-century home—the Evangelical Movement. From the period of the 1730s to the 1830s, all denominations, including the most powerful one, the Church of England, were united behind one common front, the Evangelical Movement.³ This

3. According to Armstrong in *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850* (London: University of London Press, 1973), in 1715, 250,000 people out of a population of five and a half million in England and Wales belonged to a dissenting sect. Hugh McLeod's, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996) discusses how the period between 1730 and 1750 was one of great conversions in England, the United States and Germany, a fact that is later confirmed by the

religious and social phenomenon was occurring at the same time as another event that impacted greatly on society—the Industrial Revolution. The economic upheaval of the times inevitably tinged the religious and moral revival, while this religious phenomenon upheld the economic model; the Evangelical Movement was as much a product of Industrialization as it was a promoter of it, marking a difference between this phenomenon and past Puritan revivals. We might recall how, in the previous chapter, I commented on the fusion of economic and religious concerns in the shape of the Great Exhibition of 1851; the Crystal Palace could function as a free-trade cathedral, as a bizarre yet functional marriage between the economic and religious agendas of the time, thus paving the way for the middle-class home to function in a similar fashion.

One of the rising Evangelical denominations was the Methodist Church, which originated in the eighteenth century. The Methodists were driven from the Church of England in 1738, but their teachings and impact on society would continue with the rest of the Evangelical churches that were to come. Methodism contributed greatly to the development of the home and domesticity as ideals. Methodists favored close, family-like meetings at home.⁴ As it developed into a more sophisticated church, Methodism

census conducted on the 30 March 1851 in England (the same year as the opening of the Crystal Palace), which showed that 51% of the population called themselves Anglican while a staggering 41% considered themselves Nonconformist (11).

4. Hugh Meleod's *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), explains the ways in which Methodism and Evangelicalism promoted a new concept of domesticity, a fact that is illustrated in the pattern of missionary activity attached to these churches. While in the eighteenth-century the scope of evangelisation was wider, with missionaries travelling profusely, the nineteenth-century missionary activity was more focalised: "The later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had been the golden age of the itinerant preacher, going from village to village, preaching in the market places. In the Victorian period evangelism tended to be more localised. It included preaching at street corners and in parks, preaching in pubs, and perhaps most important, door-to-door evangelism" (140). In other words, the focus of religious conversion had shifted, and instead of wanting to save those in faraway villages, Evangelicalism decided to preach to those closer to home, and literally *in* the home. The family was the main objective of this home-based evangelisation. Missionary activity follows certain peaks that can be related to other events occurring in England at the time. For instance, after the publication of *Missionary Travels* (1857) by David Livingstone, missionary travel to faraway places increased. But the greatest activity of overseas activity would not come until the 1880s and 1890s, with Imperialism. By this time, the concept of domesticity had severely weakened—what mattered now was conquering faraway lands, by military and religious means, and not the Victorian home. Therefore, the strict observance of Sunday religious activity was now substituted by the amusement activities that were just emerging: "By the 1880s

retained a strong link to the home, principally because it was a “religion of the heart,” paying close attention to individual spirituality. Methodism was initially a minor group within the Evangelical Movement, but, with time, its ideals and those of the other Nonconformists would influence the main religious entity, the Church of England, which began promoting the notion of idyllic domesticity as the most essential part of its teachings.

There was a flux in the concept of domesticity during the nineteenth century, but I will concentrate on the time when this concept and that of the home was strongest. The main characteristic of this reformed Christian home was its isolation from the outside world. This impenetrable barrier was supported by applying the ancient duality between good and evil—within the home all was good while outside of it, all was evil. This contrast was easily acknowledged by considering the characteristics that the surroundings had acquired due to industrialization and commercial activity. This notion permeated all circles, including the academic and artistic world; in 1864, John Ruskin,⁵ the great aesthetic critic of the nineteenth century, delivered a lecture entitled “Lilies: Of Queens’ Gardens,” about the home and woman’s moralizing role in it. The following excerpt illustrates this dichotomy between the pure home and the corrupt world, a notion imbedded in Victorian culture:

This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home: so far as these anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in [...]it is a sacred place, a vestal temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods [...] (*Sesame and Lilies*)

this was beginning to change. Gradually the taboos on Sunday recreation were lifted...In the 1890s, Sunday became the great day for cycling” (199). Missionary activity had a pattern that was influenced by political and social occurrences; a careful look at this pattern proves the importance of domesticity and the home during Victorian times, as well as their decline near the end of the nineteenth-century.

5. Ruskin was raised in a strict Evangelical Anglican household, but his belief fluctuated from devout Evangelicalism to agnosticism and later on to the adoption of his unique version of Christianity. However, his academic writing always retained a strong Evangelical slant.

In this work I argue against the idea that the home could repel “terror and doubt.” The notion of a sheltered home was partly created as an attempt to generate a sense of ease, but the analysis of Gothic fiction of the time will prove just how much terror and doubt did circulate in the air, especially when connected to the household. Furthermore, the idea that this shelter would neutralize *divisions* is one that runs contrary to the main argument of this chapter. In the nineteenth-century home, space was divided not only by separating the house from the world, but by partitioning areas within; spatial segregation, in fact, is the most defining characteristic of the Victorian home. In this excerpt, Ruskin also mentions the Victorian nervousness about anxieties “penetrating” the house. The moralistic atmosphere of the day suggested that, in the same way in which the soul had to be assessed daily for any signs of corruption, the household and its members had to be constantly observed for any signs of evil that could manage to seep from the outside into the household.

Apart from formulating the image of the “house on the hill,” surrounded by a dangerous abyss, the religious tone of the day also encouraged internal divisions within the home. I have already discussed the difference between the household dynamics within medieval and Victorian dwellings, and how these were reflected in their internal layout. The segregation of space within the home took place for both moral and practical reasons. Since the new religiosity was individualistic and moralistic, it demanded constant self-scrutiny and assessment of the moral condition of the person and “these spiritual goals were pursued through private prayer, meditation, diary-keeping and Bible study. A religion which stressed these practices was almost inevitably a religion of the home” (Tosh 36). This constant self-assessment⁶ could not

6. Gerald Parson’s *Religion in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) describes one of the most engaging practices, that of diary-writing. He discusses how people “monitored their spiritual progress with fear and apprehension [...] their journals filled with imperfection and infirmity, doubt and deficiency, signify an overwhelming series of sin and personal unworthiness that found outward expression in comportment and conduct” (19). The writing in these journals could actually be interpreted as Gothic fiction, because of its sombre and anxious tone.

possibly occur in the presence of others or any distractions. Thus, all the members of the family, including children, were now entitled to a space of their own, destined for their religious devotions.

Instead of prohibiting involvement with this ruthless commercial world, middle-class Victorian culture encouraged and justified a committed work ethic. Men, specifically, were encouraged to venture out and earn their family's living even if it meant participating in non-ethical, lucrative schemes. The reward for the hard toil was a return to a Paradisiacal home that would "refresh the inner man by returning at the end of the day to an atmosphere of harmony, from which competition was banished" (Flanders 6). Thus, both the socio-religious and commercial spirit of the times promoted an accentuated division between the outside and inside, between the corrupt world of business and the soothing, moralistic haven of home; this symbiotic relationship became tangible in the way that space was managed. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Crystal Palace embodied and advertised this competitive spirit of industrialization and imperialism (albeit under the pretence of international cooperation), whereas the home interpreted it negatively, thus sheltering itself and its occupants from it, "restoring" the father upon his return from its corrosive effects.

Apart from the issues of industrialization and the Evangelical phenomenon, there were two other factors that contributed to the shaping of the Victorian home. These were the development of public transportation and the unprecedented urbanization, which occurred in the nineteenth century and which radically modified British society. From the 1840s onwards, the railroad connecting main cities in Britain was developed. Furthermore, the horse-drawn omnibus was particularly active in the 1850s, as was the horse-drawn tram in the 1860s. This did not simply mean that people could move about more easily or that men could leave their homes in order to go to work. It meant that immense suburban growth took place due to a growing desire to be even more separated from the workplace and to reside in a more secluded area. There were practical reasons for this move away from the city, such as to flee increasing levels

of noise and pollution. However, there was a deeper and more symbolic reason for the move—the sanctity of the home had to be protected by distancing it as much as possible from a source of corruption.

Urbanization was not merely the answer of the middle and upper class to move away from the commercial center; it also proved to be a very lucrative business for some. Architecture was the most prestigious side of construction, and the large quantity of journals dedicated to the field are proof of this: *The Builder* (founded in 1842), *The Building News*, *The Architect*, *The Architectural Review*, *The British Architect*; even *The Illustrated London News* and *Punch* would report on the newest architectural happenings. But apart from architecture, building and contracting was what supported the construction frenzy during the Victorian period: “The building trade was one of the largest industries in the country, employing about six per cent of the total labour force” (Dixon, Muthesius 15). Furthermore, this enterprise was especially active during the nineteenth century to a degree in which it had never been before: “One-third of the houses in Britain today were built before the First World War, and most of these are Victorian. In a period of less than seventy-five years, over six million houses were built, and the majority stand and function as homes still” (Flanders 20). It is important to point out that, unlike its continental neighbours, who favoured blocks of flats and communal living, British (especially English) construction focused on the building of semi-detached or detached houses. This unprecedented suburban expansion was not without its detractors, who longed for a rural and less crowded past. A grim depiction of suburbia appears in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862); when discussing a visit to “Crescent Villas” in West Brompton, the landscape of suburban expansion is equalled to a “desolation of desolations”:

the houses were large, but they lay half embedded amongst the chaos of brick and mortar rising around them. New terraces, new streets, new squares led away into hopeless masses of stone and plaster on every side. The roads were sticky with damp clay, which clogged the wheels of the cab and buried the fetlocks of the horse. The desolation of desolations—that awful aspect of incompleteness and discomfort which pervades a new and unfinished neighbourhood. (227)

One cannot speak of *a* Victorian house, since the nineteenth century witnessed diversity in architectural and ornamental styles that soon exploded into a full-blown “Battle of the Styles.” Robert Kerr, a Scottish architect, is today better known for his productive career as an architectural writer and critic than for his designs or buildings. Between 1847 and 1900, he published twenty-six articles in major architectural journals, such as *The Builder*. A paper which he delivered at the Architecture Exhibition of 1860, entitled “The Battle of the Styles,” would provide the term for the aesthetic phenomenon which Britain and parts of Europe underwent during the nineteenth century.

Within this proliferation of tendencies, one might still identify two main architectural movements of the time: the Neoclassical and the Neo-gothic. The Neoclassical tendency was characterized by an adherence to the style and precepts of Greek and Roman ancient architecture. Neo-gothic or Medievalism, on the other hand, emerged as the strongest alternative to Classicism during the nineteenth century. The style consisted of adopting elements from medieval Gothic architecture to nineteenth-century buildings, both public and private. In direct contrast to Classicism, Medievalism supported the notions of irregularity, ornamentation (over-ornamentation at times) and variety. Architectural revivalism was just another sign of how the Victorian era was characterized by rapid change, undoubtedly shaped by industrialization and invention, all of which resulted in a sense of an acceleration of time. The implementation of the “neo” label, however, was also about recapturing the past. The relationship between Neo-gothic and Victorianism was a strong one, and was based on a desire to retain and preserve a medieval past, interpreted by some, like Pugin and Ruskin,⁷ as eminently

7. “Art and Architecture” in David Punter and Glennis Byron *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) discusses Augustus Pugin’s and John Ruskin’s roles in the defense of the Gothic as a style that was supposedly aesthetically and morally superior, and as such, a style that should represent the British national identity (despite a historically-inaccurate connection to Britain). These authors also discuss the link between the Gothic revival and early Gothic fiction. Instead of exploring this connection, my study turns to the nineteenth-century and to the relation between the middle-class home and Gothic literature of the time.

English. Architectural style became intertwined with the matter of national identity and a polemic arose, weaved by nationalistic and religious threads, as becomes obvious in the next quotation from Collins's *The Dead Secret* (1857): "to beautify the old house from top to bottom with bran-new mediaeval decorations under the direction of a gentleman who was said to be an architect, but who looked, to my mind, the very image of a Popish priest in disguise"(56). Despite disagreements about style and "Englishness," in all revivalist buildings a certain past was nostalgically recreated and crystallized as a building, in order to bring back that which had passed or died. The Revivalist impulse during Victorian times set up the perfect stage for haunting in the Gothic fiction of the time. While in life attempts were made to recapture a past long gone, in fiction, this stylistic necrophilia was the perfect setting for supernatural occurrences. In a sense, this desire to grasp the past did manage to bring back the dead, both in architectural and literary space.

Even though the shadow of the Battle of the Styles loomed large over the nineteenth-century home, one can still refer to a general layout shared by most of the middle-class Victorian houses. The various styles principally affected the structure in a superficial manner, determining external or internal elements of decoration but not the way in which space was distributed and divided within the home. Two classical works on nineteenth-century history of architecture reveal a basic sketch of the internal layout of the Victorian home. Robert Kerr's *The Gentleman's House* (1864) discusses the evolution of the English house, from the eleventh to the nineteenth century (I have focused on the nineteenth century only), while Herman Muthesius's *The English House*, which has become a classic of its kind, is a valuable account of nineteenth-century homes from a foreigner's perspective.⁸ Muthesius's work, which is full of

8. Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927) was a German architect, influential architecture critic and diplomat, who lived in London from 1896 to 1904 as a cultural attaché of the German Embassy. During his stay in Britain, he researched and wrote extensively on the Arts and Crafts house, and the English house in general, after which he published what would become a seminal work on architecture, *Das englische haus* (1904).

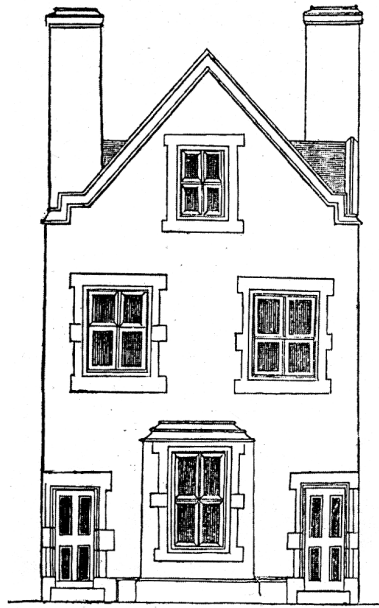
social and cultural commentary first appeared as *Das englische haus* in Berlin in three volumes (1904-05) and is still considered one of the most valuable and essential sources of information on domestic space of the period. I will present some of Muthesius's observations, as well as some of his detailed floorplans in order to facilitate a better comprehension of space in a Victorian middle-class home. Kerr's and Muthesius's works, in fact, are both representative of their times, since their objectives and structure reflect the Victorian obsession with classification; they provide Linnaen-like lists and categorizations of rooms, furniture, and overall characteristics of the homes.

Most sources agree that the layout of the nineteenth-century house derives from a single source—the large country estate: “English residential needs are embodied most fully in the large country-house...the primal, basic form of English house” (Muthesius 81). The large country estate was the vantage point from which three other basic house types developed: the **small country house** was simply a shrunken version of it, while the **town house** and **small suburban house** varied considerably in its layout from the large country home, because of the significant reduction in space. House owners across the economic spectrum wished to emulate the lifestyle of the wealthier classes, which would explain why all Victorian house types seem to be based on a single prototype, the wealthier kind of home. Furthermore, the issue of standardization facilitates noting shared characteristics between English households. Marked differences between homes existed because of economic and status discrepancies, but households of the same class were very much alike: “So one can classify the households of England according to income and know at once precisely how things will be done in a household of a given class. They have the same number of servants and the work is apportioned in exactly the same way, they have the same rooms, the same meals, the same daily routine for the inmates” (Muthesius 69). Since my study centers on the middle-class household, I will focus on the elements that best define it, while ignoring those that are limited to most lower and upper-class abodes. Obviously, since no exact boundary may be

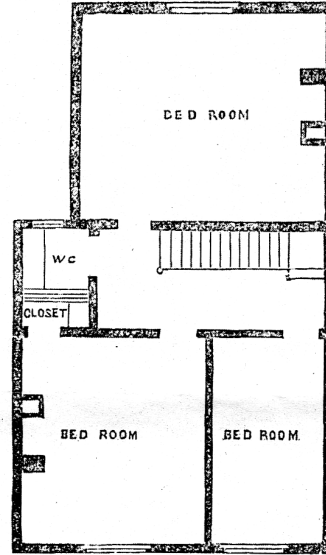
drawn, some elements that I mention hereafter would have also been present in poorer and richer households.

The Victorian home was divided into two main areas—that of the family, and that of the servants. The family departments consisted of day-rooms (reception rooms), bedrooms, and children's rooms. The servant rooms included the areas related to the kitchen, the laundry offices, the bakery and brewery room, places of storage and cellars, and the servants' bedrooms. Even though the servants were in the lower rung of the social ladder, the areas that they used and frequented were as specific and delimited as those for the family. Even in the smaller houses, as in the following, described as "a building intended for a rather small family with a moderate income," the domestic offices are placed in the back and out of sight for the family and guests that would make use of the parlour and the sitting room in the front. Notice also, the obvious horizontal division into dayrooms and domestic offices on the ground floor, main bedrooms on the first floor, and children's bedrooms at the very top.

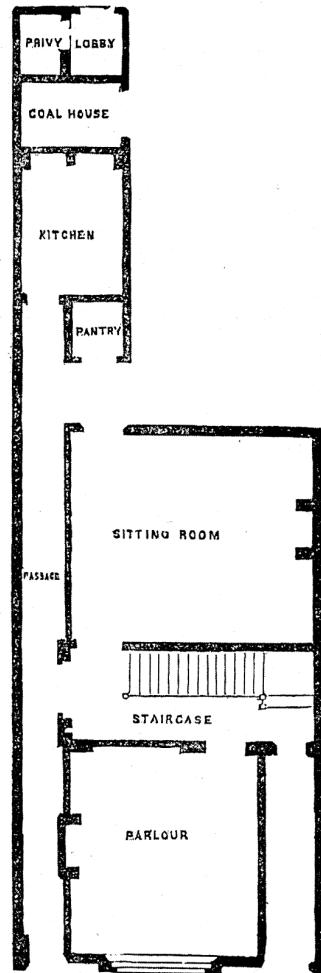
The **kitchen** was used exclusively for preparing food, but definitely not for anything related to cleaning, following the strict hygienic discourse of the time. The ideal position for the kitchen was on the east wall, ensuring the entry of ventilation and light from the north. The **scullery** was where the washing-up was actually done, and because of its obvious relation to the kitchen, it was situated right next to it. There were also storage rooms, including the meat-larder and the pantry. Larger homes would also have a **servants' hall** where the employees would dine and sit during their free time. The contact between the family and servants was kept to the minimum by supplying both parties with their own thoroughfares; the family and the guests would use the main staircase while the servants and the children would use the back one. Space was segmented and transit was restricted to certain people, thus reflecting a "new concern for the moral and social welfare of the country house community, especially servants and children" (Girouard 32). The following plan shows the strict division between domestic offices and dayrooms for the family and guests; the offices are symbolically



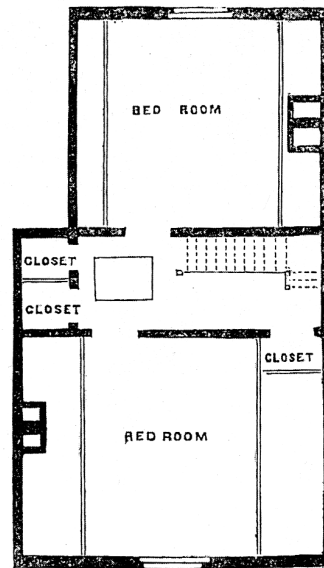
Elevation.



Second Floor.



Ground Plan.

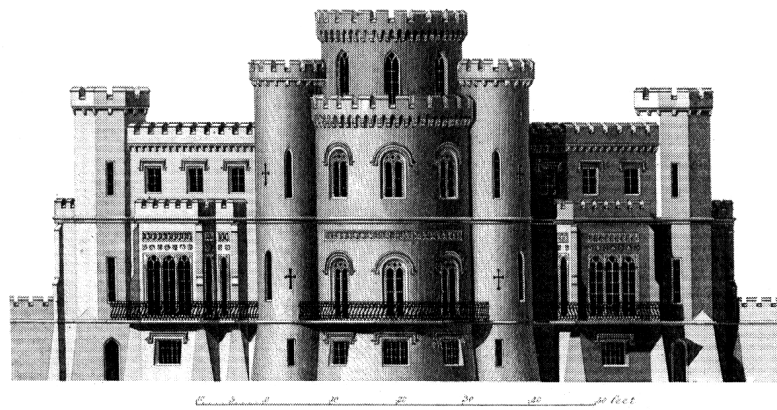


First Floor.

Fig. 1. Plans for a small house, in *The Builder* (Sep. 1843) 387.

placed at the back, within boxy chambers, with a grand staircase serving as dramatic backdrop and boundary between the servants' area and the dayrooms: the dining room, library and drawing room are impressively placed at the front of this "castellated villa," literally pointing, arrow-like, its presence and power to the world.

FRONTISPIECE TO THE PRACTICAL BUILDERS PRICE BOOK.



DESIGN FOR A CASTELLATED VILLA.

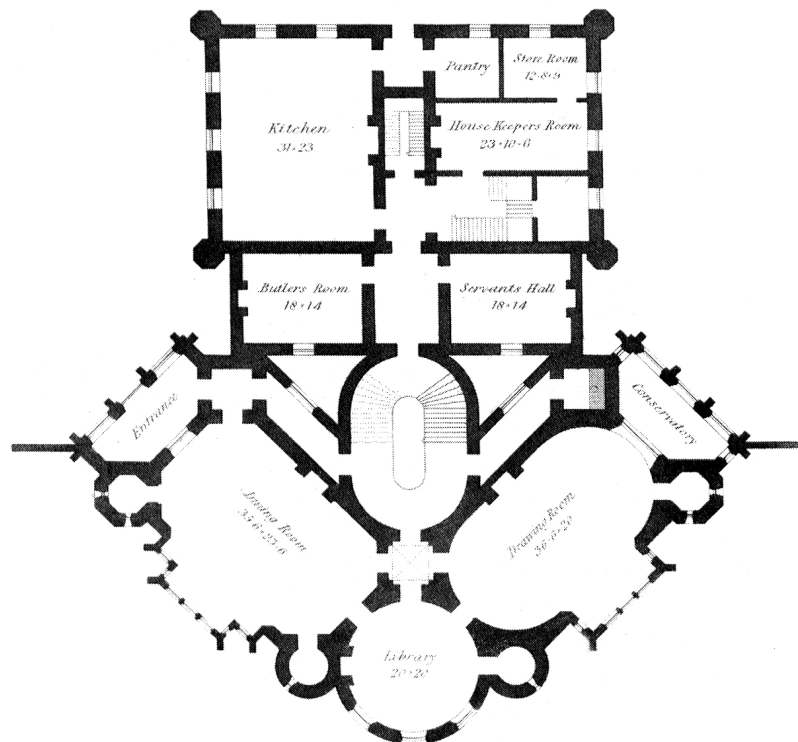


Fig. 2. Floor plan for castellated villa appearing in Kelly's price books of 1825, 1841 and 1863, in Helen Long, *Victorian Houses and Their Details* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2002) 76.

But even when people could not afford grandiose domestic layouts as the one above, they aspired to homes that were shaped by the same basic tenets of privacy and morality. Even the smallest of middle-class homes would strive to have a back staircase for the use of servants. In the house below this back staircase originates from the scullery/kitchen area and goes up to the servants' bedroom; despite the proximity between the family chambers and those of the servants, it was deemed necessary to provide not only a separate staircase, but to seal off any connection between the two parties with a party-wall between both staircases and chambers.

Apart from the main division between the family and servant department, the Victorian house reflected the roles allotted to the main members of the household, the father, mother and their children according to their gender and rank. The area that he was granted reinforced the father's role, as economic provider and authority figure. His

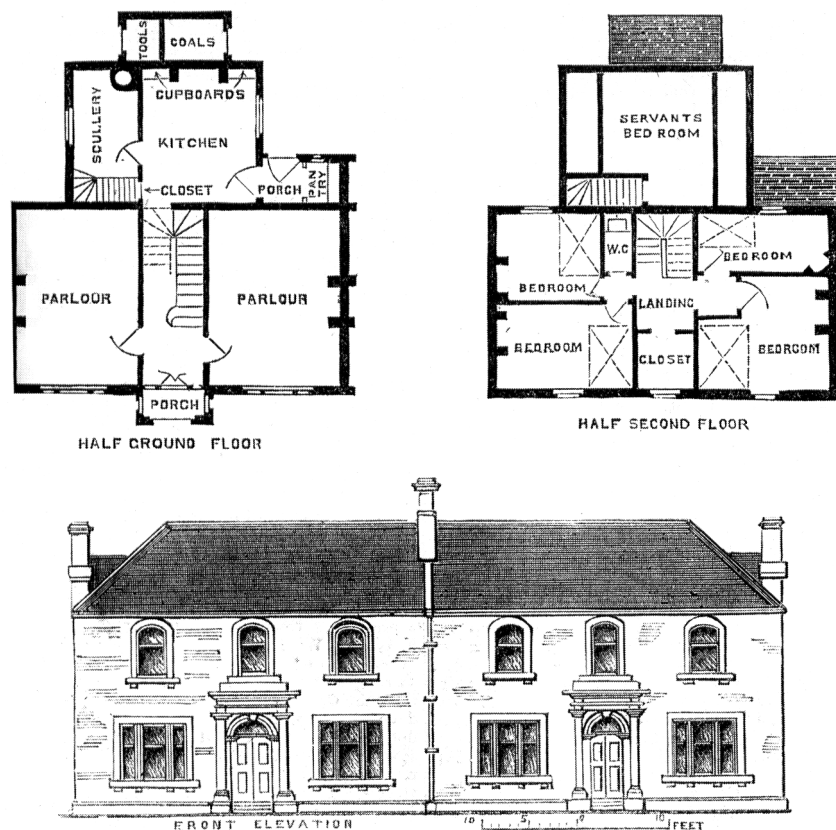


Fig. 3. Design for small houses, 1882, in Helen Long, *Victorian Houses and their Details* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2002) 115.

library highlighted his intellectual supremacy over the rest of the household (women made use of the space but it was regarded as a predominantly masculine space). The library was also the area where the head of the family would write his correspondence and literally “take care of business;” most of the commercial activity, however, usually took place outside of the household. The rest of the rooms that were assigned to the father highlighted the idea of home as refuge away from the world, and were dedicated to the enjoyment of manly pleasures, such as smoking or playing billiards, thus the existence of the **smoking room** and the **billiard room** in the wealthiest homes. A **gun-room** was also present in grand country estates, once again highlighting the masculine pastime of hunting.

The allocation of rooms to the wife/mother also reinforced her role within the household. First of all, the production of idyllic domesticity, including the enormous responsibility for the smooth running of domestic work, was the wife/mother’s task. In other words, the home was an ideal that revolved around women, making all of the home an ultimately female area. However, one might insist that there were rooms within the house which were essentially feminine or more feminine than others: the drawing room, the parlor, the morning room and, when available, the boudoir. The **drawing room** was of principal importance, since it was “the center of the house, literally and spiritually. It was the status indicator, the mark of gentility, the room from where the woman governed her domain” (Flanders 168); it was essentially a formal room for receiving and entertaining guests. The **parlour** differed from the drawing room in that it was less formal, usually destined for the use of family members or very close friends. The **morning room** was, apart from a breakfast-room, the administrative site for the good housekeeper; this is where she would run the household and answer and write correspondence. Whereas the morning room was the organizational core of the household, the **boudoir** was the lady’s private retreat; it could be located next to but separate from the drawing room or in a more intimate location next to the bedroom (on a different story). One can ascertain that the feminine spaces in the household

could be public or more private in nature and function, but they all accentuated the social and administrative responsibility of the woman, whereas the masculine spaces stressed the father's right to unwind as soon as he returned from the outside world where he toiled in order to provide for his family.

Children, the future of the family, acquired a new importance in the Victorian household. The nineteenth century view of the cult of innocence extended to the figure of the child, and the latter now began to be regarded as an individual, in ways which were unprecedented: "the child-centered home was developing" (Flanders 6). An article in *The Builder*, from 10 Jan. 1852, discusses the necessity for separate bedrooms for children in the home and proves how raising moral children was one of the main tasks in the home: "having separate bed-rooms for the parents, boys, and girls, [...] is well calculated to promote the physical and moral health of the occupants" (24). The wealthiest of homes had a **day**, a **night nursery**, and a separate **schoolroom**, proving that the most ideal situation offered a greater degree of distinction, thus a greater amount of rooms.

The influence of a new morality and the economic model of the day were among the social factors that shaped and controlled the roles performed by the father, mother and child, as the central characters within the household. The restrictive role of each family member is clearly manifested in the internal divisions of the home; both the religious movements and the economic model of the day profited from a household with clear internal divisions that reflected each of its members' roles and responsibilities. For the wife, the home was a carefully orchestrated site, while for the husband it was a refuge from a ruthless commercial world; for the children, it was a place that was progressively becoming more centered around them. The following plans testify to the strict regulation of space within the home, as well as to the relationship between the different areas. The first illustration (Robert Kerr) displays the tremendous diversity of rooms that wealthier homes or "gentleman's homes" as the author would say had; notice the quantity of separate staircases, an issue that I will refer to in the next chapter.

NUN-APPLETON, YORKSHIRE.

By Mr Lamb, 1863.

From the Builder and other Sources

Plate 31.
Nun-Appleton

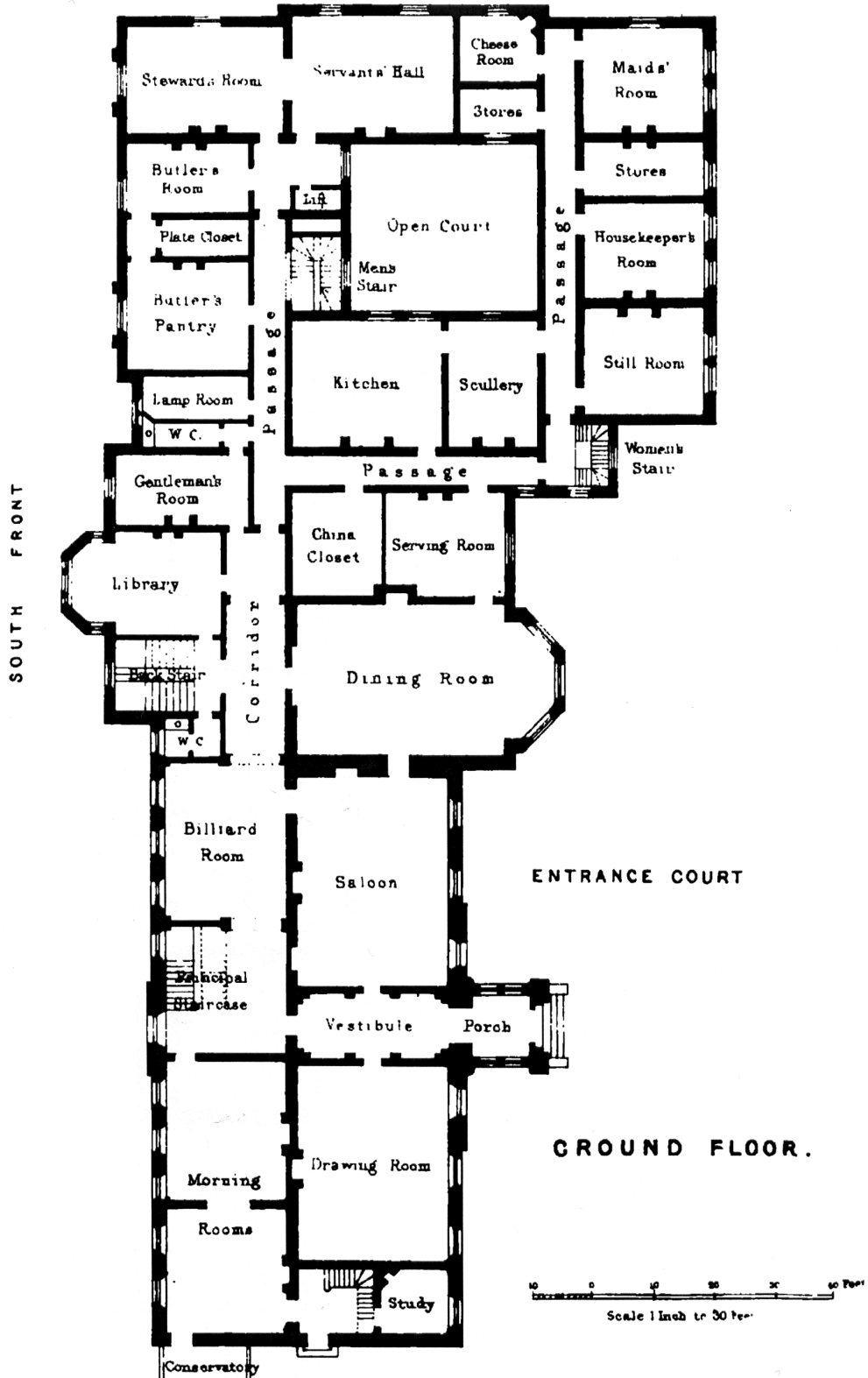
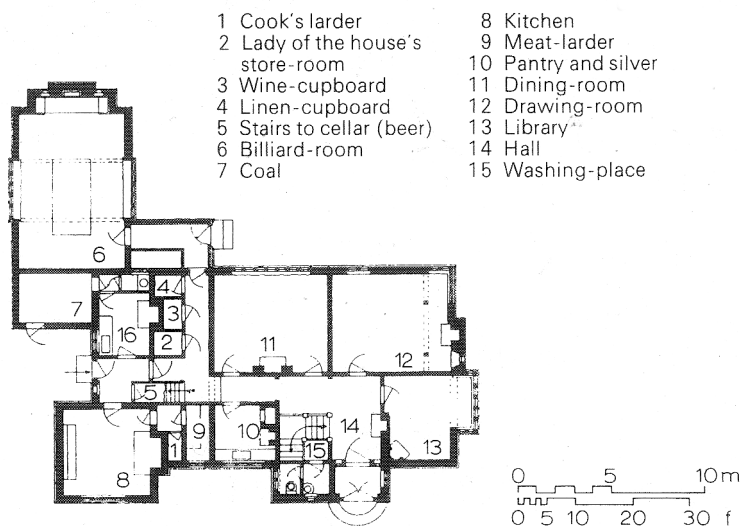


Fig. 4. Ground floor plan of a large "Gentleman's House." Nun-Appleton, Yorkshire, in Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*. 2nd. ed. (London: John Murray, 1865) Plate 31.

But even in Fig. 5, (Hermann Muthesius) which is described as “a small country house,” one can still see how compartmentalized and complex the layout could be, because of this insistence on separate spheres, functions and people within the home. The existence of numerous cupboards for different uses as well as the separation of dayrooms by their different functions, displays an urge to subdivide space almost infinitely, as a means to contain and control the home’s inhabitants and their routines.



42 The Gables, Esher, Surrey. By Seth Smith. View from forecourt



243 The Gables. Plan of ground floor

Fig. 5. Small country home. The Gables, Esher, Surrey, in Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1979)131.

This excessive division of space would often result in ridiculously complex layouts that generated feelings of disorientation and even unease. We can confirm this in the fiction of the time, for example when Jane Eyre describes her disorienting voyage through Lowood: “I passed from compartment to compartment, from passage to passage, of a large and irregular building”(36). Lowood is a large educational institution, but even large Victorian homes like Audley Court, in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), could display this labyrinthine potential:

a noble place, inside as well as out [...] a place in which you incontinently lost yourself if ever you were so rash as to go about it alone; a house in which no one room had any sympathy with another, every chamber running off at a tangent into an inner chamber, and through that turn, led back into that very part of the house from which you thought yourself the farthest. (2)

In the next chapter we will explore the Gothic potential of hallways in Victorian fiction and in the middle-class home itself.

Unveiling the Victorian Home

The Home’s “English” Qualities

Many nineteenth-century architects and writers insisted that architecture, especially dwellings, reflected a national character: “This national character attaches itself far more to domestic architecture than that to that which is displayed in public buildings” (“English Domestic Architecture”). Journals and books of the time discussed the “Englishness” of the nineteenth-century house: “the greatest merit of the English house as it stands completed before us is that it is English, that is, it conforms totally to English conditions, embodies totally English ways of life” (Muthesius 11). This feeling that the English home reflected the cultural identity often resulted in an acute idealization and nationalism: “There are few good things so good—and therefore so well worth describing—as a good English house” (Kerr first ed. 1864). In various journal articles, the English home is set apart from the dwellings of “barbarous races” as in the following example from *The Builder*: “Enter an English home, and all the

parts and arrangements of it indicate the national taste, and the national advancement in domestic art”(1850: 98, 99). Despite the inflated tone of the previous quotations (or *because* of it), we can employ it to list some cultural qualities that have crystallized in the structure of the Victorian home. The following discussion aims to see how, what these authors called the “English ways of life” are reflected in the internal layout of the middle-class Victorian home; I argue that the cultural priorities, concerns, and anxieties of the time come across in the way that space was treated within the family abode. Furthermore, I suggest that the way in which space was managed turned the Victorian home into a perfect candidate for haunting.

The first cultural characteristic, which nineteenth-century critics highlight when discussing what made the English lifestyle unique, was its “individuality,” or isolated and privileged position. Architects and architectural historians that appeared in journals of the time, often provided a deterministic explanation for the way in which the English dwelling had evolved into the Victorian home. English individuality was seen as a direct result of their living on an island: “separation from its nearest neighbours gives the island its independent development; links with the remotest bring influences from afar which are bound to intensify its individuality” (Muthesius 7). Apart from geographical isolation, which supposedly caused a cultural uniqueness, authors would often cite the outmoded concept of race as another factor that contributed to English peculiarity.⁹ For instance, the article entitled “The Influence of Climate on Race,” (1865) highlighted the contrast between Southern people, who were supposedly not as anxious or gloomy as their Northern neighbours; the advantage of inclement weather, however, was that it apparently nurtured a greater spirit for survival: “A hard winter is a Teutonic institution. It is a great teacher of stubborn endurance, providence, industry,

9. In *Scotland and Fictions of Geography: North Britain 1760-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Penny Fielding discusses how the notion of the effect of climate on race was popular since the 18th century, becoming increasingly racist during the nineteenth-century.

and other virtues”(*Fortescue*). According to these critics, living on an island and being descendants of “the Anglo-Saxon race” contributed to the English desire to live in a detached home as opposed to their continental neighbours, who preferred to live in multi-storeyed blocks of flats.¹⁰ Views like the following, which idealize English independent housing, linking it to issues of morality and dignity, were shared by many nineteenth-century critics:

For there can be no doubt that to live in a private house is in every way a higher form of life. Its most important qualities are ethical and are virtually incalculable. Just as a higher force determines that a man shall found a family, so he certainly has an inborn instinct to create a permanent dwelling-place for himself and his family, his own little kingdom in which he may rule, spread himself and blossom. (Muthesius 9)

Later on, I will argue that it is precisely the English concern for independence and autonomous living that contributes to the haunted quality of the Victorian home; the sheltered and intensely segregated aspects of the English house, when taken to the extremes of the nineteenth century, actually produce the opposite of what originally was intended—the family haven becomes a potential site of horror.

Privacy and Control

Individuality, regardless of how it resulted, is decidedly linked to privacy, and privacy is, without a doubt, the main characteristic of the Victorian lifestyle and home. It not only described the way people behaved towards one another but the way in which the house and its features such as entrances, thoroughfares, and rooms were planned, in order to ensure the utmost separation of space between its members. An article entitled “Houses and Homes” (1862) in *Good Words* discusses the issue of privacy and

10. Older as well as recent historians contrast the English situation with that of parts of Ireland and Scotland, where tenements abound instead of independent houses. Critics notes that this is due, to a great extent, to leading Scottish architects studying in France and mirroring much of that country’s building characteristics and patterns of living.

its link to the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* dimensions of home, much before Freud had published his famous treatise. The author, W.T. Gairdner, says that one of the meanings of *heimlich* in German is “secret, or private, clandestine, often used in a bad sense”(411). I argue that the Victorian home’s architectural and symbolic qualities may turn the ideal version of the *heimlich* home into its darker version, precisely because of the overemphasized concept of privacy and secrecy. Gairdner also supports what other critics had said about the Englishness of the home, by bringing up the etymological origin of the word home: “Now, a home, or a hame—to use the Scotch word, which is a great deal nearer the original word than the present English form-hame which is the Anglo-Saxon ham, is a word *that contains within it the idea of privacy, secrecy, living apart*” (411 emphasis added). The author insists that continental neighbours do not have a word as such, and that the term reflects the uniquely English concept of home. If the word and idea of “home” is unique to this nation, and if both the term and the concept are drenched in the idea of privacy, secrecy and living apart, it is not difficult to view the middle-class Victorian home as its darker and more clandestine version—the haunted house.

The issue of privacy is so significant in this English *ham* that Gairdner discusses, that he reminds the reader that as a crime, burglary is far more severe than robbery, because “the essence of burglary is *the breaking in stealthily upon the privacy of the home*” (411 emphasis added). The crime of burglary, then, lies not in the stealing of things, but in something worst—in the desecration of privacy in the home. Furthermore, the term “stealthily” implies deceit and a certain mystery, something which could be reflected in the phantoms which *stealthily* appear or materialize in Gothic fiction of the time. Apart from differentiating burglary from robbery, Gairdner says that English law protects the master of the household “in making it [the household] absolutely his own, with power to do what he likes with it,” even when the home turns into “the abode of a tyrant and his slaves, a place of hate and fear” (411). This last phrase clearly shows us how the positive version of the haven of home, away from a malignant world, can

turn into an evil place of its own. The sense of privacy reigning in an English home of the nineteenth century could be easily perceived as something negative and even terrifying, generating tales that illustrated its more *unheimlich* aspects.

Privacy is directly related to control, to the desire of the Victorian middle-class culture to lessen numerous anxieties by controlling its environment. In the same way in which the Crystal Palace sought to harness the power of the British Empire and the Industrial Revolution by exhibiting it in a controlled fashion (as museums do and did), the Victorian home relied heavily on privacy as a means to create a barrier between home and a hostile world and, most importantly, as a means to construct internal boundaries that would monitor social exchange within the household.

Controlling the environment around the house began during the initial planning stages of the house, even before it was built. The location of the house on a plot of land and its relation to the elements and to the weather was the most important aspect to consider before building a home. Nineteenth-century architects give detailed instructions of how the house's ideal location had to be achieved, thus proving the extreme care that is invested on the choice of site. Continental architects considered these factors as well, but because of England's abundant rain and limited sunlight, the English situation is unique: "the main object in building a cottage is to produce a comfortable dwelling, and that for this purpose a dry airy situation, in which, if possible, the ground falls gently from the cottage on every side; an aspect *that will allow the sun to shine on every side wall of the cottage* a portion of every day in the year" ("English Domestic Architecture" 431 emphasis added). This situation differs noticeably with that in the rest of Europe, where "the principal rooms must look on to the street" (Muthesius 68). Whereas the majority of nineteenth-century European homes seemed concerned with display or with presenting the fronts of their homes towards the street, thus, towards the rest of society, the English home was more concerned with its relation to the sun. Like a sunflower or a planet that revolves around the sun, the English house existed in relation to the elements (mainly the sun), and not to the surrounding world.

This concept, translated into architectural terms, resulted in the notion of *aspect*, “the side of a building facing a particular direction” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Kerr’s work is particularly careful in providing instructions dealing with the aspect of an area or room of the house:

With regard to Aspect, it has already been shown that a Dining-room, whether for early or late meals, ought to look in some degree Northward; on the other hand, a sitting-room should obviously look in some Southward direction; the Westward quarters—those of level sunset and rain—are more or less unsuitable for either case; and a tendency Eastward, as a general rule, is acceptable for both. (100)

This excerpt is merely a fragment of a lengthy discussion that is continuously brought up throughout the book for all of the areas in the house; this proves how essential and complex the matter of location of the house was. Positioning the house in such a way that it could benefit the most from the elements evinces how much the Victorian architect and home-owner wished to control their surroundings. In the same way that the Crystal Palace derived directly from Paxton’s hothouses, edifices where the weather was artificially controlled, the Victorian house was a domestic attempt to tame nature as much as possible, by creating the most ideal internal conditions possible. Controlling conditions has always been a concern of architects, but because of the peculiarity of the English weather, managing sunlight as much as possible became a priority in Victorian-home design and led to a very strict observance in regards to positioning. The fact that sunlight had to be regulated in such a strict fashion translates interestingly into Victorian fiction. A home placed in an often gloomy or overcast scenario was the perfect candidate for supernatural occurrences in fiction. More importantly, however, the issue of aspect also unveils the Victorian obsession with rigidity and observance of rules; this tense and rigorous environment would also contribute to feelings of oppression which became manifest (perhaps in a cathartic way) in Gothic fiction of the time. In this analysis, I consider privacy and control to be Victorian fixations that were compulsively repeated on the stage of the middle-class home, both in real life and in fiction.

I have mentioned the factors of geography and race and their relationship to “English individuality” as arguments that were used during the nineteenth century. I have also identified privacy and control as the ruling aspects within the household. Now, I will mention a third factor that was also cited in Victorian times and is still relevant in a modern discussion—the determinant role of the weather on the lifestyle and architecture of the Victorian home. I argue that the weather, along with privacy and control, were forces that contributed to a centripetal move away from the world and towards the most internal areas of the house. While in continental Europe, people were socializing outside their homes (in cafés, in the streets), or in external parts of their houses (terraces, balconies), the nineteenth century English favoured family or small gatherings within their enclosed homes, “in the ordinary shelter afforded by a house from the inclemency of the weather” (“Domestic Architecture in England”).

The same contrast of exterior vs. interior living is apparent when considering English homes of different times, those from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries: “the English house became ever more inward-turning. The small wrought-iron balconies that had decorated so many Georgian houses vanished, seemingly overnight” (Flanders 8). While browsing through English architectural journals of the nineteenth century, one realizes that the subject of balconies in general is not often mentioned, and when it is, it is not addressed in detail. There are two main instances in which it was mentioned, however. The first was while discussing houses or festivities in “Southern” or Mediterranean countries. Articles like “Houses of Madrid” and “The Carnival in Rome,” (*The Builder*) present homes with balconies in the countries mentioned; furthermore, after reading these pieces, one gets the impression of the central part that the balcony played in these cultures, mainly because the houses involved had an outward relationship towards life in the streets or the outside. One also notices the contrast between the use of balconies in southern countries and that in England. Foreign balconies are functional and not merely decorative—articles and

illustrations depict people standing or sitting on them, while celebrating a festivity, while these elements in English homes are usually superficial features.

The other instance in which balconies are referred to in these journals is particularly interesting, since it is directly related to their use in English homes. Despite the scarce references, when balconies in English homes are mentioned, the topics that are addressed are their instability and the danger that they pose to the inhabitants of the home or to passer-bys underneath them. An article from Sat. July 11, 1846, for example, discusses this particular threat, or the:

Apparent insecurity of many of the balconets by which the windows towards the streets are ostensibly protected. I am astonished, in fact, that anyone arrived at years of discretion should ever [...] trust his precious weight for even one moment to many of these precipitating traps. (*The Builder*: 329)

The word “balconets” is very relevant to this discussion; English balconies mentioned in these documents are usually balconets, not full balconies. In other words, their function is relegated to the decorative and to protecting the windows, as is clearly stated in the previous quote. While real balconies have *doors* so that people could step out and use them, the majority of English features did not (windows, not doors, would open onto the balconets, mostly in order to access flowerboxes). A balconet acts, in a sense, as a buffer to the window, thus to a source of entry to the home; it repels undesirable elements such as rain from hitting the façade directly. On a symbolic level, it also creates a certain barrier between the outside of the home, which was perceived as dangerous, and the shelter of home. Those daring to make use of them were risking their lives, as is stated in the article; on a literal level, they were risking a terrible fall, and on a symbolic level, they were exposing themselves to be dragged down by these “precipitating traps” into the abyss of the outside world. Sometimes the news about balcony or balconet collapses bordered on the sensational and morbid, as in the example below:

DREADFUL BALCONY ACCIDENT.—Yesterday week, a dreadful accident occurred at the residence of Mr. Kennedy, 40, Claremont-square, Clerkenwell, to a young woman named Harriet Boxell, a servant in the family, by the falling of a balcony on which she was standing at the time, cleaning the windows, when she received such injuries as to lead to the belief that they will terminate fatally. In her descent she fell on the iron railings in front of the house door, and the point of one of them entered her back, under the right shoulder, where she was suspended. Several persons, seeing her dreadful position and hearing her screams, ran to her assistance. They with some difficulty, as the rail was barbed, lifted her up and got her off, when the blood poured profusely from the wound. Mr. Luke, surgeon, Claremont-square, immediately attended her, and found that the point of the rail had entered the posterior part of the chest, broken some ribs, and part penetrated the lung. He administered to her relief, after which she was removed to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. There were favourable symptoms on Monday.

Fig. 6. *The Lady's Newspaper* (4 Sep. 1852) Issue 297:143.

Another point that supports the idea that I have presented on balconies is that of the nineteenth-century preoccupation with “projections,” or any elements that protruded beyond the façade of the home. This worry is reflected in several Building Acts.¹¹ These nineteenth-century legislations were clearly motivated by an effort to improve not just building irregularities, but health conditions of the British population.¹² Articles that appear in journals of the time prove the growing importance of the issue as the nineteenth century progressed. Most of the acts dealt with commercial projections, meaning structural additions to shops or signs that were obstructing the passage of pedestrians on the pavement, for instance. A structure such as a shed was in fact an

11. The Metropolitan Building Act of 1844 and the Health of Towns Act of 1848 were just two of the many bodies of legislation passed, where building and sanitary regulations were inseparable. There had been acts passed before, dating to medieval times and Elizabethan times, like the 1667 legislation of London (after the Great Fire in 1666), but building acts blossomed with the increased urbanization of the nineteenth-century and with the problems that came with it. One of the issues that the Victorian acts concentrated on was the issue of projections.

12. See Kit Wedd, *The Victorian Society Book of London: The Victorian House*. (London: Aurum Press, 2002) for detailed information on epidemics. For instance, the author discusses how in 1832 and 1848-49 cholera epidemics killed thousands, leading to efforts to improve living conditions of the inhabitants of major cities and smaller settlements. 53,293 people died in the 1848-49 epidemic in England and Wales (12).

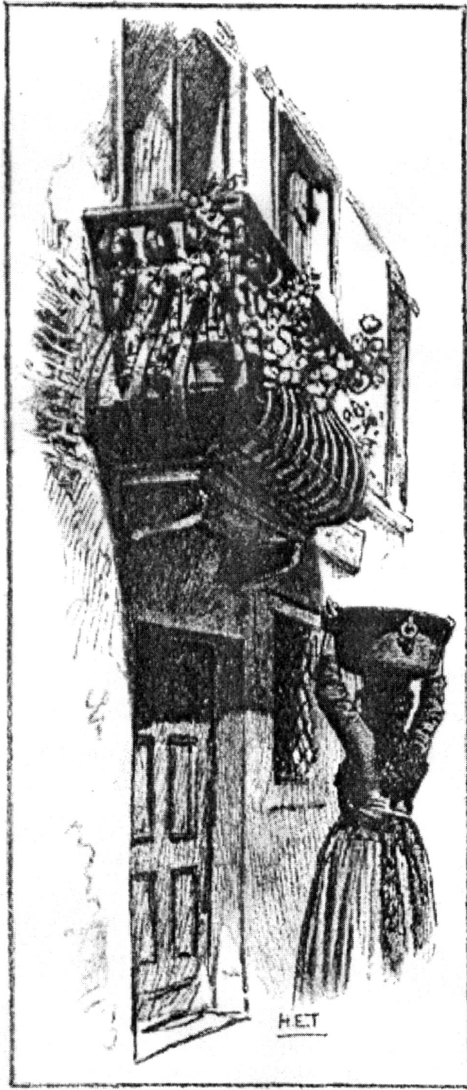


Fig. 7. Balcony in Venice, in
The Magazine of Art (Jan. 1893) 311.

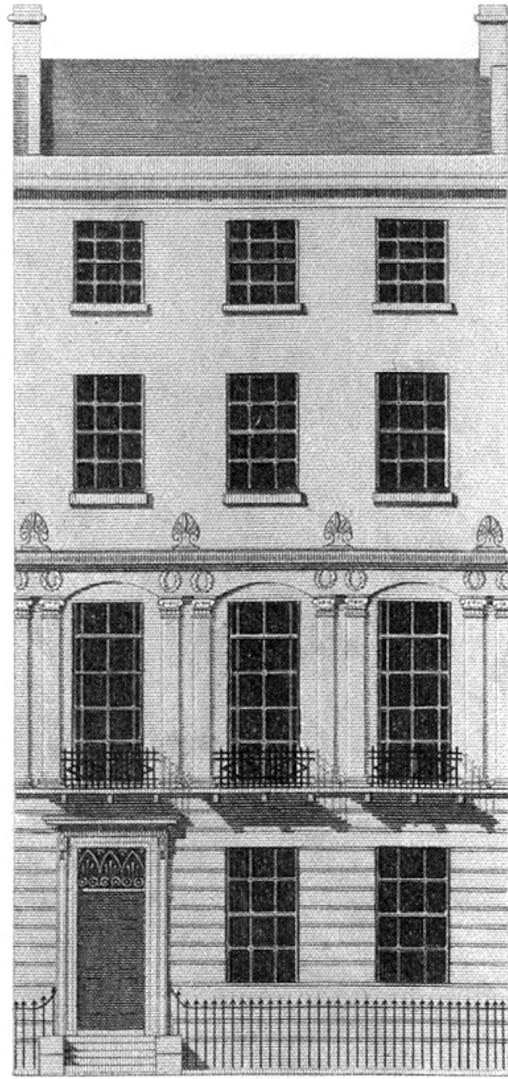


Fig. 8. Balconet in London, in
The New and Improved Practical Builder (1836).

extreme projection, and one that would have caused much discontent. Nevertheless, a look at more subtle projections points to a Victorian sensibility for anything that protruded away from the private space of the home and into the public sphere. Minor elements, such as window-shades, windows or shutter cases, and even doors or gates that would “open outwards” were condemned in newspapers of the time.¹³ The article

13. Punishment would be imposed on those “who shall place any shew-board, sign, window-shades, &c. extending further than three feet from the wall or seven feet from the ground or who shall hang a door or gate to open outwards, or make any pent houses bow windows, shutter cases, or shutter stands spouts pales

entitled “Outside Window Blinds,” from 1845, discusses the case of “some of the district surveyors having considered that outside window blinds must be regarded as projections from face walls within the meaning of the Buildings Act, summoned the makers to remove their work” (*The Builder* 24 May 1845:241). The referees in this case certified that the blinds did not qualify as projections, but the idea of the surveyors ever believing that they *could be* projections illustrates the extremes to which the issue could be taken.

When property owners did not heed specific instructions, there were legal consequences, and nineteenth-century journals are full of minor articles dealing with police meetings and legislation, discussing the need to remove projections. “The New City Police Act,” for instance, had to do with citizens disobeying the law and “neglecting to sweep footways, obstructing footways by projections, and *leaving cellars and areas dangerously open*” (*The Morning Chronicle* emphasis added). The phrase “dangerously open” offers a chance to discuss Victorian fears of openness. Leaving a cellar wide open would have been an obvious danger for a daydreaming passer-by, but the phrase may also be a remark pointing to a cultural anxiety. Having considered the genesis of the Victorian home and its isolation from the public world, it is possible to assume that open cellars were perceived as dangerous because they were sources of entry of anything and anyone that belonged to the hostile surroundings into the household; they were a means of non-regulated communication between the inside and the outside. Open cellars, then, could not only cause broken ankles, but more importantly, a dangerous infiltration of the outside and its insidious components into the private. I believe that the lengthy discussion of projections in Buildings Acts of the nineteenth century illustrates a Victorian fixation with regulating any protuberance of the private sphere unto the public realm. Projections, just like the open cellar discussed

[...] or projections beyond six inches from the wall” in the article “For Watching and More Effectually Lighting, Cleaning, and Otherwise Improving the town of Kingston-upon-Hull” in *The Hull Packet and Original Weekly Commercial Literary and General Advertiser* (8 May 1810).

above, were, in the best of cases, perceived as unsightly, but in most cases as *dangerous*. Their danger lay in the disrespect for Victorian norms that clearly circumscribed the private from the public, the internal from the external.

If the Victorian home reflected cultural concerns for a geographical and symbolic separation of the public from the domestic, and it rejected external features such as balconies and projections in general, what features did it favor? I argue that a happy compromise in the English home between the exterior and interior was the bay window, a place where the occupants could feel as if they were connected to the outside, whilst still being protected from the elements. In this respect, the bay window was similar to Paxton's greenhouses and to the Crystal Palace. Architectural critics such as Kerr discussed its prevalence in English homes: "Bay windows of various forms and sizes, are one of the most useful and pliant of all contrivances in respect of the more ordinary questions of prospect¹⁴"(92).

But the bay window was not merely an architectural feature. Its symbolic significance is confirmed by featuring in sections in nineteenth-century periodicals dedicated to children and women. For example, there was a section entitled "In a Bay-Window" in *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget of Tales, News, Sketches, Fun, Puzzles, Riddles &c.* One piece tells the story about a parlour containing a bay window:

This particular bay-window is a delightful one, for all over the outside of it clammers a beautiful rose-bush, poking itself in here and there in the boldest way, just to take a peep at the room inside [...] The space is within filled by a wide, comfortable, chintz-covered lounge, with soft pillows to lean against. (8 Mar. 1873)

In this short description of the bay window area, the narrator highlights the feelings of comfort and day-dreaming relaxation that derive from sitting in such a spot. Being inside, sheltered from the elements, as well as sitting in a comfortable seat, heighten the feelings of comfort and protection which the home itself was supposed to

14. "Prospect" referred mostly to the view that could be appreciated from an area in the house, in this case, through this type of window.

generate. The narrator also points out the rose-bush's bold behaviour in trying to "take a peep at the room inside." Despite the tone being playful, it is clear that, even though the bay window offered the chance to look out from the house, the outside was still the outside, and neither the rose bush nor anyone should be looking in or coming into a private space.

The sensation derived from sitting by the bay window is one of tranquillity and reflection, but it differs from that of sitting in a veranda or balcony in a "southern" country, where there is a direct connection with the outside, without a glass pane in between. Sitting at a bay window provided a great sensation of comfort because the person would feel even more sheltered by comparing his/her comfortable situation to that of the outside, especially when the weather was particularly stormy, as in the next passage from *Jane Eyre*: "I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged [...] and having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement [...] to the left there were clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day" (1,2). Furthermore, the bay window area was not merely utilized to look at the views outside of the home. One must not forget that even though one could sit towards the outside on one of these seats, the seats inevitably faced the inside of the home. The illustration below reveals how bay windows also served as intimate meeting places for members of the family, and in some instances, close acquaintances. Charlotte Riddell's "The Old House in Vauxhall Walk" (1882) describes a setting such as the one in the illustration: "there were four windows in the room, shuttered close; they had deep, low seats, suggestive of pleasant days gone by; when, well-curtained and well-cushioned, they formed snug retreats for the children, and sometimes for adults also" (102).

The meeting that is depicted in this illustration could very well be taking place in the family focal point *par excellence* –the fireside. In journals and literature of the time, the fireside, (especially that one in the drawing-room) is identified as the nucleus of family life. The ideal picture of a unified and morally strong family was

one that gathered around the fire upon the father's return from the harsh world of toil. The symbolic associations with the hearth are primitive and universal, but I wish to limit this discussion to the importance of the fireplace and fireside as a central feature in the Victorian English home. In his discussion on the main features in the house, Kerr underlines the importance of the fireplace and goes into great detail about the specific location of it in different rooms of the house: "The position of the Fireplace with relation to the door and windows is in perhaps all rooms a matter of the utmost importance"(95). Despite discussing all fireplaces within the home, this critic coincides with other nineteenth-century writers and identifies the fireplaces in the reception rooms as perhaps the most important feature in the entire household:



Fig. 9. "The Meeting in the Bay-Window," *Little Folks* (n.d.) 41.

But for any sitting-room, keeping in view the English climate and habits, a fireside is of all considerations practically the most important. No such apartment can pass muster with domestic critics unless the good old English circle round the fire be quite free from the possibility of disturbance. Even in the largest Dining-rooms [...] where people do not draw round the fire, the principle of plan is the same [...] Intercommunication with perhaps the Drawing-room, Library or study, may be convenient in a small house, but too many doors, it will be obvious, must seriously interfere with the fireside circle, even if they do not preoccupy the snug corners, create thoroughfare traffic, and thorough draughts, and disturb privacy and comfort generally. (*The Gentleman's House* 99,100)

In this quotation, it becomes quite obvious that the “fireside circle” or the drawing “round the fire” is the most valued intimate and social encounter in the sitting rooms of the household. Furthermore, the circular imagery coincides with my argument on the centripetal nature of the Victorian household. Kerr insists that this sacred circle should be “free from the possibility of disturbance,” thus equating the fireside to an inner sanctuary of, in this case, domesticity. We can confirm how the Victorian fireplace conveys feelings of safety in the realist fiction of the time, when in *Villette*, Lucy Snowe comments on how she liked the black stoves that she encountered in her new French residence because she “began to associate them with a sense of comfort, and liked them, as in England, we like a fireside” (309). It is equally interesting to see how this sense of normality and comfort embodied by the fireside is represented by the Gothic fiction of the time, in Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde*. When Mr. Utterson stops for a visit, Poole admits him into Jekyll’s home, and into a “comfortable hall paved with flags, warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak” (39). Predictably, Poole tells Utterson “we see very little of [Mr. Hyde] on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory” (40). In other words, abnormal and subhuman Hyde could not possibly be “at home” in the center of domesticity—the fireside. He is incapable of being “at home” at all, since as an atavistic creature, he is best suited for the laboratory. In the description presented above by Kerr, the reference to doors or intercommunication as elements that should be avoided promotes the sense that the fireside was the nucleus of the Victorian household, and one which had to be protected as much as possible

from any negative influences that could penetrate the household from the outside. This would definitely be the case in Stevenson's novella, where doors limit the passage of Mr. Hyde, or at least warn of the transformation of Jekyll into Hyde and vice-versa.

Further examples from nineteenth-century publications reinforce the importance of the fireplace in English homes. In "The Weather and the Fireside," the author says: "Foreigners remark that the first thing that an Englishman talks about is the state of the weather, and the solace of a sea-coal fire is so, indispensable to us, that the 'Englishman's fireside' is an exclusive phrase, as though the natives of other countries had no firesides to sit by" (*Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety* 1838). As in the case of the bay window, the fireside provided inspiration for the titles of sections in various publications. In *The Child's Companion and Youth's Instructor*, for instance, there was a section entitled "Questions for the Fireside Circle" (an example for such a question was "Who are called in the Bible 'the patriarchs?'), while *The British Mother's Magazine*, offered a column entitled "Fireside Thoughts." As in the case with the bay-window, the fireside was featured as an English home's essential meeting place for the family, often where religion, morality and the sense of domesticity could be strengthened by sharing in prayers, educational sessions, and informal conversations. The following illustration may be compared to the previous one that was presented for the bay window, in order to confirm the similar social role that these two architectural features performed in the middle-class home.

It is not valid to say that balconies and other external elements disappeared in the nineteenth century because of weather alone. Eighteenth-century homes had contained these elements and there had not been a radical change in the weather from one century to the next. The elimination of external features, in other words, also had to be the result of something else; I argue that the concept of domesticity, which culminated in the nineteenth century, was a *centripetal force*, pulling its inhabitants and the space that they moved in further and further towards the center of the house and away from its margins. The factors that I have discussed, such as weather, the religious component of



Fig. 10. Illustration by B.M. Walters.

the day, and urban patterns, all seemed to coalesce into an inward-turning middle-class home. This inward pull caused balconies to give way to their weaker relatives, the balconets. These were often featured as dangerous, and projections in general became increasingly more regulated through the creation of more Building Acts. Instead of these external elements, the new type of home allowed a place for the bay window, which offered a limited connection to the outside, but one that, like the greenhouse, still confirmed the Victorian preoccupation with regulation and control. The feature that was proclaimed the nucleus of the home, however, was indisputably the fireplace, the domestic shrine of the home and the one that should be the most isolated. As a nucleus, it was the source of this centripetal force which attracted all of the other elements of the home and its inhabitants. In the following section we will see how concepts of “refuge” and “comfort” presented were meant to characterize the Victorian

household, often ignoring the more negative connotations resulting from this inward pull within the household and away from the outside.

Radical and Subtle Separations

The rigidity of the design system ensured that most middle-class homes could function in similar ways. One of the main aspects that had to be recreated in all these homes was that of spatial segregation. Not only were areas demarcated and limited to certain people and functions, there were other more subtle mechanisms of dividing space inside the home, such as the way in which doors would open unto a room as well as the deluge of things, which, I argue, had a partitioning effect on rooms.

As I explained before, the main division in the home was that between the servant and the family areas. In the eighteenth century and beginnings of the nineteenth century, servants would often sleep in the kitchen,¹⁵ but with the rise of a wealthier middle class, the ideal Victorian household boasted servant quarters as far away as possible from the bedrooms of the masters of the household. The most important feature that would keep the servants separate from the family, however, was not the bedroom, but the thoroughfares: “the lines of traffic of the servants and family respectedly have to be kept clear of each other, by recognised precautions” (Kerr 68). The word “precautions,” of course, offers a rich analysis. It implies that an imminent danger or problem will eventually arise from close contact of family with their servants. Having separate thoroughfares ensured that no mishap would befall either party and that the key to a happy life within the home was their separate existences, coming in contact with each other only in prescribed ways and areas of the house. Another phrase by Kerr mentions the danger of undesirable encounters between masters and servants: “let the

15. In *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England* (New York: Norton & Co., 2003), Judith Flanders comments on how Thomas and Jane Carlyle, who lived in London, had a servant who would, at night, unfold her bedding in the kitchen, where she would sleep. It wasn't until 1865 that the Carlyles added an additional floor at the top to accommodate the servant's sleeping quarters.

family have free passage-way without encountering the servants *unexpectedly*; and let the servants have access to all their duties without *coming unexpectedly upon* the family or visitors. On both sides this privacy is highly valued” (68 emphasis added). Once again, a single word—*unexpectedly*—points to the notion that the way to deal with each other with the least amount of tension was in expected ways. It was expected for family and guests to transit a main staircase, while those members who existed but were meant to remain invisible—children, but mostly servants, used a separate, back staircase. Separate thoroughfares were the physical embodiment of privacy and predictability when it came to human relations, eliminating the element of surprise in a Victorian world that interpreted unpredictability as a negative and undesirable factor.

Nineteenth-century fiction featuring haunted houses often presents this anxiety about surprise, and translates it into frightening encounters in hallways and staircases. In James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, for example, the governess’s candle goes out as she goes toward a staircase and she sees an apparition, supposedly of Quint: “The apparition had reached the landing halfway up and was therefore on the spot nearest the windows, where, at sight of me, it stopped short and fixed me” (170). We must remember that the horror of this situation is accentuated by social conventions of the time—the governess, a female member of the household (whose status is not as clear as that of another servant), comes in close contact with one who is clearly a servant and a man. These tales communicated the fear that encounters between the two very separate groups in the household (family and servants) were never free from friction, or, worst yet, could not be completely regulated or controlled. Collins’s *The Dead Secret* contains an interesting example in fiction of what might go wrong if the boundaries between master and servant are not maintained; Rosamond’s miserly uncle lives in a disorderly fashion, to the point of allowing his only servant to behave abominably and to entertain attitudes like the following: “If it comes to a tustle betwixt us [master and servant] which is to have his own way, I know who’s master and who’s servant in the

house by this time” (235). Spatial separation in the Victorian home rose from fears of this kind of anarchy and inversion of class roles.

Another factor that proves the importance of privacy between servants and the family, is the issue of screening. Whereas thoroughfares were ways of completely avoiding contact between members of the household, there were other more subtle ways in which to avoid undesirable encounters or to conceal improper scenes. One of the most fascinating ways to do this was achieved by the positioning of doors:

The rule known to every Englishman says that the door must open towards the main sitting area in the room, which usually means towards the desk [...], in a bedroom towards the bed. The idea behind is that the person entering shall not be able to take in the whole room at a glance as he opens the first crack of the door but must walk round it to enter the room, by which time the person seated in the room will have been able to prepare himself suitably for his entry. (Muthesius 79)

Thoroughfares regulated close proximity between servants, children, family and guests. Doors and the way in which they opened guaranteed that when contact between the different members became necessary, it would at least be under controlled circumstances. This quote, found in an architectural book, may be easily applied to passages that abound in Gothic literature of the period, in which shadows and ambiguous characters peer into a room through a crack in the doorway, as in this one found in Marsh’s *The Joss*: “The door came a little forward [...] a pause; as if to ascertain if the movement had been observed [...] Then... Then something appeared at the opening” (104). The narrator expects to see “Some shape of horror, some monster born of the terror I was in; a diseased imagining of my mental, moral, physical paralysis” (105). Instead, she sees “[s]omething more commonplace” (105), a human face. The feeling of terror that is present in this and other passages can be understood better if one knows that the everyday-Victorian house was fertile ground for haunting, because of “rules” such as the one discussed above. The ever-present feeling that someone might come into a room and disturb whatever was occurring (from the sounds of the quote, plenty of interesting things must have gone on behind shut doors) must have generated a great feeling of anxiety. One can picture nineteenth-century home dwellers on permanent

alert, and literally on the edge of their seats, or beds, ready “to prepare themselves suitably” for anyone’s (or anything’s) entry into a room.

Another way to screen visual encounters that could have been uncomfortable was through the immense quantity of things, furniture, knick-knacks and ornaments that flooded the Victorian house, in ways that other centuries had not experienced. A standard middle-class drawing-room, for example, included the following “essential” pieces: two upholstered armchairs, two low chairs, four other chairs without arms, and a sofa. The “essential” tables usually included a drawing-room table, as well as a series of smaller ones. Additionally, the following were recommended: one, or preferably two, china-cabinets, a piano, a corner table, a lady’s desk, low book shelves, cupboards of all sorts (hanging or corner ones), semi-circular wall-tables and the fundamental mantelpiece. Furthermore, the mantelpiece served as a shelf for small ornaments. The proliferation of furniture, ornaments that were exhibited on shelves, tables and other surfaces, as well as the excessive coverings (produced to shroud an equal amount of furnishings), is clearly a Victorian phenomenon. The amount of things does not only prove how space and furniture had to address a specific purpose vs. being multi-purpose; I suggest that this Victorian cluttered space also fostered privacy because the objects had a camouflaging and distracting effect. If one were to compare an austere interior, such as the one present in previous homes, such as the Georgian house¹⁶ or in later examples, such as a modern minimalist interior, the effect is one of unhindered visibility; the Victorian interior, bursting with objects, had a partitioning effect. Apart from this flood of things, “there were things to cover things, things to hold other things, things that were representations of yet more things. It no longer seems odd that it took a “brisk” girl three hours to clean the drawing room” (Flanders 189). The quantity of elements used to cover furniture and other features in the house may be interpreted as

16. I confirmed the difference between the uncluttered Georgian interior and the saturated Victorian interior first-hand, by visiting the Linley Sambourne historical home in London (a prime example of a Victorian home) and comparing it to the Georgian House in Edinburgh, where I volunteered for three months.

yet another physical demonstration of how much privacy was valued in the Victorian home. More importantly, the notion that the multitude of things needed to be covered illustrates the Victorian fixation with veiling, privacy, and secrecy. Once again, these characteristics set the stage for the *heimlich* home turning into the *unheimlich* abode.

Agents of Concealment

One of the objects that best embodied the Victorian concern for privacy and secrecy in the home was the screen. As an object, the ever-present screen had a utilitarian role—to counteract the all-too-common and despised draughts, but it also had a decorative purpose: “they [screens] are not only really useful in a cold or draughty room, but if nicely made, are a great ornament at the same time” (“Screens and How to Make Them”). The use of several kinds of screens in various rooms of the house flourished during the decorating frenzy that Victorian homes experienced until the end of the nineteenth century: “Screens have played many parts in pictures, novels and the drama, other than their ostensible *raison d’être* of keeping off the draught, but never, I suppose, have they attained anything like the popularity they are now enjoying” (“On Screens”).

There were screens of all kinds, meant to be used in different rooms of the house: “There were also smaller satin and silk worked screens, just the height to hide the ugly back of a piano, and strong, useful leather-cloth red and gold screens for dining-room or sturdy use, besides the usual cheap Japanese screen, which adds so much to one’s comfort in a bedroom¹⁷” (“On Screens”). The screen, the ultimate object of concealment, was often itself covered with excessive ornamentation: “Screens plainly covered with material are sometimes decorated with arrangements of Japanese fans or screens, miniatures are hung upon them, coloured photographs are suspended in the same way, and many fanciful systems of decoration are adopted” (“Screens and Screen

17. When a separate dressing room was not available, a screen was placed in the bedroom. The essential objects were placed behind the screen: a wash stand, a towel rack, a dressing table, as well as the occupant’s wardrobe.

Making”). This quotation shows how screens were sometimes covered by miniature fans (a fan is in itself a kind of screen for the face); the ultimate screening device, then, was covered by replicas of itself, uncannily recreating its main objective as an agent of concealment. Furthermore, drawing-room screens were sometimes adapted to have small shelves and “on them any small silver ornaments and bijouterie, photograph frames, paper-knives can be put” (“Home Decoration”). Screens were undoubtedly one of the favorite and indispensable pieces of every middle-class Victorian household. Despite possessing numerous screens, Victorian ladies did not seem able to control an insatiable need to keep covering and dressing up the home and its objects.¹⁸

Home-decorating publications were full of articles presenting numerous specifications for different types of screens, as well as detailed instructions for their fabrication by the ladies of the household.¹⁹ The following example shows how the acquisition and fabrication of screens was as serious a business as the management of space in a household. The style employed to describe screens in home-decorating manuals displays the same concern for meticulous detail as that employed to describe houses and rooms in the architectural works that I have discussed:

Screens are made with from two to six panels or folds, but those having three or four panels are generally preferred as being large enough to be useful, without being of such a size as to be cumbersome. Great variations are also allowed in the sizes of the panels, and in the height of the screens, but for ordinary purposes, it will be found that a screen consisting of three or four panels, each of two feet wide, and about five feet six inches in height, is of a convenient and serviceable size for most purposes. (“Screens and Screen Making”)

18. Martha Crabill McClagherty’s “Household Art: Creating the Artistic Home, 1868-1893. (*Winterthur Portfolio* 18.1 (1983):1-26) explains how “the unprecedented interest in the physical situations of the home which dominated the last half of the nineteenth-century coincided with the growth of a leisured class of women. Relieved of strenuous domestic duties by servants and ready-made merchandise, yet confined to the home, these middle-class women were saved from total idleness by collecting and producing artistic things” (8,9).

19. An engaging topic of study (but one that lies outside this investigation) would be to consider how nineteenth-century female anxieties could be alleviated by their dedication to art work; I have mentioned that McClagherty and other authors talk about the spare time that was in these women’s hands but also about how they were in a sense sequestered within the domestic sphere. Screen-making and decorating in general was perhaps a tangible way of dealing with their domestic dilemma.

Apart from the abundance of screens and their aesthetic importance within the Victorian home, screens may be addressed as symbolic objects within the household. First of all, the screen is, above all, a partitioning element, used to divide space within a room, depending on the social circumstances and objectives.²⁰ Several decorators, such as German architect H. Kirchmayer would divide a room into three conversation areas, using furniture: “across the room a screen separates yet another cluster of chairs, tables, cushions, and knick-knacks” (McClaugherty 13). Second, screens, “conceal something”, but they also protect inhabitants from the numerous dangerous drafts within the home. The issue about concealment, however, gives the screen a new possibility for analysis. Since privacy and control were the main characteristics of spatial management in the nineteenth-century home, screens played a key role in the concealment or veiling of sights and conversations which might be otherwise too visible, audible and indiscreet. The line between protecting (private matters, for instance) and concealing, indeed was a thin one. Women, the empresses of the drawing room, were told to “scatter there easy-chairs, foot-stools [...] screens—*indispensably screens*—and you will have a sort of society bazaar where delicious mysteries may be confidentially discussed” (McClaugherty 13). The fact that in the original text the phrase “indispensably screens” is highlighted, by being italicised, proves the importance of screens in the play between gossip and privacy in the social stage of the drawing-room.²¹

20. Apart from dividing a room internally, screens acted as signals of segregation when placed in spaces of the home that were regarded as either feminine or male: “Screens covered with the stamped leather paper referred to are suitable for dining rooms, libraries, smoking rooms, and studies,” meaning for masculine spaces. “Those covered with plain or embroidered cretonne are well adapted for use in bedrooms, dressing rooms, and morning rooms,” meaning for neutral spaces or areas which were frequented by both genders. Lastly, “for the drawing room or boudoir, something a little more elaborate and fanciful is needed,” since these rooms were essentially feminine spaces (“Screens and Screen Making”). Screens, therefore, not only divided space within a room; they also signalled the gender of space, as the materials that they were constructed with acquired feminine or masculine qualities.

21. See Ann Gaylin *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for an engaging discussion of eavesdropping in scenes in nineteenth-century English and French literature.

The other decorative (and functional) elements that competed with the screen in its symbolic significance for concealment were the over-abundant and ever-present window hangings. I have referred to them as window hangings (and not “curtains”) because curtains were just one of the multitude of layers used to cover windows. A description of the layers used in windows in middle-class homes will prove just how excessive this practice was. From the glass inwards, there was usually a blind— Venetian blinds were introduced in the later part of the eighteenth century, and they became extremely popular in the following century. Instead of these, sometimes roller blinds were used, and they could be fabricated in diverse fabrics, from gauze to heavy canvas. In front of these blinds, there were usually three sets of curtains: one made of a sheer fabric, such as lace; lined curtains in chintz or cretonne; and on the top, a heavy curtain sometimes made of tapestry was used. But this was not the end of the story. Apart from these layers, a pelmet or lambrequins was used as a decoration at the top of the window; finally, it was very stylish to have an excessively-long fabric loop around a pole and cascade down unto the floor, at both sides of the overall window arrangement.

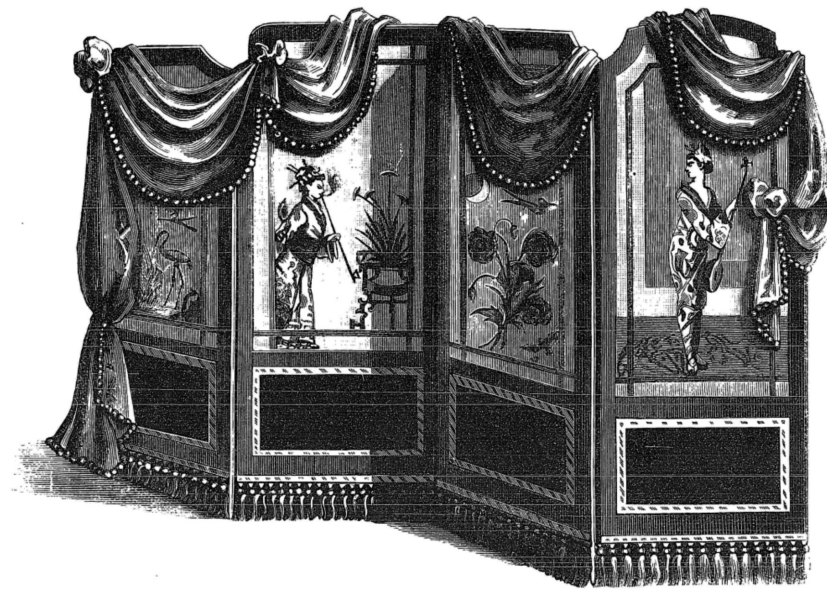


Fig. 11. Screens and Screen Making, in *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* (1 Mar. 1885) 130.

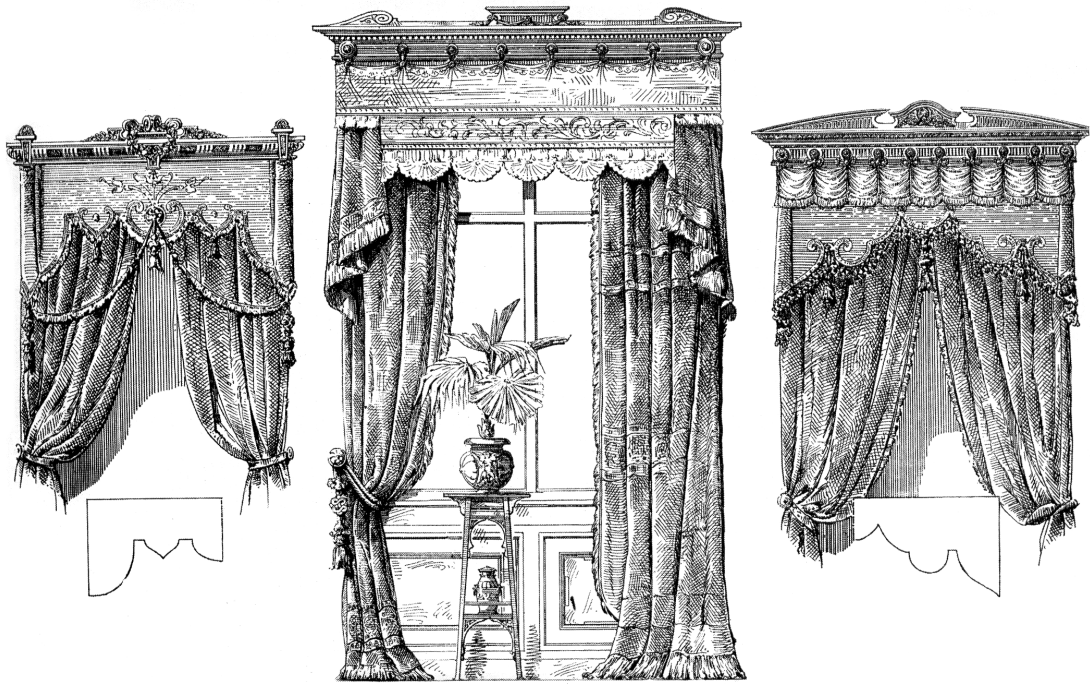


Fig. 12. Curtain Arrangements from *The Cabinet Maker* 1885-6, in Helen Long, *Victorian Houses and their Details* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2002) 118.

Despite them being decorative elements, window hangings had a functional aspect: “draperies served to filter sunlight and protect from drafts” (McClaugherty 18); “Victorian householders were very much concerned about the damaging effect of too much sunlight on brightly-coloured decorations and furnishings” (Wedd 111). The dyes used on fabrics and the types of fabric themselves were very sensitive to direct sunlight. Combatting the damage of sunlight and the infamous drafts, however, cannot justify the nineteenth-century obsession with hanging various types of coverings on windows: “besides an impressive array of curtains, sub-curtains and blinds on the inside—windows were often fitted with external ‘bonnet’ blinds on spring-loaded rollers or with chains and pulleys that could be cranked up and down with a handle” (Wedd 111). The image of “cranking up” these blinds reminds one of that of protective features in castles, which would be cranked up in order to completely seal the interior of the place from the exterior. Furthermore, the castle imagery was already associated with the home in the nineteenth century, and with the notion that “an Englishman’s

house was his castle.” Window coverings, then, apart from being decorative elements, were undoubtedly used as a protective and veiling device from the outside.

As with anything dealing with household style, there were times when excessive window-dressing was more popular than others. Near the end of the century, when concerns for hygiene and health had reached a height, some writers began to criticize this abundance of window hangings. The article entitled “Savage and Civilised,” published in the *London Pioneer*, lost no time in upholding the civilised qualities of England over “barbarous people” but it also satirised the use of excessive window coverings in the national households; it assured that if one were to “transport a ruddy squaw” to a bedroom in Grosvenor Square, she would have felt suffocated: “gently drawing aside the thick damask curtains of a four-poster bed, [...] its young aristocratic inmates [...] protected from every breath of air by glass windows, wooden shutters, Holland blinds, window-curtains, hot bed-clothes and beautiful fringed night-caps.” The people depicted in this excerpt are within the curtained room, lying on a curtained bed and wearing curtained night-caps to match! Also, in *The Drawing Room* (1877), Mrs. Lucy Orrin Smith criticizes this suffocating practice, most specifically within the drawing room:

The inevitable first step in furnishing a drawing-room has hitherto been to shroud all windows, as quickly as possible, with Venetian or roller-blinds above; and frequently with wire or cane dwarf-blinds below. Then comes a superstructure of curtain-poles and valances, with as abundant a display of curtains as possible, which exclude, most effectually, necessary light and air. (63)

This exclusion of “necessary light and air” that Orrin Smith discusses contributes greatly to generating a space that could be interpreted as mysterious, or worse, as malignant. A portrayal in fiction of a frightening space caused by excessive curtains is that of the “red room” into which Jane Eyre is locked into by Mrs. Reed: “a bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre, the two large windows with their blinds always drawn down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of a similar drapery” (7). In Victorian times, the lack of pure air was already an issue because of the use

of gas lamps and other lighting practices, but blocking the entrance of air through the windows with layer upon layer of materials could have only made things worse. Mrs. Orrinsmith also criticizes what she considers a mistake, that of believing that “curtains for drawing-rooms look pretty made of gaudy velvets, crackling silks, stiff damasks, or harsh reps, varied by flimsy lace, net, leuno or muslin looped with cords and tassels, bands and bows, crowding windows”(70). Picturing the various types of fabrics and accessories that were employed in these monumental arrangements supports the author’s view that what these women were doing was “crowding” the windows. However, it is worth noting that instead of supporting the removal of all coverings, Mrs. Orrinsmith suggested the following: “Instead of blinds, little curtains are suggested of delicate soft material such as white Muslin, Tussore, silk or Madras muslin”(66). In other words, because of decorative issues, but also because of notions of privacy, Mrs. Orrinsmith could not dream of telling her readers to eliminate all window coverings; instead, she could only try to convince her readers to use curtains made of a fabric that would let air and light in, while still blocking an interior view of the home from the outside.

The last point that I wish to make about the use of coverings in middle-class homes of the time has to do with curtains used alongside or as substitutes for doors. In the first case, a door *and* a curtain were used at the same time: “The Victorian solution to draughty doors was to fit a portière or door curtain, to the back of the door” (Wedd 111). In this case, the curtain was a complement to the door as the screen would have been, in the ever-going battle against draughts. In the second case, curtains could be used instead of doors. Once again, Mrs. Orrinsmith had an opinion on this subject: “Great comfort, especially in small houses, would be gained by making doorways between front and back rooms, [...] objections may be urged against this scheme—*one may dislike the supposed lack of privacy*, another may fear chilling draughts”(76 emphasis added). Her solution to this dilemma, between opening up space in smaller areas, and exposing the inhabitants to harming draughts, and “the supposed lack of

privacy,” was to install a curtain pole on top of the doorway and hang a curtain on it, as in a setting presented in Collins’s *The Dead Secret*, in which “two pretty chintz curtains, hanging inside the trellis work formed the only barrier between the day-room and the bedroom” (25). In her statement cited above, Mrs. Orrinsmith refers to the lack of privacy as something that is subjective, because she employs the word “supposed.” Furthermore, her remarks confirm that for inhabitants of these homes, privacy was valued a great deal, whether they were exaggerating the situation or not. An example from fiction that testifies to the importance of privacy within a household and to the use of coverings to ensure it, is present in Algernon Blackwood’s “The Empty House,” in which one of the main signs of haunting is precisely the lack of window coverings: “shutterless windows, without blinds, stared down upon them, shining here and there in the moonlight” (11).

The Veiling of Anxieties: The Wholesome Home

I have discussed how Victorian preoccupations with privacy and control materialized in the shape of screens and curtains, and in the way that space became increasingly inward-turning and excessively partitioned. Now, I wish to discuss how anxieties of the time regarding health were dealt with inside the home, most specifically in the discourse dealing with ventilation and the sewage system. The language used to discuss these issues talks about fears, dangers, and even death that could infiltrate the home in the form of impure air and smells. Because of the type of language in articles and home manuals, the setting described is more than apt for a sensational or Gothic tale.

Periodicals and home manuals of the time employ the word “wholesome” to describe food and diet, but they also utilize it when referring to the general condition or health of the home. Efforts had to be made, mostly by the wife, in order to provide a comfortable and healthy home that would shelter her family, and most importantly,

guard them against disease and even death: “Where cleaning is not done [...] there always will be, especially in bedrooms, a close, noisome smell [...] which smell is the prolific origination of many diseases” (*Sylvia’s Family Management* 87). I believe that the concept of the wholesome home did not only have the power to ward off the death of someone *in* the family, but also *of* the family, as a notion. Like domesticity, the idea of the wholesome home was a binding force employed to keep the family unit and a social structure together. Furthermore, the issue of comfort became a valuable commodity for this institution and acquired moral characteristics: “The character of the home may be said to make the character of the man. A happy home, efficiently conducted, is a garden where young lives are reared to noble issues” (*Sylvia’s Family Management* iii). A sharp line was drawn between the home, which had to be wholesome, and the world, which was advertised as decadent. One of the strategies that was employed in the ongoing “competition” against the world of perdition and the haven of home, was cookery: “Cookery is a most important science and art, [...] not as a luxury but because it is necessary to the health of the home [in] preventing some people from running away to the public-house” (Beeton 415). Women and servants had to perform well in the art of cooking, not merely so that family members could enjoy what they ate, but in order to keep “some people,” meaning the man, inside the home and away from temptations of the public world (and its possible vices such as drinking and prostitution). Under this light, cooking and any domestic skill that would contribute to a wholesome home acquired a moral importance.

Because of the importance of a healthy home, many architectural writings of the time stress the importance of pure air and the careful management of ventilation within the home, as in the following example: “Long experience has convinced me that nothing could be more conducive to public health, than the ventilation of our bed-rooms; multitudes of people [...] always feel weary, oppressed, and unwilling to rise on awakening” (203). Pure air had the power to “prevent innumerable head-aches and foul tongues; dissipate the gloomy thoughts” (“Close Bedrooms” 203). All of

these symptoms, which were described in a quite melodramatic way, originated from a scientific source believed to be true at the time, the miasmatic or zymotic theory:

In the mid nineteenth century, the most widely accepted explanation for the occurrence of disease had been the miasmatic or zymotic theory, which attributed it to a process of spontaneous combustion that was supposed to occur in foul, stagnant air. According to this theory, the best way of preventing disease was to make sure that there was constant ventilation everywhere (Forty 160).

At this point in time, when Building Acts were becoming more and more popular, architecture was about building a safe, comfortable home, but also a healthy one. The issue of ventilation and its relation to a healthy home was so significant, that Edwin Chadwick, Secretary to the Poor Law Commissioner's Report (1839-1842) wrote in his four-hundred-and-fifty page report that "each living room should have an air flow equivalent to three air changes per hour" (Ley). This mathematical and precise calculation is typical of the Victorian fascination with data and numbers in general, but it also illustrates how much the issue of ventilation was related to that of health in the home.

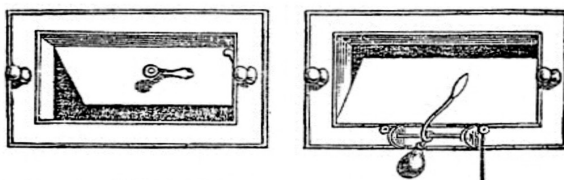
The importance of making sure that proper ventilation was available within the home reached unprecedented heights and brought with it anxieties about death, if air was not managed properly: "The importance of proper ventilation is more generally felt at this time than it was a dozen years ago [...], larger numbers of persons have become convinced that bad air will kill as certainly as prussic acid, though not so quickly" (*The Builder* 2 Aug. 1845:361). An excellent example of the belief in the killing capacity of foul air takes place in *Jane Eyre*, as the narrator explains why so many girls died at Lowood: "that forest dell, where Lowood lay, was the cradle of fog and fog-bred pestilence, which, quickening with the quickening spring, crept into the Orphan Asylum, breathed typhus through its crowded schoolroom and dormitory," generating an "effluvia of mortality" (68,69). In *Villette* we also witness a concern for draughts and their dangers (although not as extreme as in *Jane Eyre*), when Dr. John tells Lucy Snowe and a companion: "You are both standing in a draught; you must

leave this corridor” (218). Even when proper ventilation was achieved within a home, publications revealed more problems or dangers that arose, in the form of the much-discussed drafts: “To avoid unpleasant and dangerous drafts is of course the difficulty as in all similar cases; but this would be lessened if it were oftener remembered that it is not so much cold airs that is required as pure air.” The attempts to properly ventilate a home, then, were not devoid of danger because of the draughts and the potential illnesses that they brought. One of the solutions for this dilemma was the ventilation trap, illustrated below. It is as if Victorians needed to control not only space, but the means of ingress of anyone and anything, including air.

The issue of pure air was directly linked to the growing need to improve sewage systems in different cities; building acts concentrated on the improvement of drainage and sewage, as well as in regulating width of streets so that households could be better ventilated. Sewage and ventilation came together in the much-discussed topic of effluvia. Newspapers and home guides of the time are teeming with articles discussing the pernicious effects of not only impure air, but also bad smells.²²

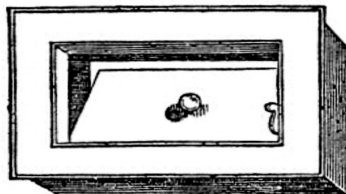
W. Rowland, the author of the article entitled “Impure Air from the Sewers,” discusses how he had heard physicians talking about the dangers of cholera and their relation to cities where there were open sewers. Rowland supports the physicians’ views and is particularly worried about the bad smells rising from grates: “My attention was first seriously drawn to this subject by my occupying a house near one of those gratings, from which the effluvia arising frequently compelled me to close my windows in the summer” (129). The offense that is presented in this quote seems to be of a dual nature—not only does the effluvia rise and enter his abode, but it also causes him to shut the windows or inhibit that valuable ventilation which has been discussed.

22. The issue acquired new proportions with the incident of “The Great Stink,” (1858) when Parliament could not meet because the smell of the Thames floated above Westminster in unprecedented ways. This led to Parliament finally agreeing to invest £ 3 million into a network of public sewage for the city of London, which took approximately ten years to build.



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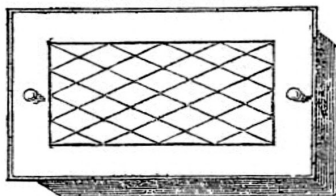
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Fig. 13. Ventilation Traps, *The Builder* (3 Feb. 1849) Issue 313: 59.

There seems to be a common denominator in the examples that I have mentioned and in many others that appear in the nation's newspapers during the nineteenth century. Words like "dangers" and "evil" populate articles which almost personify effluvia and depict it as a malignant entity composed of the most foul matter, originating in the dirty streets and then rising, entering, and defiling the home. The topics of ventilation, pure air, effluvia, and home cleanliness in general are addressed using a language that would be appropriate for a sensation novel or a Gothic plot: One of the favorite and most dreaded topics was that of "zymotic diseases", and they were even more

terrifying because they were not fully understood: “There are various fevers which seem to have their origin in some poison which enters the system, and there for a time the poisonous germs seem to multiply and increase” (*Sylvia’s Family Management* 329). The constant threat of an invisible enemy, contaminating the most necessary resources in a home—water and air—permeates the literature of the day. The notion of the wholesome home was the antidote that could, to a certain extent, suppress these kinds of anxieties. But as we will see in the next three chapters, anxieties, like effluvia, managed to surface through the grates, entering the home and turning it into a haunted house of fiction.



Chapter Four

Traversing Liminal Space: Hallways and Staircases in the Haunted House

Chapter 1 of my thesis provided the theoretical basis for the concepts of spectral space and the intimate relationship between characters and the haunted houses that they travel through. Chapter 2 presented the historical background necessary to understand the political, economic, but mostly social transformations of mid-nineteenth-century society; a close reading of the iconic public space of the time, the Crystal Palace, revealed this social upheaval and its consequences. Chapter 3 offered a reading of the prototype for nineteenth-century private space, the middle-class Victorian home; like its public counterpart, the home proved to be an ultimately haunted space, replete with anxieties that easily mutated into the ghosts of domestic, Gothic fiction of the times. The second part of the study will rely heavily on the information and analysis provided in the initial section. The three remaining chapters are dedicated to the “dissection” of the haunted house (in selected texts from 1850-1910), dividing the home into different types of areas: liminal, secret, and surrounding. The theoretical, social and architectural notions covered in the introductory chapters are employed to look at how specific parts of the house (and characters travelling through them) function within the haunted houses portrayed in fiction.

This chapter concentrates on the sensations experienced by characters in these marginal areas. I examine how passageways in the house must be considered in terms of their liminality and labyrinthine nature, a fact that creates a fertile environment for the intimate relationship between character and home. I begin the discussion with

an explanation about the unique *genius loci* that characterizes the haunted houses in literature. After this prelude, I examine literary works that show the significance of liminal space in the spectral domestic sphere. I argue that these marginal areas in the house of fiction inaugurate the close rapport between home and characters.

I have discussed how early phenomenologists such as Vernon Lee and later ones like Norberg-Schulz and Holgate insist that domestic sites possess a “sense of place” or *genius loci*. This is derived mostly from the home’s link with the past and from ensuing memories that demand to be remembered and relived by the house’s inhabitants, as Bachelard had explained in *La Poétique de l’espace* (1958). A home’s *genius loci* is also shaped by more sinister factors, by this family’s or group’s darker secrets or phantoms. Because of the leading role of space and the prevalence of haunted-house fiction in the nineteenth century,¹ I have chosen to transplant this concept of sense of place, widely employed in contemporary design and discussed in theoretical treatises, to literary analysis, in order to consider how areas in the spectral dwelling function. In Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), a classic of the haunted-house genre (but one which lies outside the range of this study) the voice of reason, embodied by Dr. Montague explains the nature of a haunted house and its existence in the universal imagination:

the houses described in Leviticus as ‘leprous,’ tsararas, or Homer’s phrase for the underworld: *aidao domos*, the house of Hades; I need not remind you, I think, that the concept of certain houses as unclean or forbidden—perhaps sacred—is as old as the mind of man [...] it might not then be too fanciful to say that some houses are born bad. (70)

1. Numerous critics have mentioned the domestication of the Gothic mode and its move from medieval settings to the contemporary home during the nineteenth-century. David Punter and Glennis Byron, for instance, insist that “the exotic and historical settings that serve to distance the horrors from the world of the reader in earlier Gothic are replaced with something more disturbingly familiar: the bourgeois domestic world or the new urban landscape” in *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007). On the indisputable relationship between ghost stories and the haunted home as reflecting class anxieties, see Andrew Smith, *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). On the issue of degeneracy presented in haunted-house fiction, see Robert Mighall, “Haunted Houses I and II,” in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History’s Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Furthermore, the narrator tells us that the house has “an unbelievably faulty design which left it chillingly wrong in all its dimensions” (40), leading Doctor Montague to describe it as “a masterpiece of architectural misdirection” (106). In other words, in Jackson’s novel, as in the following nineteenth-century examples, the home’s unsound architecture is a clear sign of its disturbed status; in all these works, a sinister atmosphere is inscribed on the very body and face of this anthropomorphic and cursed dwelling. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the home’s dark character is equally exhibited by architectural features that produce an effect of abnormality or deformity. When Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield take a stroll in a London neighborhood, they encounter Dr. Jekyll’s “house:” “a certain *sinister* block of a building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high, showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey”(emphasis added 18). Although not haunted by ghosts, issues of duplicity and degeneration, to name a few, haunt this odd structure. But the building’s uncanny nature also derives from an irregular use of design elements, such as the gable that seems to project excessively unto the street (once again pointing to anxiety over projections discussed in the third chapter), or the lack of a window, suggesting a certain compulsion to conceal. Furthermore, Mr. Enfield remarks how the structure “seems scarcely a house”(24), but cannot point out exactly why that is. His failure to identify precisely what characteristics produce this sinister effect coincides with his failure to describe the source of Mr. Hyde’s abnormality: “He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance, something displeasing, something down-right detestable [...] He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point”(25). Both Dr. Jekyll’s house and Mr. Hyde appear somehow “wrong” to the eye of the beholder; the inability to identify the reason for their abnormality only heightens the sense of unease.

In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the cursed *genius loci* is conveyed by a deformed or warped home. In Algernon Blackwood’s “The Empty House”(1906),

however, the home in question is uncanny because it exhibits an appearance which is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. We are told that the dwelling “looked exactly like the houses on either side of it. It had the same number of windows as its neighbours; the same balcony overlooking the gardens; the same white steps leading up to the heavy black door”(7). The normality of the home is derived from its regularity, from the fact that, as a replica of its neighbours, it adheres to existing social and building conventions. However, we soon become aware that this house is also somehow unfamiliar: “And yet this house in the square, that seemed precisely similar to its fifty ugly neighbours, was as a matter of fact entirely different—horribly different. Wherein lay this marked, invisible difference is impossible to say”(7). As in Stevenson’s novella, the concrete proof of diseased *genius loci* is not easily ascertained; there is always the sense, though, that the home is “horribly different,” and the uncertainty about the root of its abnormality is precisely what makes it horrible. The homes portrayed in “The Empty House” and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are clear examples of how a certain sense of place materializes in fiction, resulting in descriptions of dwellings that physically embody a corrupt or diseased *genius loci*. Although characters are unable to pinpoint the specific source of unease, these descriptions highlight specific architectural details and features, thus proving the significant role of a certain design and of overall space in haunted-house fiction; consequently, the way in which the house and the spaces within it are portrayed must be considered in order to explore its spectral essence.

After discussing the significance of *genius loci* in haunted dwellings, we may now turn our attention to how characters sense this particular spirit of place. In the aforementioned story, “The Empty House,” the main protagonist, Shorthouse, is predictably portrayed as the more rational of the two characters (the other character being his elderly aunt). He admits that in the house “everywhere there was a sense of recent occupation, an impression of sadness and gloom”(15), a feeling that echoes other visitors’ claims: “persons who had spent some time in the house, knowing

nothing of the facts, had declared positively that [...] the atmosphere of the whole house produced in them symptoms of a genuine terror” (8). The mention of words and concepts such as “sense,” “impression,” and “symptoms” confirms the recurrent topic of sensations, and the powerful feelings portrayed in the descriptions of encounters between a spectral environment and its visitors.

This particular spirit of place is present in the initial encounter between the house and its visitors, in the moment when the characters are about to turn the key and cross the main threshold of the home. The previous chapter explored the anxiety over ingress or penetration into the middle-class Victorian home, which had become a haven meant to shelter its members from a hostile outside. I have discussed how this sanctuary had the potential to become isolated from without and extremely compartmentalized from within, thus becoming a true site of horror. Feelings of expectancy and foreboding are constant as characters are about to enter a haunted dwelling; I argue that these worries present in fiction, as in “The Empty House” quoted below, respond to very real nineteenth-century concerns over the potential permeability of a home:

It was as if the whole world—for all experience seemed at that instant concentrated in his own consciousness—were listening to the grating noise of that key. A stray puff of wind wavering down the empty street woke a momentary rustling in the trees behind them, but otherwise this rattling of the key was the only sound audible; and at last it turned in the lock and the heavy door swung open and revealed a yawning gulf of darkness beyond. (12)

Even before entering the house, the protagonist is ready to fully acknowledge his surroundings: “Shorthouse had already begun to notice everything, even the smallest details”(10). I have mentioned how previous and contemporary phenomenologists insist that collaboration between all the senses is needed in order for a person to truly feel and experience architectural space. For instance, according to the architectural critic Juhani Pallasmaa, all senses, not just vision, need to be employed in order to reach out towards architectural space and appreciate its complexity. This passage in Blackwood’s story portrays the moment in which senses are focused on a single and momentous action, to the point of shutting off other stimuli; the quotation is

also an invitation for the character, as well as for the reader, to peer into the “gulf of darkness” that lays ahead, to cherish the moment of anticipation before stepping into the haunted house.

Like “The Empty House,” Richard Marsh’s *The Joss* (1901), which I will refer to in greater depth later on, also presents a detailed description of the moment before entering the dwelling. In this text, this scene is also characterized by great anticipation, experienced not only by the characters who are about to enter, but by a crowd of neighbours who has gathered to watch: “People were watching us at doors and through windows, and a small crowd of children had gathered round us in a circle on the pavement” (52). The fact that neighbours believed that the house was haunted only adds to the weight of the moment, when the door is finally opened: “The door had opened about an inch. We all stared at it as if something wonderful had happened” (52). Another episode in the same novel that proves excessive concern over home penetration takes place when the female protagonists are warned in a letter not to leave the house after nine at night, because of the dangers that lurk outside: “You are surrounded by enemies. Out of the house you are at their mercy. They watch you night and day [...] But in the house you are safe [...] Do not be afraid of anything you may see or hear. *There is That within these walls which holds you in the hollow of Its hand*”(63). This quotation reveals the strong dichotomy that emerged during the nineteenth century alongside the concept of domesticity, between the hostile world and the safe haven of home (the exterior is advertised as being more dangerous for members of the “weaker” sex). As is apparent in this phrase, however, this shelter has the potential of turning into the incarcerating Gothic home that is suggested above in italics; the women in *The Joss* are as “safe” within this home as prisoners in a penitentiary would be. Finally, the letter that contains these warnings does tell the women that if they disobey and leave their home/prison at night, they may still come back through a hidden passage at the back of the home, but that they must make sure to “enter and close quickly lest your enemies be upon you. If they enter with you may God have mercy on your soul”(63).

If intruders manage to infiltrate the domestic sphere it will be the fault of those in charge of its integrity—the women—and the price to pay will be severe. These two episodes underline the intensely-drawn boundary between the inside and outside in the middle-class Victorian home; furthermore, they prove how Gothic fiction adopted current social concerns in order to create successful spectral spaces.

This initial crossing of the front door is clearly an issue of liminality. When characters turn the key and step into the house, they are crossing the *limen*, the main threshold in the structure. But they are also entering a state of liminality. In the chapter “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” in *The Forest of Symbols* (1967), anthropologist and critic Victor Turner explains the concept of liminality which has greatly contributed to the field of social sciences and other disciplines. Turner mentions Arnold van Gemp’s discussion of rites of passage, in which the latter identifies three different stages: separation, margin (stage when the individual crosses the limen), and aggregation (reinstatement into society as a transformed individual). During marginality, Turner says, the subject “passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state” (94). My study applies the key aspect of liminality to a discussion of space within the haunted house; it may be employed to investigate the dynamics of space and the movement of characters through the marginal areas of hallways and staircases. Because of the ambiguous and open nature of liminality, characters undergoing it are especially vulnerable to any external influence; my objective is to center on the characters’ susceptibility to being moved and seduced by their haunted surroundings.

The third chapter discussed the home’s centripetal aesthetics, its inward pull away from the margins and into its core, in the shape of the fireside. I have explained how it was necessary to protect the structure and its occupants from the outside, by discouraging the use of external features or projections. The staircases and hallways that I will analyze next signal the beginning of a journey into liminality, into a haunted state characterized by the openness and ambiguity that were discouraged in the household.

As characters traverse these areas, they are trading a sense of security—present in the home’s nucleus—for one of vulnerability; this trade-off, I insist, is a prerequisite for seduction. In *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (2002), Wolfreys discusses liminal space and says:

The phantasm is thereby revealed as occupying a liminal space, as well as moving between two supposedly distinct realms, inside/outside, while being impossible to assign to either. Thus the phantasm haunts any ground on which distinctions are based between what can be felt and what can be known. (Wolfreys 21)

Characters in these tales encounter numerous ghosts and other supernatural activity when they are traversing passages. But characters that walk up or down staircases and that move along hallways become, in a sense, the phantasms that Wolfreys is talking about. They are entering uncharted territory and renouncing certainty for ambiguity, consciousness for unconsciousness, rationality for feeling. In what follows, I will look at how voyages through the margins of the homes affect characters in two novels, in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* and Marsh’s *The Joss*, as well as in short stories—Bulwer Lytton’s “The Haunted and the Haunters,” Blackwood’s “The Empty House,” and Jacob’s “The Toll House.”

Satis and its Sensuous Staircases

The role of passages and their appealing effect is of great relevance in *Great Expectations* (1860-61). Commonly regarded as a realist work,² this novel also contains Gothic elements, such as the central role of the run-down house, Satis. Even

2. In Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), “realist” novelists such as Dickens, George Eliot and Henry James are said to employ “Gothic motifs such as ghosts and visions [...] and [...] plots driven by the force of destiny” (141). *Bleak House* is perhaps the work by Dickens that is most often analysed under a Gothic light; see, for example Christopher Herbert, “The Occult in Bleak House,” *NOVELA Forum on Fiction* 17.2 (1984) 101-115; Allan Pritchard, “The Urban Gothic of Bleak House,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 45.4 (1991):432-452. All of these authors insist that, despite the fact that Dickens is considered the most important realist novelist of Victorian Britain, his works undoubtedly employ Gothic tropes and techniques.

though this text offers numerous topics of discussion, I will focus on brief episodes that illustrate a single theme—the function of passageways. From his initial visit to Satis House, Pip notices that the grounds and the home itself influence him greatly: “What could I become with these surroundings? How could my character fail to be influenced by them? Is it to be wondered at if my thoughts were dazed, as my eyes were, when I came out into the natural light from the misty yellow rooms?” (96). But Pip’s journey does not begin with rooms; rather, it begins with passages and staircases, and with moving through them and being transformed by them. His main guide is Estella, a fact that, from the start, determines this voyage as one of seduction.

When Mr. Pumblechook drops off Pip at the gates of Satis House, Estella denies the former entry, letting only Pip inside; from the start, Estella is exercising the dynamics of rejection and attraction through her management of space. After crossing the courtyard, Pip describes his first entrance into the house: “we went into the house by a side door—the great front entrance had two chains across it outside—and the first thing I noticed was, that the passages were all dark, and that she had left a candle burning there. She took it up and we went through more passages and up a staircase, and still it was all dark, and only the candle lighted us” (55). Pip enters Satis through a side-door, not a main entrance, a fact that highlights the liminality of the situation. At the end of the first appointment, when Pip meets the decrepit and mysterious Miss Havisham, Estella once again comes to guide him through staircases: “and her light came along the dark passage like a star” (58). From this vantage point, he will penetrate the house through dark passages, and the only source of light in these twilight voyages is that emanating from the candle and from Estella, the star.

A close look at architectural and social dynamics of the Victorian home demonstrates how attraction is a key ingredient in this voyage through passageways. In the third chapter I mentioned that the Victorian home was split into two main areas, that of the family and that of the servants. This resulted in a careful administration of space. For instance, the most intimate of family rooms, bedrooms, were completely set

apart from those of the servants (with the exception of the nursery) by a floor, whenever possible: “The Victorian middle-class household represented a new departure not only in the number of servants employed, but in their segregation from the rest of the household [...] They were accommodated in the attic or the basement, often in shared rooms, designed to impinge as little as possible on the rest of the household” (Tosh 20). Hence, spatial distribution in the Victorian middle-class home came to emphasize social, class and gender divisions in an extreme way. But the feature that constantly ensured the separation between the two parties was not the bedroom, it was the thoroughfares: “It is still a major concern in the English house that the paths of the servants and the family and visitors shall never cross [...] The proper solution depends largely on the position of the staircases [...] The main staircase is for the sole use of the occupants and their guests. All other traffic, including that of the children to their rooms, uses a secondary staircase” (Muthesius 94). In the episodes that I have discussed above, Pip, who is classified as a playmate/plaything belonging to a lower class, is transiting the same thoroughfare with Estella, who is treated as a member of the family. Not only are they of a different social class, they are also of a different gender, a fact that clearly defies the spatial and social etiquette of the times.

An architectural critic observes how, in large Victorian homes, the distribution of areas insured the separation of the sexes, even within the same class. The following plan, showing the ground floor of a stately home designed by William Burn, evinces the remarkable amount of compartmentalization that took place in the domestic offices; Edinburgh-born Burn had become the preferred country-house architect in Britain by 1870, and the one “who first systematized the offices, dividing them up into zones under butler, housekeeper and cook, each with its own corridor, and providing separate male and female staircases, and the servants’ hall and steward’s room at the meeting of the zones” (Girouard 33). As I have mentioned previously, this division derived from a new domestic morality, and one which especially targeted children and servants: “above all, the men servants slept separately from the maids and often did not have

the pleasure of passing them on the stairs, separate men’s and women’s staircases were provided” (Girouard 29). Notice the choice of words and the way in which passing someone of the opposite sex could involve “pleasure.” Seduction is clearly the force that is shaping these vertical and winding trips through some Victorian homes in life and definitely through homes in fiction like *Satis*, as the transgression of spatial and social norms contributes to the sense of the forbidden yet pleasurable. The fact that

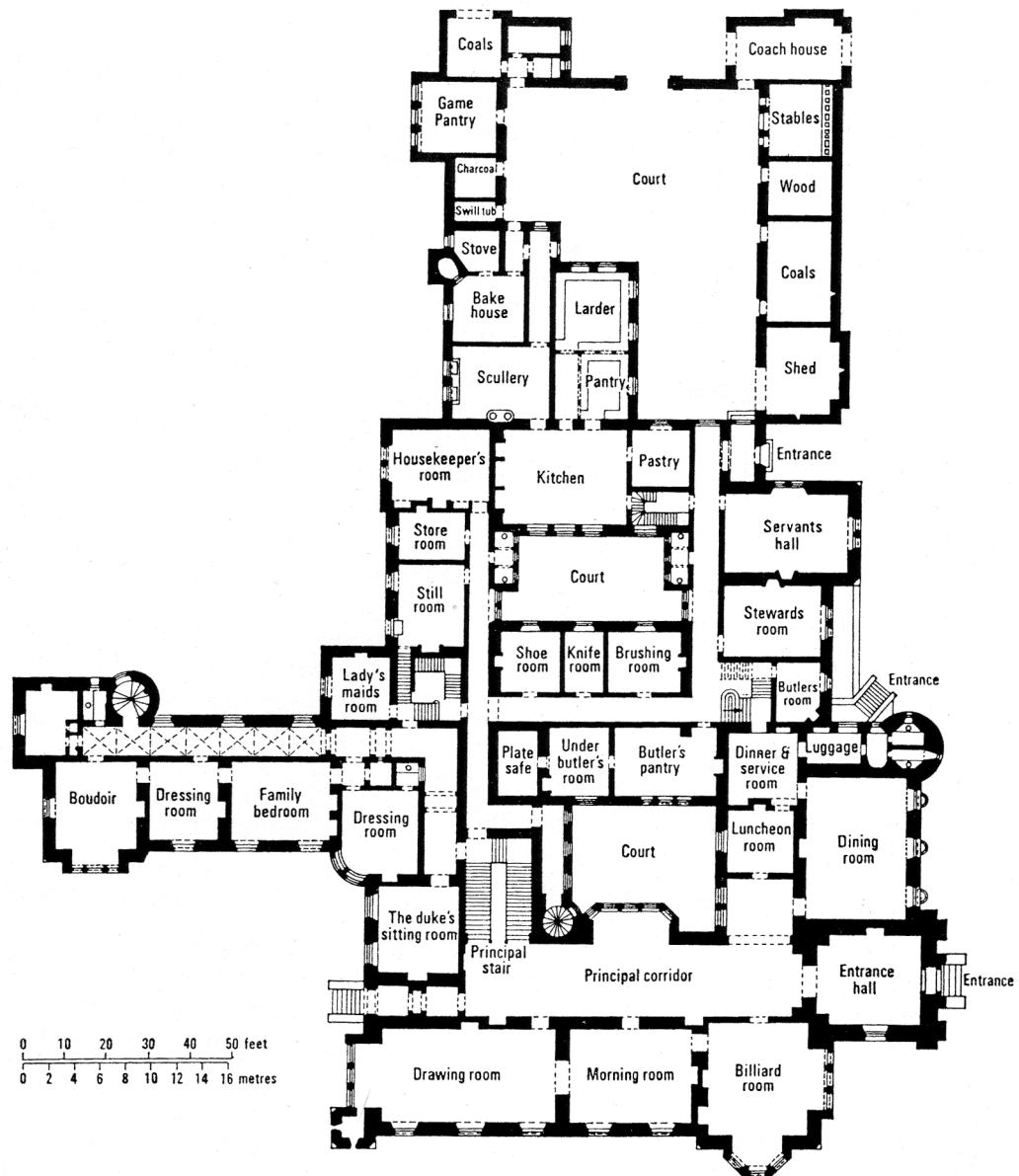


Fig. 1. Ground-floor plan of Buchanan House, Stirlingshire (William Burn, 1851-3), in Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1979) 32.

domestic designs of the day assign separate staircases in order to regulate feelings of arousal is proof of the presence of seduction within the Victorian household.

In addition to the infringement of spatial and social norms, another notion also explains the alluring quality of these twilight journeys through Satis. In the initial theoretical chapter, I identify darkness as an essential ingredient of “sensuous architecture.” In “The Significance of Shadow,” Pallasmaa defends darkness as a necessary requisite of an intimate architectural and emotional experience. For him, a dark space is seductive because vision is demoted to the background, allowing the other senses that promote a more intimate experience of space to take center stage; this results in what he terms a “tactile fantasy” (*The Eyes of the Skin* 46). Pip’s journey along dark passageways, in company of Estella and a faint candle as the only providers of light, is, in a sense, a tactile fantasy. By transiting close, dark spaces, that force proximity between bodies (architectural and human), Pip is already moving through intimate, thus haptic space. In turn, these intimate architectural regions highlight and magnify the attraction that Pip feels towards Estella. Furthermore, Pip is lured equally by the dark passages, because of their promise of intimacy, and by Estella, who is the only holder or embodiment of light in these gloomy yet appealing surroundings.

When he exits Satis, Estella makes Pip retrace his initial steps, all the way to the side entrance again: “I followed the candle down as I had followed the candle up, and she stood in the place where she had found it. Until she opened the side entrance, I had fancied [...] that it must necessarily be night-time”(61). Instead, a “rush of daylight” (61) meets Pip. Pip penetrates a house which will lure him time and again, with the help of bright Estella, of course. Darkness envelops him and he is forced to follow Estella’s candle and presence as if he were a moth hopelessly attracted to light. Once he is thrown out of Satis, however, a rush of daylight blinds Pip, after having become used to the gloomy and mysterious surroundings. While Estella’s candle and starry presence attract Pip, the light from the outside is portrayed as “blinding” and offensive. The contrast between the light inside Satis and that outside is that the former is

suggestive and shrouded by dark and tantalizing surroundings, while the latter shatters the intimacy that was experienced inside.

In *Through the Labyrinth*, Kern explains how a person is transformed by their labyrinthine journey; when Pip retraces his steps to the side-entrance, he is turning around at the center of the labyrinth and being transformed by it: “turning around at the center does not just mean giving up one’s previous existence; it also marks a new beginning. A walker leaving a labyrinth is not the same person who entered it, but has been born again into a new phase or level of existence. The center is where death and rebirth occur”(Kern 30). In the beginnings of Pip’s journey into Satis, light, often analogous to that which is positive and comforting, is portrayed as something which attacks Pip, while darkness and spectral space within, although mysterious, ultimately enthralls him. Thrown out into the blinding light, Pip will never be the same, and he will always long for and be tempted to return to the sensuous darkness offered by Satis.

The Joss and its Confining Corridors

Whereas in Dickens’s novel staircases define and contain a voyage of seduction, in Marsh’s sensational novel *The Joss* (1901), passageways appear as spaces of confinement, alluding to Gothic issues of entrapment and oppression. In *The Gentleman’s House* (3rd. ed. 1871), architect and critic Robert Kerr lists the attributes of a comfortable English home: “In its more ordinary sense the comfortableness of a house indicates exemption from all such evils as draughts, smokey chimneys, kitchen smells, damp, vermin, noise and dust; blind passages and musty rooms” (70). Kerr’s description and use of the word “evils” opens the door and introduces us to a Gothic household, allowing us to explore the ways in which haunted houses in fiction reflect the domestic misdemeanours mentioned above. In this section I use this cautionary list as a template for unveiling “evils” present in the domestic and Victorian space presented in Marsh’s novel. Moreover, the decision to concentrate the discussion

around issues of domesticity is substantiated by the fact that the main characters in this work are women, who, in the middle-class Victorian context were responsible for making the home “comfortable,” by doing some of the housework themselves, but mostly by supervising the servants who did most or all of it. I argue that the Gothic mode in this work upholds cultural attitudes of the time in regards to the home and to women, while at the same time shaping them in order to suit its own needs. Apart from focusing on these issues, I consider how the protagonist, Mary Blyth, is transformed by a journey that takes place predominately in the “blind passages” that Kerr mentions above, in the hallways and staircases of a haunted house, thus underlining the topic of liminality in regards to both setting and the character’s development. While in *Great Expectations*, Pip transits sensual passages rather freely, in *The Joss*, Mary Blyth is forced to remain in the marginal passageways of the house, a fact that will only fuel her attraction towards the haunted surroundings.

When Mary Blyth surprisingly inherits a dilapidated house from an uncle that she has never met, she must accept a set of very unusual conditions—to live there with a female companion of her choice, to not allow any men inside, and to not leave the house at night. She accepts, and together with her friend Emily, she embarks on the exploration of a house that seems to possess all the evils that the architectural critic above is warning Victorians against. Even before moving in, Mary has a dream that foreshadows the significance of domestic design, liminal space, and the reaction of characters to that particular setting: “It was as if I were continuously passing through endless chambers of nameless horrors [...] there were Emily and I, standing at the top of an enormous flight of steps, in pitch-black darkness, in frightful weather outside the door of some dreadful place”(26). In this nightmare the characters are standing at the top of a staircase; without delving into a psychoanalytic meaning of stairs,³ the image

3. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (Harmondsworth:Penguin,1976), Sigmund Freud suggested that “steps, ladders or staircases, or, as the case may be, walking up or down them, are representations of the sexual act”(472). He defends this assertion by explaining the comparison between the two: “we come to the top in a series of rhythmical movements and with increasing breathlessness and then, with a few rapid leaps we can get to the bottom again” (472).

undoubtedly suggests that the characters will have to exert themselves physically and emotionally in this journey. Furthermore, the fact that they are standing outside a door points to the topic of exclusion, which is heightened by the fact that outside, they are at the mercy of “frightful weather,” an environment that is hostile in various ways. Previously, I referred to an episode in this work that reveals the fear about intruders coming into the home. But the nightmare also indicates that even once inside, they will be entering a “dreadful place.” Mary’s dream foreshadows the problematic journey consisting of fleeing from a hostile and dangerous environment outside, in order to seek shelter in an incarcerating yet appealing space within the haunted house. We will see how, as in Mary’s nightmare, traversing spectral space in *The Joss* is characterized first and foremost by a constant state of “passing through,” by an ambiguous condition stemming from, on the one hand, wishing to explore the household, and on the other, being forbidden to do so. Locked doors, sealed openings and windows, and armies of frightening vermin repeatedly inhibit the characters’ free transit into rooms, and Mary and Emily are forced to remain not only in the house, but mainly in its thoroughfares. In the case of Mary, remaining in the passageways highlights the ambiguous yet transformative nature of her journey through the house.

As soon as the characters step into the house, Mary notices that “[t]here was no window over the door. In the passage it was so dark that it was as much as we could do to make out where we were. Emily put her hand upon my arm, as if she wished to make out where we were”(53). This episode signals the contrasting attitudes of each of the characters that will prevail throughout the story, with Emily literally leaning on Mary for physical and emotional support, and with Mary leading the way. But this episode is significant mainly because it marks the beginning of a trip that will be characterized by passages that provoke sensations of entrapment but also of allurements.

When characters wish to deviate from this dark path, they are met with obstacles that inhibit their progress:

We were brought to a standstill at the very start. In front of us a door which led into a room opening out of the passage, or ought to have done. When I tried the handle I found that it was locked. I shook it, I even thumped at the panels, I searched for a key. It was no good. Against us the door was sealed. This is a comfortable beginning! *Perhaps Uncle Benjamin intended that I should merely have the run of the passage and the stairs.* (emphasis added 54)

The door that could have enabled their escape from the never-ending passages is only one of the many exits that have been sealed, thus confining their movement to these marginal areas. After not being able to open this exit, the women are offered another option, and as they turn around, they are able to step into a room that is open—a kitchen. Uncle Benjamin and the conventions of the day seem to be allowing them out of the passage but only so that they can step into a sphere destined exclusively for women. Curiously, this room contains numerous of the wrongs detailed above by Kerr, related to household management, thus to the female sphere. Mary describes this room as an antithesis to domestic order and hygiene: “a delightful state it was in. Not only was it inches thick in dust, but it was in a state of astonishing confusion [...] The last person who had used the kitchen to cook a meal in had apparently simply let the utensils drop from her hand when *she* had done with them” (emphasis added 54). Not only is the nucleus of domestic housework dirty and disregarding of strict hygienic standards of the day—it is also chaotic. The shrine of domesticity and household management, in charge of women, is basically a dirty mess.

Predictably, the protagonist is bothered by the pathetic state of the kitchen and decides to improve it; her first impulse is to ventilate it—recall that one of the main characteristics of a “comfortable English home” is proper ventilation: “There’s one thing wanted, and that’s light and fresh air. Only let me get those shutters down, and the window open, and then we’ll see. I should say that from the smell of the place that there has never been any proper ventilation since the house was built” (54). This episode reinforces the feeling of entrapment and claustrophobia generated by this house full of windows and doors that have been sealed off, but most importantly, this scene points to the Victorian preoccupation with ventilation that stemmed from anxieties that

emerged about disease, and the ensuing discourse on hygiene. Architectural manuals of the day are clear about this need: “Let every Room in the house and every Passage be sufficiently ventilated from the external atmosphere”(Kerr 78).

Along with the careful management of ventilation went a curious attention to smells.⁴ In the chapter on the Victorian home I discussed the predominant discussion of ventilation traps and traps in drains, used to ensure a purity of air within and the blockage of unwholesome vapors from entering or remaining within the home. We might recall how this followed the building of the public sewage network, after the “Great Stink” of 1858 frustrated parliamentary meetings at Westminster. In *The Joss*, one of the things that Mary Blyth finds most offensive about the kitchen is that the sealed windows and shutters create a foul atmosphere: “No wonder the place smells like a vault”(54). Her remark adds a dark tone to the setting, pointing to Gothic themes of death and burial, but it also supports the relevance of the issues of ventilation and smells within the wider discourse of the wholesome home. Once again, building advice voices this concern: “Avoid for the windows, not only of the Family-rooms, but of the thoroughfares, and not only of the Offices, but of their Passages,--any admission of what is offensive to the sense of smell” (Kerr 79). The transit of smells, just like that of family members, guests, and servants, had to be carefully regulated so as not to offend social conventions, and the physical channels of control were often the thoroughfares, because of their obvious connecting but also excluding capacities.

Another point that relates historically to this worry about sealed shutters and windows in *The Joss* is that of the window-tax. The portrayal of dark households in numerous Gothic works obviously responds to the need to create a mysterious and

4. The second chapter of Robert Mighall’s *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History’s Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1999), makes reference to how Gothic fiction of the eighteenth-century principally dealt with settings described by sight and touch, whereas “within a hundred years Gothic fiction became more fastidious about smell [...] stench could itself become a Gothic property and evoke its own horrors” (66).

frightening environment; however, I believe that the passing of the window-tax in the late eighteenth century⁵ contributed to the predominance of gloomy houses both in fiction⁶ and in life. M. Humberstone's *The Absurdity and Injustice of the Window Tax* (1841) offers numerous reasons why this tax should be abolished, and in doing so, he provides intriguing quotations that reveal the significance of air and ventilation in the middle-class home: "taxing the LIGHT and AIR, the best of heaven, as though we could by any possibility have too much, as if the God of nature were too good, and puny mortals sought to set him right"(11). Another document, *The Case to the Window Duties* (1844), also condemns this particular tax because it creates the domestic Gothic setting *par excellence*, where "multitudes of human beings" are compelled to "breathe, in darkened rooms, a poisoned air" (3), and where "life or death may be inhaled by the lungs, according to the properties of the gases present in the atmosphere, or minute morbid particles held in suspension at the time of inspiration. Hence the 'pestilence which walketh in the darkness'"(6). This last quotation clearly reflects worries about disease and the advances of science; these discoveries promised to find treatment or cures for disease but also unveiled the fragility of life through detection of the microscopic forces that could foster illness. The following quotation, from Kerr's architectural work proves the concrete effect of this duty on households of the time: "Since the abolition of that ill-contrived impost the Window-duty, which made it necessary for the designer of even a Gentleman's House *to reduce its light to the verge*

5. Following the revolution of 1688 and the financial stress that resulted, the English government passed a series of taxes, among which was the window tax (1696). It would survive, despite strong opposition, until 1851, when it was replaced by House Duty. The window tax had a direct effect on the physiognomy of homes, with owners or inhabitants stopping up windows in order to decrease the fees or avoid them altogether. For example, in 1718, the tax office ascribed the declining yield of the duties "mainly to the stopping up of windows to avoid the tax" in W.R. Ward, "The Administration of the Window and Assessed Taxes, 1696-1798"(1965) 526.

6. Another example of this in fiction is Margaret Oliphant's story "The Library Window" (1896), in which a young narrator is able to see through a sealed-up window into an other-worldly room in the library and its ghostly occupant. Other characters do not have this ability, and they just see how "the panes are pented black" and how "It's no window," because "It has been filled in, in the days of the window duties."

of darkness, and its freshness to an equal extremity of denial, the number of windows, more especially in the Offices and Thoroughfares, has very much increased”(emphasis added 78). The author is writing this in the latter part of the nineteenth century (his first edition came out in 1864), and his words prove how common it was for homes to be badly lit because of the elimination of windows. The passing of this law had a direct effect on homes of the time and was often responsible for the creation of gloomy and stuffy environments, like the one that is magnified by fiction in *The Joss*. This provides an answer for why *The Joss* features the curious sealing or elimination of windows and other openings: “Those shutters would not come down. How to begin to get them down was more than I could understand [...] They seem to have been built into the solid wall, as if they had never intended them to be moved”(54); “where apparently there had been a door leading to the backyard or something, was a sheet of solid metal”(55). I argue that the setting that is depicted in Gothic fiction, apart from responding to Gothic conventions of setting (requiring an eerie and confined environment) reflects the connection between fiction and social context; the passing of the window tax and its effect on home design offer an interesting justification for the emphasis placed on sealed openings and windows in nineteenth-century Gothic works like *The Joss*.

The final domestic flaw present in Marsh’s novel that I wish to discuss is the predominance of vermin. Numerous episodes are literally teeming with vermin often depicted in Victorian journalistic and literary works: cockroaches, beetles and rats. In the kitchen, which is supposed the cleanest area for practical reasons—as the site for food preparation—as well as for symbolic ones—as the shrine of domesticity and wholesomeness—Mary observes: “Another thing we soon became conscious of—that the place was alive with cockroaches. ‘What is it we are stepping on?’ asked Emily. ‘Why, it’s beetles’”(54). As before, the women react in completely different ways to the incident, with Emily fleeing: “she picked up her skirts, she gave a scream, and back she scurried into the passage”(54), and Mary, the brave protagonist assuming her domestic responsibilities: “I am not fond of the creatures [...] but I am not afraid of them, and

I was not going to let them drive me out of my own kitchen” (54). We have seen how the presence of the wholesome home, vehemently promoted by the nineteenth-century press, home manuals and architectural treatises readily materialized and entered fiction. One of my main objectives in discussing *The Joss* is to draw attention to how, because of extreme anxiety and regulation, this vision of a pristine and hygienic home easily flipped over and revealed its Gothic side—a home as stuffy and lethal as a vault, where vapors and vermin alike wreak havoc and pursue female characters who seem to be utterly incapable of establishing any kind of order.

Instead of fleeing from the frightening, inverted picture of domestic bliss, however, Mary decides to stay. *The Joss* records this woman’s curious relationship with the haunted house, and the way in which it unfolds in the home’s thoroughfares. As I mentioned previously, Mary assumes ownership of the house from the start, by calling it her own even before seeing the totality of it. In fact, she is not able to enter the final rooms in the house until the final chapters of the novel. This spatial prohibition only serves to fuel her interest in the house and her desire to own and to get to know the home in its entirety. Near the beginning of the expedition, Mary is instructed to open an envelope, and in it she finds a letter from her Uncle Benjamin. This document foreshadows the strange attraction that Mary will feel for the house: “Now that you are inside the house, you will never sleep out of it again [...] the spell of the house is on you. It will grow in power. Each night it will draw you back. At your peril do not struggle against it”(62). This so-called spell announces the mounting feelings of attraction that Mary will feel towards her surroundings, which clearly contrasts with Emily’s reaction; early on, Emily realizes that she has made a mistake by coming into this incarcerating home. At one point, Mary drags her miserable partner up and down stairs: “Now you go up those stairs [...] You vowed to be my companion to the death [...] she bundled me up the staircase as if I were a child, with such impetuosity that I was breathless when we reached the landing”(95). The mounting of the steps signals

Mary's growing and insatiable appetite to move through the house that she feels very much as her own.

While Emily only sees horror and feels like fleeing, Mary is seduced by a house that tantalizes her, tempting her to explore sealed quarters yet restricting her access into these places and limiting her transit to thoroughfares. This spatial game that the house is playing with Mary is discussed in Thomsen's "Erotic Manifesto" on seductive architecture (discussed in the first chapter). In this treatise, the author explains how space that appeals to the senses is playful and is involved in a game of "luring in and fending off," and how it "rouses cravings and satisfies desires" (13), thus engaging and seducing the person who experiences it. Ironically, when Mary's movement is restricted to corridors and staircases—spaces intended to connect—she is constantly prohibited from arriving at a destination, and is forced instead to constantly retrace her steps in these areas. This increases her frustration at not being able to overcome her liminality. But precisely because of her irritating entrapment in the margins, Mary enters this seductive game with space, reaching a state of complete involvement and engrossment towards *her* home, inhibiting any desire to flee from it.⁷ Her horizontal movement through the house—in labyrinthine corridors—as well as her vertical journeys—up and down stairs—have sealed her commitment to the home and have insured the hold of the spell that Uncle Benjamin had prognosticated.

Hallways of Crime in Empty Houses

7. In Christine Wilson, "Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and the American Haunted House Narratives" in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), the author discusses the "space attachment" that heroines in Gothic works, such as King's *Rose Red* and Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* develop towards their spectral dwelling. Mary Blyth in *The Joss* exhibits this same type of unhealthy yet powerful space attachment towards a home, that is above all, *her* home.

Mary Blyth is enthralled by her spectral surroundings largely because she acknowledges her right to inhabit and own the haunted house. In the following analysis, however, I explore houses that are not occupied, a fact that contributes enormously to their haunted quality. But what is it about empty houses in Victorian fiction (apart from the obvious fact that they are haunted by memories of past inhabitants) that provides such a suitable backdrop for spectrality? During the nineteenth-century, concerns about the rise in criminality and vagrancy,⁸ along with an interest in emerging sciences, gave rise to the figure of the criminal, recorded in numerous social and anthropological works. Older publications such as Fielding's *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751),⁹ as well as Victorian works like Reynolds'¹⁰ and Mayhew's,¹¹ all reflected the birth of the modern criminal, who could now be classified and examined under taxonomic and voyeuristic scrutiny. These works, especially Reynolds' and Mayhew's, identify London as an urban setting that is full of diseased pockets of opium dens and "rookeries" or labyrinthine and foul districts inhabited by prostitutes, criminals and disease. Along with the numerous lodging-houses described in detail by Mayhew in his letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, empty houses also provided logical shelters for marginal members of society, including criminals who were looking for at least temporary concealment; this fact is portrayed in the fiction of the time. In Conan

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8. In his *Morning Chronicle* letters, Henry Mayhew claims that "the subject of Vagrancy is one of such vast importance, as being the source of the principal part of the crime of the country"(65). Furthermore, he relates how "Of the tide of crime which, like that of pestilence, accompanies the stream of vagrants there are equally strong and conclusive proofs" and that amongst the "habitual predators" there are "house-breakers" (69). Henry Mayhew, *The Morning Chronicle Survey*. (Firle, Sussex, England: Caliban Books, 1981)65,69. The tramp in "The Toll-House" represents the characters from real life that Mayhew described, who used to make regular use of empty dwellings during Victorian times.
 9. Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers With Some Proposals for Remedying this Growing Evil*, 2nd. ed. (London: A. Millar, 1751).
 10. G.W.M.Reynolds, *The Mysteries of London* (London: George Vickers, 1846).
 11. Henry Mayhew, *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts*. (Firle, Sussex: Caliban Books, 1981).

Doyle's "The Empty House"(1903), for instance, Colonel Moran, the right-hand man of Holmes's archrival Moriarty, makes use of an unoccupied house across from 221 B Baker Street. Here, he hides while waiting to shoot Holmes; instead, he shoots a dummy that Holmes had cleverly left as bait, at the window of his home. Similarly, in *The Mysteries of London*¹² a young and naïve protagonist wanders into a bad part of town and, when a storm ensues, he seeks shelter in an abandoned house: "He was alone—in an uninhabited house, in the midst of a horrible neighbourhood" (9). Soon, others enter the house, and the youth overhears them planning a burglary: "His common sense told him that he was in a den of lawless thieves—perhaps murderers; in a house abounding with the secret means of concealing every kind of infamy"(9,10). This house is, in a sense, haunted by recurrent visitations of criminals and memories attached to criminality, as the youth imagines: "all the fearful tales of midnight murders which he had ever heard or read, rushed to his memory"(9). Conan Doyle's and Reynolds's tales are examples of how Victorian fiction spectralized empty houses, because of these structures' vulnerability to recurrent visitation by criminals.

Furthermore, because of economic hardship, numerous towns suffered from the closing of factories, resulting in the emptying of houses. The following newspaper articles, the first from 1828 and the following from 1852, attest to this: "free trade measures have produced the following happy changes in the country: 'we regret to inform our readers that there are now, in the town of Macclesfield, the following unoccupied property:--Empty houses,920; ditto factories,15'" (*The Age* 26); "In visiting Ipswich he will find in several of the principal streets seven or eight shops closed within the space of a hundred or two hundred yards, and from eight to nine

12. George W.M. Reynolds wrote the highly successful weekly penny thriller from 1844-1856. It made use of Gothic and sensationalist tools, such as the dark and empty house immersed in an equally frightening neighbourhood. According to Peter Razell, editor of the 1996 compilation of this serialized work, *The Mysteries of London* (Staffordshire, England: Keele, University Press, 1996) is, along with Dickens's *Bleak House* and Henry Mayhew's voyeuristic travels, one of the most important accounts of the nightmare that poor London had become during the nineteenth-century.

hundred houses unoccupied [...] A little further, and Woodbridge presents the image of the ‘Deserted Village’—empty houses and closed shops in every direction” (“The Prosperity of Free Trade” 218). These empty houses were easy targets for unwanted invasions, and were often ideal sites for the perpetration of crime, as Henry Mayhew asserts, when describing the operating mode of “attic or garret thieves”: “These attic robberies are generally effected through unoccupied houses—perhaps by the house next door, or some other on the same side of the street. They pass through the attic to the roof, and proceed along the gutters and coping to the attic window of the house to be robbed” (qtd. in O’Malley 438). In other words, part of the horror represented by these empty houses was their capacity to serve as bridges that facilitated the invasion of criminality into a righteous domestic space, thus conducing to contamination.

Horror about empty houses in life shaped the Gothic setting of vacant houses in fiction. Here, characters are attracted to explore dwellings that hide behind a façade of vacuity, but which are in fact full of memories of a criminal past. In “From Udolpho to Spitalfields: Mapping Gothic London,” Mighall talks about how certain Victorian texts like Dickens’s *Bleak House* take place in a gothicized London; this urban Gothic presents houses that are haunted by “memories of crime” and “by a legacy of a criminal past” (51). In this section, I follow Mighall’s notion about literature, presenting dwellings tainted and haunted by criminality, but I add the element of seduction, arguing that characters are attracted to these empty haunted houses in order to explore the home’s delinquent roots, in the same way that Victorians were driven to explore criminal districts in the city of London. Curiosity and a morbid fascination with a history of dark deeds foster the desire of these characters to enter and explore these dwellings. I apply this concept in the study of two classic-haunted tales, “The Haunted and the Haunters, or the House and the Brain”(1859) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and “The Empty House” (1906) by Algernon Blackwood; even though these houses are not exactly lairs of thieves described in Mayhew’s or Reynolds’s works, they are haunted by a criminal deed that fascinates and attracts characters into the depths of

the dwelling. As in past sections, this analysis follows the journey of characters mainly in the marginal areas of the house; like the exciting and dangerous voyages through marginal London slums, the journey of the house takes place in liminal areas, ideal for haunting because of their ambiguity and instability.

In both stories, characters are initially drawn to explore the house because of the knowledge that it is a haunted site. In “The Haunted and the Haunters, or the House and the Brain,” when the protagonist hears about the haunting from a friend, he is unable to hide his desire to explore the dwelling: “You excite my curiosity [...] nothing I should like better than to sleep in a haunted house. Pray give me the address of the one which you left so ignominiously”(11). Moreover, upon visiting the landlord, the protagonist admits, “that [he] had a strong desire to examine a house with so equivocal a reputation” (11). Similarly, in “The Empty House,” Shorthouse, the protagonist, accompanies his elderly aunt, who has “a mania for psychical research”(8), to explore a house that she has heard is haunted: “He turned to look at her. The ugly, lined, enigmatical face was alive with excitement. There was a genuine enthusiasm round it like a halo [...] I should not dare to go quite alone,’ she went on, raising her voice; ‘but with you I should enjoy it immensely” (9). From the start, the protagonists in both tales are drawn into these homes because of their desire to explore spectral space.

This urge to discover and penetrate a haunted dwelling, however, is only part of the temptation. Characters are mainly drawn into these homes because they are curious about the deaths and crimes that have taken place within those walls, and which have cursed the place. In the beginning of Bulwer-Lytton’s story, the protagonist knows that the caretaker of the home was found dead with a terrified look on her face, as if something or someone had frightened her to death. Furthermore, apparitions that he later witnesses recreate a past crime, in which a malignant man and his passive wife take in the wife’s small nephew (whom they mistreat and eventually indirectly kill) in order to inherit a fortune. The story becomes the protagonist’s obsessive search for clues that will unlock the mystery behind the haunting. Therefore, one can argue

that the house seduces the protagonist because it presents itself as a repository of past crimes that the detective-like character wishes to unearth and solve. In the same way, in “The Empty House,” Aunt Julia is aware that a terrible event has cursed the house, and excitedly shares the story with her nephew: years ago, a stableman had come into the house, “crept upstairs to the next landing, and before anyone could come to the rescue, threw her [a servant] bodily over the banisters into the hall below” (9). The source of the haunting then, is also a crime that was committed precisely in the staircase area, and Aunt Julia and her nephew will explore the house from top to bottom, as they search for more clues about past events.

Within these diseased homes, hallways and staircases become the main areas used by protagonists in their search throughout the house. As I mentioned previously, because of their transitional nature, these areas are ideal for haunting, and in both stories the apparitions that recreate past tragedies occur in these regions. The protagonist of “The Haunted and the Haunters” describes the first phenomenon that he sees upon entering the house: “I saw, just before me, the print of a foot suddenly form itself, as it were. I stopped, caught hold of my servant, and pointed to it. In advance of that footprint as suddenly dropped another [...] I advanced quickly to the place; the footprint kept advancing before me, a small footprint—the foot of a child” (72). The way in which he reacts to this first apparition reveals the protagonist’s thirst for knowledge and his willingness to literally follow clues that lead to “solving” the mystery. He follows the footprint into the depths of the house, through stairs and corridors that will serve as a medium in this alluring search for a criminal occurrence. Similarly, in “The Empty House,” since a tragedy took place in a staircase (the servant thrown over the banisters), Shorthouse and his Aunt predictably feel drawn towards that area. As they begin to hear noises originating upstairs, Shorthouse decides to face them: “Now, Aunt Julia, we’ll go upstairs and find out what all this noise is about. You must come too. It’s what we agreed”(22). Shorthouse feels a need to do this, even if it means facing a terrifying sight or truth; in this sense, Shorthouse’s logic follows what Abraham and

Torok would recommend—the exorcising of a phantom by acknowledging its presence and questioning it. As the characters approach the staircase in fear, they encounter the sounds that recreate the horrible past: a scream is heard and a loud thud announces the deadly fall of the poor servant girl. In Bulwer-Lytton’s and Blackwood’s stories, the liminal regions of these empty houses are full of images that recreate a past crime that seems to have permeated the home. Furthermore, the compulsive recreation of these events signals the issue of haunted space, characterized by *unheimlich* repetition.¹³ The passageways of these houses are in-between places that function as perfect channels for the transmission of images that are compulsively played over and over again.¹⁴

We have discussed how Blackwood’s and Bulwer-Lytton’s tales may be analyzed in terms of the alluring effects of a space that is haunted by a criminal past, a notion that was being explored in journalistic and literary works at the time. Despite their attraction to these houses, characters also experience fear about losing control in these enthralling spaces. In these tales, both male protagonists combat their physical and emotional involvement with the house by recurring to scientific discourse and techniques employed by it.¹⁵ I argue that this reaction is caused by their desire to

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13. We might recall how the concept of the *unheimlich* presupposes a compulsive return, as in the case of Freud discussing how it was uncanny for him to return to the same area of the city after being lost: “Strolling one hot summer afternoon through the empty and to me unfamiliar streets of a small Italian town, I found myself in a district about whose character I could not long remain in doubt [...] after wandering about for some time without asking the way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street” (144). *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).
14. Another example in fiction in which there is a spectral replaying of a past crime, is Elizabeth Gaskell’s “The Old Nurse’s Story” (1852). Here, near the entrance of the home that is portrayed, we see the phantasmagorical recreation of an awful deed, in which members of a family banish one of the daughters and her illegitimate small girl from the house, and into the cold and their deaths.
15. In Christine Wilson, “Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and the American Haunted House Narratives” in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), the author discusses the role of science and reason in selected Gothic works, and notes how gender stereotypes determine the reaction that male and female protagonists display towards their haunted environment: “It is no coincidence that females in these texts try to use traditional housekeeping tasks to subdue the house, while the males try to conquer the house through exploratory tactics” (204). While Mary Blyth in *The Joss* battles against domestic chaos, the male characters in this section explore and investigate, hoping to dispel the supernatural.

counteract seduction, to keep it at bay in order to regain control over an increasingly powerful environment. For instance, in “The Haunted and the Haunters,” the main character admits that he is “curious” about the haunted house, a word that could be used to describe scientific interest more than an emotional drive. Furthermore, upon entering the house, he claims to be “impatient for the experiment” (13), and near the end of the tale, he embarks on a lengthy “theory” of how the supernatural occurrences that he witnessed are in fact “natural,” thus explained by science. Part of this lengthy treatise includes comments such as: “Now, my theory is that the Supernatural is the Impossible, and that what is called supernatural is only a something in the laws of nature of which we have been hitherto ignorant [...] So, then, the apparition of a ghost is, contrary to received opinion, within the laws of nature—i.e., not supernatural” (22). In a similar way, in “The Empty House,” when abnormal activity increases, the male protagonist also derives strength from scientific techniques that would accompany any experiment; for instance, he says “we must now go through the house from top to bottom and make a thorough search”(13), and he insists that “any sound or appearance must be investigated at once, for to hesitate means to admit fear. That is fatal”(13). Words and concepts like “search” and “investigate” clearly signal a cool and rational façade that is struggling against a powerful feeling—fear—and a sense of loss of control. Furthermore, as in “The Haunted and the Haunters,” characters employ techniques akin to a new emerging discipline—detective science¹⁶—as they interpret apparitions as clues and seek information about past crimes. Both in Bulwer-Lytton’s and Blackwood’s stories, science is placed alongside supernatural activity, in order to explain and rationalize, thus to dispel the latter.

16. According to Michael Cox, editor of *Victorian Detective Stories*: “the passing of Sir Robert Peel’s Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 [...] established the Metropolitan Police and led to the setting up in 1842 of a special Criminal Investigation Department dedicated to detective work “(xii,xiii). This would have a great effect in the area of detective and forensic science, but also in the fiction of the day. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Despite their desire to reduce or neutralize the supernatural, characters still fall prey to the house's seductive powers. In "The Haunted and the Haunters," the highly rational protagonist insists on challenging the strange force in the house, but is undoubtedly dominated by it; after he sees a shadow with two penetrating eyes looking at him, he admits: "I strove to speak—my voice utterly failed me; I could only think to myself, 'Is this fear? It is not fear! I strove to rise—in vain; I felt as if weighed down by an irresistible force'" (81). Even near the end of the story, after the protagonist has discovered the physical source for the haunting within the house, and after he has identified the culprit—an evil mesmeriser who is unnaturally old—he falls prey to the mesmeriser's influence. Like the haunted house, the hypnotist is a strong presence that influences and enthrals people. After all, the story is called "The Haunted and the Haunters or the House and the Brain," the latter part of the title referring to the presence of a great brain or wilful, seductive force within the house that projects its power over those in the home. Even after discovering the "truth" and crimes committed within the home, the protagonist is under the mesmerizer's and the home's influence. We have already discussed how Aunt Julia, in "The Empty House," is affected by the house's spell. But even her nephew, who has insisted on using detective-like techniques to rationalize the supernatural phenomena, is ultimately affected by the haunted house. At the end of the story, both characters have to flee the house, as they sense a presence in the staircase area: "the whole way down the stairs they were conscious that someone followed them; step by step; when they went faster IT was left behind, and when they went more slowly IT caught them up. But never did they look behind to see; and at each turning of the staircase they lowered their eyes for fear of the following horror they might see upon the stairs above" (24). In both stories, the spell of the house continues working on the characters, even after their attempts to break it through their belief in rationality.¹⁷

17. In *The Weird Tale* (Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990), S.T. Joshi comments on the role of perception in Blackwood's tales, a fact that would account for the importance that is placed in "The Empty House" on the sensations experienced by the two characters, and their failure to rationalize the supernatural: "Perception, indeed, is of special importance, for it is through a heightened or altered perception that we are given access

The discussion of these stories highlights common themes: these houses are perceived and described as exhibiting a certain character derived from their *genius loci* as haunted, cursed and diseased sites; furthermore, characters that move within these structures fall under a spell of attraction that makes them enter and keep moving through them, despite or because of frightening experiences; lastly, in spite of the effort of these characters to combat the supernatural with reason and science, characters inevitably experience an intimate response towards the house, a fact that supports the theoretical and aesthetic discussion on seduction and translates it to the dynamics of space. Linked to the significance of an intimate relationship between characters and the spectral home, these stories illustrate the economic and social climate of the times, and allude to a growing insecurity about criminality and the threat to an idealized concept of domesticity. I argue that the harsh economic climate of the day, causing the emptying of houses, as well as the emergence of the discourse on criminality, were historical factors that contributed to the spectralization of empty homes in the Victorian landscape. Empty houses acquired powerful symbolic characteristics as dangerous places that could provide shelter and concealment for marginal members of society and for that which was unlawful. Moreover, these unoccupied dwellings threatened the idyllic image of a home made up by its lawful occupants, headed by the figure of the laborious father and guided by the morally-superior mother; in a sense, these empty houses were just that—houses—and not what they were supposed to be—homes. Gothic tales like “The Empty House” and “The Haunted and the Haunters” portray an anti-home that is above all, empty of its rightful owners. The horror that these uninhabited spaces represent emerges from their vacuity of domesticity and family life, which creates a permeable structure, vulnerable to entries of the worst and most corrupting kind.

to other, truer realms of entity” (92). In the story, we can see how characters are not able to neutralize the supernatural by fully rationalizing it, and that they are actually forced to flee when the “truer” realms, as signified by the supernatural, are revealed.

The labyrinth as concept has been present since the beginnings of British Gothic, with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). In this work, as well as in various eighteenth-century texts, the labyrinth as spatial and theoretical notion has shaped space, providing classical Gothic settings such as tortuous staircases and vaults, underground mazes connecting monasteries and convents, and secret passages between graveyards and churches, to name a few.¹⁸ But the labyrinth did not die with a renunciation of medieval settings—it migrated to the nineteenth century and adopted new shapes warranted by the times. Numerous critics have discussed how Victorian Gothic shifts its attention to the urban problematic. For instance, Sicher provides an intriguing account of the use of the classical Gothic convention of the labyrinth in order to portray urban space in Dickens's works.¹⁹ Like Sicher, I consider a nineteenth-century work that employs the notion of the labyrinth as an organizer of space. Unlike him, I do not focus on the city and streets as the urban labyrinth; rather, I focus on the domestic, on the Victorian home as labyrinth. I consider architectural characteristics of the middle-class home that are responsible for conveying a maze-like environment.

The story that I examine in this section is W.W. Jacob's "The Toll-House" (1909), an example that touches upon many of the topics discussed in this chapter. Like "The Empty House" and "The Haunted and the Haunters," the setting is an unoccupied house. But instead of focusing on emptiness as being the source of spectrality, I concentrate on the labyrinthine nature within this home, which results in a highly

18. Neil Cornwell, for instance, offers a political interpretation of early Gothic labyrinthine settings as "images of tyranny or incarceration—within, ruin, castle, prison, asylum or monastery" (28) in "European Gothic," in David Punter, *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001). Kate Ferguson Ellis presents labyrinthine passages in early Gothic from the perspective of gender—women characters at times submit and at others challenge the prison-like spaces that they traverse in novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) or Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) in *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels, and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1989).

19. Efraim Sicher, "Bleak Homes and Symbolic Houses: At-Homeness and Homelessness in Dickens" in *Homes and Homelessness in the Victorian Imagination* (New York: AMS Press, 1988).

successful haunted space. The story begins when, out of sheer boredom, four men decide to visit a house that is said to be haunted. The house in question is called as such, because as one of the characters explains, “it has taken a toll of at least one life” of the families who have lived there. The last person that died there was a tramp who was found hanging from the balustrades; as in “The Empty House,” the area that seems to be most haunted is that of staircases and passages, the reason being that murders or tragic deaths have occurred in these parts of the house. However, in this section I propose that passageways in these stories are significant not merely as sites haunted by a past event, but also because they are capable of producing certain sensations in characters and an overall atmosphere of expectancy and terror, but also of strong attraction.

From the beginning, corridors and stairs emerge as the architectural protagonists in this story. When the characters Barnes, Meagle, Lester and White enter the home, they begin the exploration of the house through a dim corridor and stairs: “At the end of the passage they found a second staircase, and ascending it slowly gained the first floor”(149). From this point onward, the story follows the disorienting voyage first of all characters, but mostly of Meagle, as they attempt to navigate in disorienting space. A close look at the design of the middle-class Victorian home offers an explanation for the portrayal of dreadful passageways in fiction. In these houses, thoroughfares “constitute a species of skeleton of plan, upon which the rooms are grouped”(Kerr 76). We might recall how, because of the need to segregate space by function and gender and assign a specific purpose to every room, the design of the house often sacrificed comfort in order to accommodate this excessive quantity of rooms. This had a cramping and claustrophobic effect on space within the household. In the section “Aping the Large House,” Muthesius refers to the Victorian tendency of the middle class to model their house after the large homes of the upper class, with the following cramming result: “the rooms have all become so small and are usually also cluttered up with useless household effects to such an extent that it is difficult to move, let alone, to live in them” (130). Furthermore, because of concerns over privacy, most rooms

were not connected to one another, something which often created lengthy and dark thoroughfares whose only purpose was to connect these various chambers. Girouard coincides with Muthesius's views, when he mentions the negative aspects of domestic designs by one of the most popular Victorian architects that I mentioned previously, William Burn: "when the Burn mystique was on the wane, [...] the debit side of his method, in the shape of interminable passages and excessive number of minute rooms, began to be realized" (*The Victorian Country House* 34). It is clear, then, that like the rooms that it contained, the domestic plan was overly stuffed and crammed, and that "interminable passages" used to connect these chambers were an inevitable result, conducting to a labyrinthine atmosphere.

The lengthy skeletal plan for the lines of communication did not result merely from the amount of rooms that had to be connected by passages. It was also due to what, by today's standards, would be considered an excessive amount of staircases and entrances, resulting from the need to segregate space because of class and gender hierarchies. A large country home could afford a drastic multiplication of these features:

A sizeable country house could easily have six staircases; men's and women's staircases in the servant's wing; the main staircase, the back staircase; a family staircase leading from outside the boudoir up to the masterbedroom suite and on up to the nurseries; and a bachelor's staircase. Entrances could be easily as complicated: not only a front and back entrance but a garden entrance; a man's entrance, coming in by the smoking and gunrooms; a business entrance, for the business room; and a luggage entrance, to which carriages could move on after dropping guests at the front door. (Girouard 31)

Notice that, as in the monumental plans for Buchanan House (Fig. 1), the transit ways in the next plan are labelled carefully, assigning certain corridors and staircases to a certain person or set of people—butler's corridor, nursery corridor, principal staircase, women's stair, bachelor's stair, young ladies' stair. Entrances, as Girouard suggests above, and as is apparent in the plans below, were as incredibly specific and exclusive as staircases. Notice how, for example, sensibilities about morality determined house plans, thus causing the young ladies' stair (first and second floor) to be placed as far away as possible from the bachelors' stair.

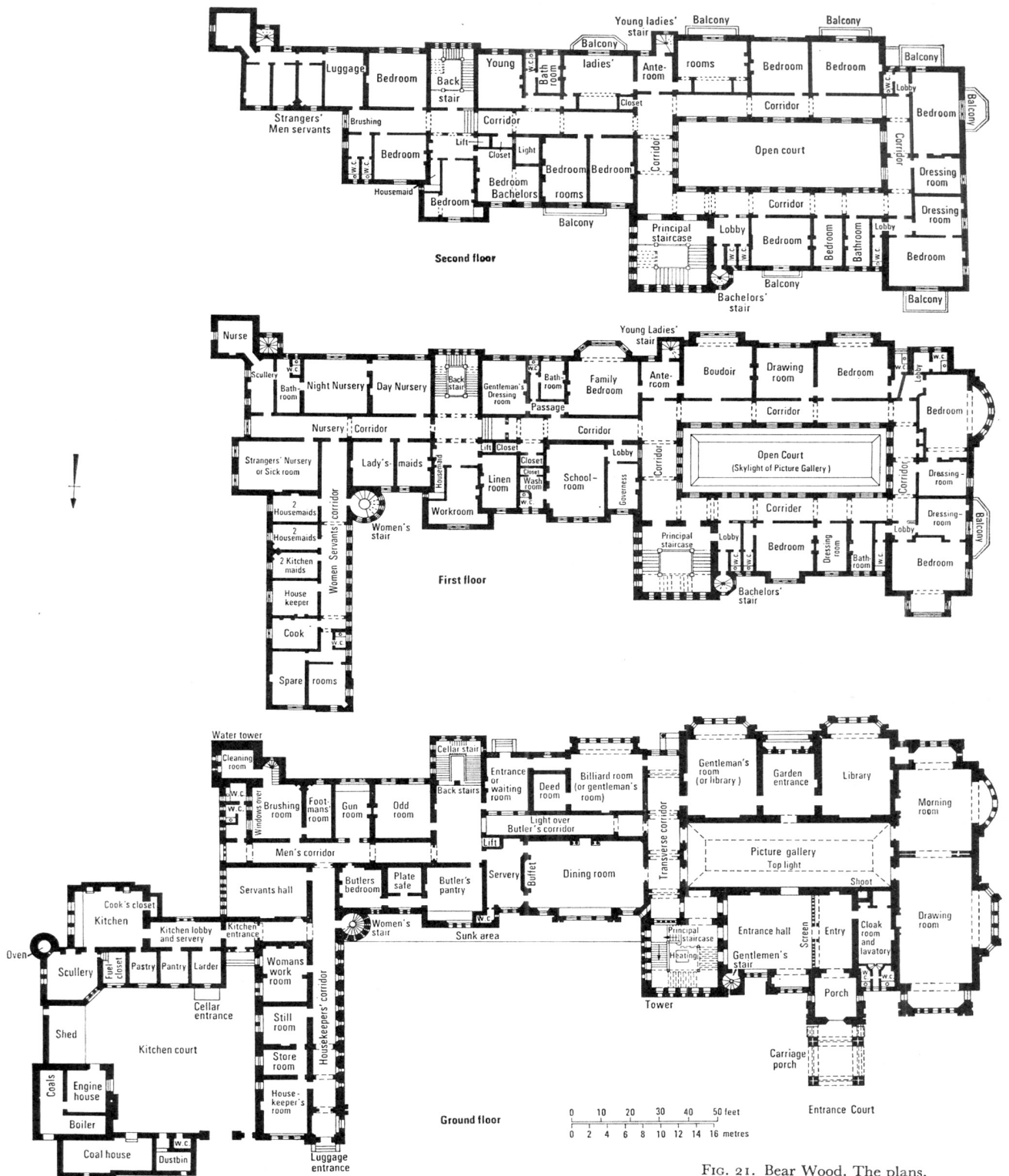
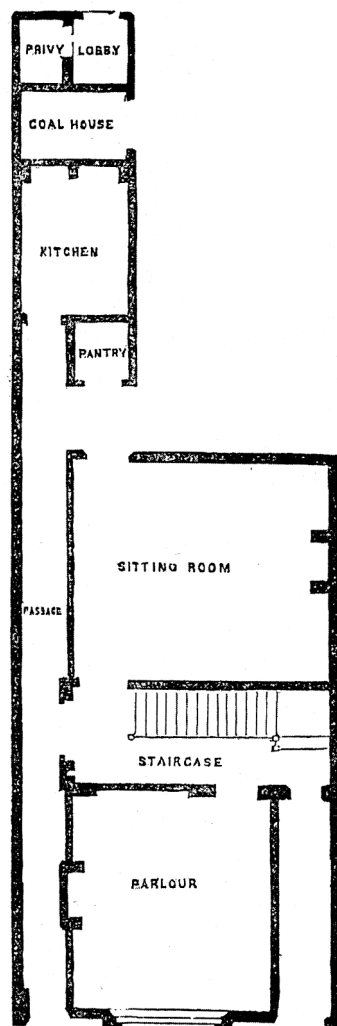


FIG. 21. Bear Wood. The plans.

Fig. 2. Plans of Bear Wood, Wokingham, Berkshire (Robert Kerr), in Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

Bear Wood, like Buchanan House (Fig. 1) are examples of large country estates, but they do manifest certain qualities that were also present in the Victorian middle-class household, albeit not in such extreme measure. Because of the middle and lower classes' need to "ape" the rich, the middle-class home often chose to sacrifice the size of rooms in order to maintain separate spaces for hallways and staircases. For instance, look at the absurdly long hallway in the ground-floor plan below, labelled "passage"(on the left-hand side), intended to be used by servants only. Because family and guests had to make exclusive use of the main entrance (right-hand side)



Ground Plan.

Fig. 3. Ground plan of middle-class home in *The Builder* (1843) 387.

that led to the main staircase, in order to enter the parlour and the sitting room, servants had to employ the passage on the left, leading to the domestic offices. As opposed to contemporary open-plan layouts, where the governing objective is to avoid compartmentalization and to eliminate "wasted space" in the form of hallways, the plans below present a parlour and sitting room whose dimensions could have been greater, had the "passage," not been deemed necessary.

However, the whole point is that they were deemed necessary, as the following nineteenth-century author, T.J. Maslen, suggests: "If the houses of the middle classes have their entrance-passages and halls, *and if they deem them necessary parts of their dwelling*, conducive to convenience and comfort, why should not the poorer classes also be allowed to participate in them?" (emphasis added 178). The same author, who is discussing ways to improve lower-class homes, explains the need

to have a staircase that is not part of a room, because of a concern for privacy: “I consider it a bad custom to build a staircase in any room, even if the room be of ever so large a size: thousands of poor families in the country, are obliged to have a press-bed (a bedstead that shuts up) in the ground-floor room, and there can be no privacy or comfort in sleeping there where the staircase opens into the room” (177). Therefore, as Maslen insists, during the nineteenth-century, there was this ideal that the righteous home—poor, middle class or rich—should boast separate staircases and hallways (as in the plans above), as a way to maintain a strict regulation of people and their movement throughout the home. This ideal, in turn, inevitably resulted in overly restrictive and proscriptive lines of communication that easily translated into winding and disorienting space in Gothic fiction.

This complex and symbolic domestic layout, where transit and behaviour were heavily regulated, gave Victorians a sense of control, but this spatial delimitation also generated a lot of anxiety, a case that is proven by this particular story. An analysis of the sensations experienced by characters in these confining marginal spaces shows how the design of the Victorian home takes its toll on the characters within “The Toll House.” I argue that this Gothic work reflects feelings stemming from complex social dynamics, and that phenomenological notions covered in the initial chapter throw light on these cultural anxieties. In the story, there are two main areas that generate a great deal of concern for the characters, the staircases and the hallways. For instance, as soon as the characters reach a landing, they encounter a gap in the balustrades and assume that this was the spot where the last victim hanged himself: “He held the candle forward and showed where the balusters had been broken away. Then, he peered curiously into the void beneath²⁰”(149). Clearly, the memory of a death that

20. Algernon Blackwood’s “A Case of Eavesdropping,” which I will address in depth in the next chapter, contains a passage that is almost a replica of the one in “The Toll House”: “Moving stealthily from the door, he peered over the banisters into the space below. It was like a deep vault that might conceal in its shadows anything that was not good”(59). In addition to employing the same Gothic convention of feelings of unease in a dark space, the choice of location—the banisters and staircase—the feelings of unease that are described illustrate the notion that spaces with certain qualities produce specific sensations in individuals.

took place here promotes discomfort, but as we will see later on, the feeling also arises from the ambiguity and liminality of these passageways. The other feature which generates discomfort is the hallway. The men quickly decide to leave the corridor since it made them feel “uncomfortable,” and they seek shelter in a small room at the end of a passage; even though the room is empty, there is a clear contrast between it and the darkness and uncertainty that characterize the hallways outside. Inside this room Barnes first hears something coming from without: “it really seemed to me that I heard a door open below and steps on the stairs”(150). Then, he affirms hearing “sounds of something moving about in the passage outside” (151). Frightening noises originate in the stairs as well as in the hallway immediately outside the door that is sheltering the men, thus turning corridors into threatening and terrifying areas, something that will be exploited throughout the story. In “The Toll-House” the protagonist is not a person and not even a ghost, but the house and its never-ending passageways, and these are identified, from the start, as areas of an uncomfortable and dangerous openness.

Despite the sense of unease that is caused by strict social regulations resulting in an equally rigid and complex plan of the house, the characters, especially Meagle, do not choose to remain within the relatively safe confines of a room; instead, they feel drawn to explore the liminal and risky regions of the house. After Barnes leaves the room in order to investigate the source of a noise in the hallways, Meagle decides to follow him, since the rest of the characters have mysteriously fallen into a deep slumber. But when he walks out into the corridor, he feels so vulnerable there, that he decides to return to safety: “He glanced into the blackness behind, and then came hastily into the room again” (153). Even though he is petrified with fear, he soon engages in a game of hide-and-seek with the presence in these corridors. Despite his panic, the sounds finally tantalize and make him follow them:

He stood with the candle in his shaking hand. He heard them ascending the farther staircase, but they stopped suddenly as he went to the door. He walked a little way along the passage, and then went scurrying down the stairs and then at a jog-trot along the corridor below. He went back to the main staircase, and they ceased again. For a time he hung over the balusters, listening and trying to piece the blackness below; then slowly, step by step, he made his way downstairs, and, holding the candle above his head, peered about him. (153)

In his “Manifesto of Erotic Architecture,” Christian Thomsen points to the “playful” quality of spaces that seek to engage with people’s sensations. The hide-and-seek quality of movement present in “The Toll-House” describes the same kind of interaction between characters and space that Thomsen is referring to, when he describes sensual architecture:

Its playfulness is expressed in a contradictory interplay of veiling and unveiling, of covering up and opening out, of luring in and fending off, of exterior and interior. The game played by erotic architecture is at once narrative and signal [...] It prefers states of suspense and protraction to the direct fulfilment of a function. This game is capable of creating all sorts of associations in the mind, but its aim is to unite the head and the belly, fantasy and urge. The game played by erotic architecture stimulates the imagination and offers the prospect of pleasure. (13)

The haunted house in this story may be classified as “erotic architecture” because it attracts the character by playing with him, by luring him into passages and a certain area, and then by fending him off. This swinging movement that repels and attracts at the same time, creates a tension that keeps the character moving within haunted space. Furthermore, this tense but engaged relationship with the house creates “states of suspense and protraction” that Thomsen refers to, and which ultimately offer this searching journey a “prospect of pleasure.” Suspense and playfulness, in other words, guarantee that Meagle will keep engaging with the haunted house, instead of merely trying to flee from it.

While Meagle follows the steps on the stairs and hallways, the enclosed spaces of passageways only intensify his feelings of apprehension and of uncertainty, since, at one point, he is not sure about whether he is following in the footsteps of Barnes (who had stepped outside of the room) or of someone or something else. The changing rhythm of his movement—he walks, scurries down, trots, stops and walks again—conveys a feeling of restlessness but also illustrates how his body reacts and is affected by his journey along the unsettling passages and staircases.²¹ Several of this character’s

21. In John, Templer, *The Staircase History and Theories*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992), the author illustrates how the body is fully engaged by moving up or down the stairs by explaining how small treads “propel us along the stair at a comparatively brisk and business-like

senses, including that of touch, are engaged, as he “groped his way along the narrow passages”(154). His whole body seems to be involved in running after that which creates so much uncertainty and terror in him, and the passageways are the medium that channels his multi-sensory involvement with the house.

This character’s journey reaches its climax, appropriately, on a landing near the top of some stairs, when the weary but insistent pursuer becomes the horrified pursued, and he turns and flees, trying to reach the stairs in order to get out of the house: “The passages *wound like a maze*, and he threaded them blindly in a vain search for the stairs. If he could get down and open the hall door” (emphasis added 155). Once again, the Gothic trope of the maze provides a suitable background for feelings of mounting anxiety and stress that concentrate in these passageways. The rest of the story describes his desperate attempt to retrace his steps and escape the house altogether. However, he is not able to reach the end of this labyrinth:

He came out and ran swiftly and noiselessly in the other direction, and in a moment the steps were after him. He found the corridor and raced along it at top speed. The stairs he knew were at the end, and with the steps close behind he descended them in blind haste. The steps gained on him, and he shrank to the side to let them pass [...] suddenly he seemed to slip off the earth into space. (155)

Meagles is predictably found dead, at the bottom of the stairs, by his colleagues, including Barnes, who wake up the next day with no recollection of events the night before. Even though the events in this story are a recreation of tragic happenings that seem to haunt the house, it is undeniable that the feelings that are generated within stairways and corridors play a key role in the development of events. We have discussed

pace,” while “stairs with larger treads and smaller risers encourage us to employ a more leisurely gait permitting us to linger longer on the stair [...] to spend more time in sensing the nature of the stairs setting” (23). Meagle’s relationship with his surroundings may be better understood by considering certain aspects about staircases and their effect on the people climbing or descending them. Stairs are one of the architectural features that have a greater effect on the body of its users: “stairs engage the user’s motions and their senses to a remarkable degree—perhaps more than any other architectural element. The enclosing balustrades (or walls) of the flight control the stair user’s movement through space, and the dimensions of the risers and treads strictly govern the cadence of gait” (Templer 23). If stairs have the power to engage the user’s body to such an extent, one may conclude that they are powerful generators of sensations.

how passageways and staircases in middle-class homes of the nineteenth century were often dark and lengthy affairs. Meagle's reactions, first of frenzied search (for whom he thinks is Barnes), and then of desperate flight are magnified and heightened by his physical environment; the climbing or descending of interminable and gloomy stairs heightens emotions of excitement, euphoria, and fear.

"The Toll House" narrates a common occurrence in haunted-house tales—the death of one of its occupants who has fallen victim to the pernicious influence of diseased, spectral surroundings. Nevertheless, in this story, one cannot identify a cursed *genius loci* as the single source that causes the unfolding of unfortunate events. The entrapping quality of a maze-like space is the overwhelming presence that is at work in this story. I argue that design aspects of the middle-class home, favoring excessively long dark corridors, help shape the labyrinthine haunted house in this story. Moreover, sensations of nervousness and restlessness experienced in these disorienting spaces within the story reflect the concerns of a middle class fighting hard to create a shelter impervious from the world inside their home; ironically, it is precisely this effort that inevitably led to a spectralization of space generated by extreme compartmentalization, cramping of space, and the creation of endless passageways that seemed to lead everywhere and nowhere. In W.W. Jacobs' "The Toll House," the medieval labyrinths that characterized early British Gothic are successfully adopted and internalized by a middle-class household with a fixation on spatial management and supervision.

Passages and liminal areas in Gothic houses of fiction lure characters into penetrating the house; throughout this internal voyage, characters experience a loss of control of their own will and a growing force around them that pushes them further on, towards the nucleus of the terrible house. Once entered, these passages isolate characters and force them to get closer and closer to a terrifying but alluring center. Characters begin their journey into haunted space in a passage and as the tale progresses, their wills begin waning, while the house's own will increases in strength and power. Because of this, characters have no choice but to continue moving

in these liminal areas. Since hallways and staircases are confined areas, feelings of encroachment and claustrophobia are generated, allowing characters one possibility—to keep moving forward. In the narrative structure of these tales, these claustrophobic passages represent the first stage of a journey of attraction. Characters enter an intimate relationship with the house as they move through corridors and sense this forward thrust that is generated in these confined spaces. Holgate explains this thrust in terms of architectural phenomenology, when he discusses that the “ ‘movement’ in a building, or the ordering of its elements, progresses gradually to a visual climax, followed by relief of tension” (110). One can employ this notion of spatial “relief of tension” and superimpose it onto narrative structure, arguing that the relief of tension that occurs at the end of Gothic tales featuring voyages in passages, follows this building up of tension deriving from the characters’ movement throughout the corridors of the house.

These labyrinths take different shapes and function in slightly different ways in the literary works that I have discussed. In *Great Expectations*, Pip is lured into the sensual darkness of Satis mainly by travelling through its staircases, in the company of Estella. Here, the disorienting effect of the labyrinth is created by darkness and by the transformation that Pip undergoes as he is seduced by Satis house and Estella; when he is thrown out of this appealing and mysterious place, he feels changed and lost. In *The Joss*, Mary Blyth is confined to liminal regions within the house, and like Pip, she undergoes a transformation resulting in a powerful bond between her and the haunted surroundings. As her companion Emily notes, Mary becomes “possessed” by the spirit of her uncle, but mostly by the sense of ownership—the haunted house belongs to her as much as she belongs to it. Her continuous travel within liminal regions of the house guarantees the seductive effect of spectral space and seals her commitment to it. Mary Blyth’s bond with the home is based on a sense of ownership, but in “The Haunted and the Haunters” and “The Empty House,” characters are drawn within a dwelling that does not belong to them. Still, in detective-like fashion, they choose to enter it and to experience a growing need to keep moving forward through dark hallways and

staircases. These stories illustrate the strong physical and sensual reactions experienced by characters in a haunted surrounding, but they also point to the social climate of the time and its worries of over criminality and its potential to enter the middle-class home. Finally, in “The Toll House,” liminal space is presented in the shape of the labyrinth, a leitmotif since the birth of European Gothic in the eighteenth century. Sensations of claustrophobia and disorientation experienced by the protagonist are central in this story. I argue that these powerful feelings once again mirror very real social anxieties as well as architectural features of the middle-class home that were responsible for creating a highly-compartmentalized and meandering domestic space.

In all these works, liminal regions are the spaces through which characters explore the haunted house. I argue that these marginal voyages initiate the characters’ interest in the house, an interest that soon grows into feelings of a strong attraction. The Gothic works that I have examined portray nineteenth-century concerns over the home and its threatening surroundings, but they also illustrate the characters’ fascination to discover the frightening and disagreeable elements that are often perceived as originating in the corrupt world of the outside, but which are often fostered within and by the claustrophobic and diseased home itself. As Girouard explains when referring to country houses, the social rigidity which led to an inflexible design, helped foster a truly Gothic domestic layout:

The Victorian country house at its best was a remarkable achievement of analysis and synthesis, a vast machine running smoothly and with clockwork precision, a hierarchic structure as complex and delicately graduated as the British constitution. But it had its dangers. Unless arranged with skill, it could become a warren of small rooms, confused corridors, dark corners and innumerable staircases. Even when well planned, Victorian country houses were inflexible, and the lines of communication were inevitably very long. (31)

Whether referring to a country estate or to a middle-class home, one notion stands—the highly complex Victorian home resulted from social concerns, which solidified into complex plans and lengthy passageways. The Gothic works that I have discussed in this chapter demonstrate how these architectural features, resulting from the aforementioned conventions, have the power to foster an unsettling yet

appealing environment, where characters initiate a journey into haunted space in the passageways of the home. The liminal space that they traverse is characterized by a certain permeability, an in-betweenness that is ultimately permissive, allowing bothersome elements to wander alongside characters, within the infinite thoroughfares of the home.



Chapter Five

Unlocking Secret Space: Rooms and Doors in the Haunted House

In this chapter I explore three different types of rooms: those that contain secrets; those that mutate in frightening ways; and finally, those that have been infiltrated by corruptive entities. The main argument behind this classification asserts that these various chambers represented in Gothic fiction respond to real anxieties present within the Victorian household. Therefore, concerns over secrecy and privacy emerge as rooms that viciously conceal a shameful secret. Also, worries about the dissolution of a way of life based on domesticity and a strict observance of spatial rules are transformed into fantastic rooms, whose partitions move in unsettling ways. Lastly, fears regarding home infiltration surface in tales where windows and other means of entry into rooms allow an invasion by supernatural, malignant entities. Having discussed liminal space in the previous section, this particular chapter follows characters deeper into the home and into its rooms; while passageways entice the characters to penetrate the home, this chapter explores the destination of this seductive journey through haunted space—the secretive, hermetic room.

Rooms Containing Secrets

The Myrtle Room and its Not-So-Dead Secret

The Dead Secret (1857) was Collins's fourth novel; like *The Woman in White*, three years later, it offered classic sensational and Gothic elements, featuring the

concealment of a shameful event within a chamber. On her deathbed, Mrs. Treverton orders her feeble-minded servant, Sarah Leeson, to disclose in a letter what has been kept from the former's husband, Captain Treverton—the infant Rosamond Treverton is in fact Sarah's illegitimate child, passed as Mrs. Treverton's own in order to retain the love of her husband and to save the real mother from disgrace.¹ Instead of delivering the letter, Sarah flees, deciding to take the secret with her to the grave. However, because of her superstitious nature, Sarah is too afraid to disobey her mistress completely, and instead of destroying the letter, she hides it within the Myrtle Room, a disused chamber, hoping that it will never surface. Later on, Rosamond returns as the newly wed lady of Porthgenna Tower, and she feels mysteriously drawn to the enigmatic room.

In this section I explore how Wilkie Collins's *The Dead Secret* (1857) presents domestic spaces that are haunted by issues of privacy, concealment and secrecy. I argue that these three notions defined the landscape of the household at the time, shaping isolated and secretive rooms and stressing the containing and prohibitive roles of boundaries in their diverse architectural forms, in both the real households of the nineteenth century, and their frightening counterparts of fiction. I will begin by referring to privacy and to its manifestation. When Rosamond marries Leonard Frankland, the happy couple decides to move back to Rosamond's childhood home, Porthgenna Tower, but before reaching it, they stay in temporary lodgings. Miss Mowlem, the servant at the inn, is excessively curious about the young couple, rashly disregarding

1. Jessica Cox in "Representations of Illegitimacy in Wilkie Collins's Early Novels," in *Philological Quarterly* (83.2 (2004): 147-169) draws attention to the fact that this author's early novels, *Hide and Seek* (1854) and *The Dead Secret* (1857) highlight the issue of illegitimacy, revealing the perilous situation of illegitimate children and the social stigma that befell their mothers in Victorian society. Cox explains how the passing of the Bastardy Laws of 1834 was actually a step back in regards to women's rights and their children's position, since the father of the illegitimate child was no longer held financially accountable for the child. Cox argues that Collins's regard for this topic, largely motivated by fathering three illegitimate children himself, is fuelled by a desire to redress the victims of this social injustice. Furthermore, Ira B. Nadel in the introduction to *The Dead Secret* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), points out how "secrets, whether in short stories [...] or elaborated in Sir Percivale Glyde's parentage in *The Woman in White*, fascinated Collins who, at the time of *The Dead Secret*, was himself leading a secret private life with Caroline Graves" (xvi).

social considerations that existed between masters and servants. Her transgressions undermine the boundaries that are set up within the home to ward off indiscretions like the following: “this observant spinster stole up stairs again, according to custom, to drink at the spring of knowledge through the key-hole channel of the drawing-room door [...] ‘She’s actually sitting on his knee! Mother, did you ever sit on father’s knee when you were married?’”(62). The servant goes as far as entering the drawing-room when Rosamond is kissing her husband, and this indiscretion proves to be too much: “Turning round instantly[...] Mrs. Frankland, to her horror and indignation, confronted Miss Mowlem standing just inside the door [...] ‘You wretch! how (sic.) dare you come in without knocking at the door?’” (67). The offense is so severe that an irate Rosamond announces why they will be leaving: “Mr. Frankland says *he won’t have his rooms burst into, and his doors listened to* by inquisitive women—and I say so too” (emphasis added 68). These passages clearly transmit the Victorian preoccupation with privacy and its translation into a domestic setting that sought to uphold an agreement of discretion between all its inhabitants.

A sense of spatial prudence was key in a home that had to be shared, by necessity, with servants. Kerr’s quote in *The Gentlemen’s House* (1864) brilliantly exposes how the design of the house assured the marked division between the different classes, an idea that I pointed out in my third chapter:

The sleeping rooms of the domestics also have to be separated both internally and externally from those of the family, and indeed separately approached. The idea which underlies all is simply this: the family constitute one community. The servants another. Whatever may be their mutual regard and confidence, as dwellers under the same roof, each class is entitled to shut its door upon the other, and be alone. (68)

In 1880, another architect and critic, J.J. Stevenson, identifies the undeniable consideration for privacy, when planning the design of a home: “privacy is essential to our comfort, and to live in its fullness and variety our modern life, we require apartments appropriated to its various phases” (*House Architecture* Vol. II 3). Stevenson refers to the “modern” need to segregate space into separate compartments because of

the importance placed on privacy, as opposed to previous models that were not highly sensitive about segregation.²

In the passages present in Collins's novel, it becomes apparent that Miss Mowlem ignores a physical boundary—the door—employed for maintaining privacy, by peeping through the keyhole. The servant's affront threatens the delicate balance that exists in the household and that could be achieved by a simple shutting of a door, as Kerr proposes. Ignoring these architectural and social borders by listening through dangerous openings (such as keyholes), and worst yet, by “bursting into rooms” unannounced, are serious offenses in this spatially sensitive space where intimacy reigns supreme, as the following comment elucidates: “the Englishman plans the layout of his house without giving a thought to banquets and celebrations, but rather to fulfil all his residential needs as intimately as possible” (Muthesius 79).

As in Collins's novel, screening and hiding sights and events is one of the main concerns in the Victorian household. The positioning of furniture within a room responds to practical considerations, such as the avoidance of draughts, especially in bedrooms: “for planning a bedroom the rules are few and simple. A position should be provided for the bed, out of the way of the draughts between window, door, and fireplace; not with the object of excluding air, but rather that it may be admitted without danger of cold to the sleeper” (*House Architecture* 67). In *The Dead Secret* we see how, when Mrs. Frankland gives birth in her bedroom in the lodging house, special care is taken to ensure that the curtains in her four-poster bed are drawn at the foot of the bed closest to the fireplace, in order to avoid draughts. Nevertheless, exceeding the practical uses, the placement of furniture within the Victorian bedroom also indicates the distress

2. In “Housing and Privacy,” in *A History of Domestic Space* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 1999), Peter Ward discusses how “notions of privacy have always been contingent, ‘constructed’” (5). Furthermore, he points out how the “ideas about the nature of privacy have varied greatly from time to time, place to place, culture to culture” (5), thus explaining how the domestic setup within Britain could mutate in a matter of two centuries, from a relatively flexible setting, to a highly prohibitive structure, upholding privacy.

caused by the possibility of confidential scenes being overseen or heard by others, and within the bedroom, the most intimate of all family rooms, this is particularly true. For instance, in Collins's work, the narrator describes how the arrangement of Mrs. Frankland's bedroom is defensive in nature:

The bed was of the old-fashioned kind, with the customary four posts and the inevitable damask curtains. It projected from the wall into the middle of the room, in such a situation as to keep the door on the right hand of the person occupying it, the window on the left, and the fire-place opposite the foot of the bed. On the side nearest the window the curtains were open, while at the foot, and on the side near the door, they were closely drawn. By this arrangement, the interior of the bed was necessarily concealed from the view of any person first entering the room. (108)

The way in which furniture is employed assures the greatest measure of privacy possible for a mother and her newborn child; the drawing of the curtains on the side closest to the door acts as a spatial precaution that blocks unwanted strangers from witnessing and threatening what was perceived as an excessively feminine and intimate situation. When Dr. Orridge steps into this cocoon-like arrangement, his comments prove how claustrophobic and excessive (even by Victorian standards) it was: "Do you think you will be any the worse for a little freer circulation of air?" (108). His reaction proves a notion that I suggested in the third chapter, of how complicated it was to strike a balance between a wholesome home that admitted air, and an unsafe one that allowed the entry of draughts and even worst threats to the family. Furthermore, the image of drawn curtains and the careful positioning of furniture highlight the need to conceal in a home so preoccupied with privacy.

Privacy and concealment within the Victorian household as well as in a representation of it in *The Dead Secret* undoubtedly reflect norms of the time and function as anteroom to the central premise of the novel—secrecy—and to its numerous physical manifestations—doors, rooms, drawers, locks, bolts and keys. Bolting doors goes hand in hand with the management of secrets in the novel. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, a dying Mrs. Treverton calls Sarah into her room, in order to write a letter telling Mr. Treverton the truth about Rosamond: " 'Bolt the door' [...] 'Bolt the door. Let no one in, till I give you leave' "(13). The letter, as well as the

room in which the dictation takes place, function as spaces of containment for the information. On the surface, writing the truth down instead of simply vocalizing it saves the dying woman the trouble of a direct confrontation. At a deeper level, though, the letter, meant to disclose is in reality, a medium that anchors the secret; even though letters are meant for circulation, in this case the letter ironically holds and restricts the secret's free flow, hence suppressing the dangerous consequences that could result from a sudden dissemination of the truth.³ I argue that even Mrs. Treverton, the author of the letter, who is the person most interested in telling the secret, unconsciously or consciously chooses to place the information in the contained medium of a letter, instead of liberating the information by simply telling it.

From this point onwards, the secret is transferred from this particular bedroom to a less intimate one—the Myrtle Room—an unused chamber where Sarah Leeson hides her mistress's letter. And it is at this point in the novel, that the relationship between secrecy and the architectural features of the home, acquires the most relevance. Before reaching the secret itself, Rosamond and her husband Leonard must explore different compartments that are framed by the main one of the room. This effect of stripping off layers or penetrating a space that is organized in a sort of Russian-doll fashion,⁴

3. Tamar Heller, in *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), comments on the feminist implications of the image of locking up and submerging texts written by women in Collins's works. Heller argues that in Collins's novels, obsessed by secrets, the real secret is that female Gothic is present, drawing attention to the topic of the resurgence of women's voices that have been silenced by this burying of information written by women: "The plot of *The Dead Secret*, with its focus on buried writing, typifies many characteristic themes in Collins' writing. Transgressive secrets [...] concerning a character's illegitimacy—abound in Collins' writing; as in *The Dead Secret*, such secrets can be concealed and later revealed, by writing that is hidden or buried. Through the recurrent image of buried writing Collins represents social and textual marginality, as well as subversiveness lurking beneath the surface of convention" (1)

4. In "The Restless Labyrinth: Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel," in Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, eds. *Gothic Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2004), Jerrold E. Hogle discusses the powerful function of the crypt in classical Gothic texts, and its generation of attraction through the creation of enigmatic space: "Hence a further tendency in Gothic crypts despite and because of their distance from groundings, to deepen themselves into enigmas both inaccessible and beckoning" (148). His engaging analysis of the dynamics of space of crypts coincides with the way I see secret space functioning in Collins's work; the numerous containers that hold the secret have ever-expanding depths that keep drawing Rosamond in, with the promise of eventually reaching the secret.

in order to reach an enigma, obviously adds to the suspense and highlights the issue of how boundaries are used within this nineteenth-century text to conceal and guard, much in the same way in which partitions within the Victorian home accomplished their containing and shielding roles. Rosamond becomes her blind husband's eyes, and it is through her meticulous description that we see the Myrtle Room and the different enclosures and barriers that it contains. She tells Leonard about the existence of two doors, apart from the one that they used to enter the chamber. His response about the door once again confirms how this feature and its connecting capacity generate a sense of uneasiness in a domestic setting valuing compartmentalization: "I don't like the idea of sitting here, and leaving you to open these doors by yourself" (264). As with any other opening into a room of the Victorian household, doors clearly generate feelings of insecurity.

What follows is a thorough narration of the opening of the doors, and the trespassing of numerous boundaries to reach the information, including boxes, drawers, and sealed documents. Eventually, the truth literally spills out, when a table falls over, revealing its guarded contents. Rosamond picks up a picture-frame with the portrait of an enigmatic woman; behind this layer is yet another object—the folded letter that reveals the secret. The picture and the various folds of paper of the letter are further materializations of the issue of multiple and almost infinite containment of the information; these layers that must be traversed are the medium through which the secret is eventually disclosed, but they also serve to block its straightforward exit into Rosamond's eager eyes.

The relationship between Rosamond, the secret, and the space that contains it occupies a central role in the work and supports my thesis about the symbolic and sensual qualities of secretive, haunted space and the characters that experience it. When the mysterious Mrs. Jazeph (in reality Sarah) tries to dissuade Rosamond from inhabiting Porthgenna Tower, Rosamond says that she is "more curious to see the uninhabited rooms at Porthgenna than to see the Seven Wonders of the World" (122).

Furthermore, when she identifies the room as the container of the secret, Rosamond asks her husband: “Do you know so little of my half of humanity as to doubt what I should do the moment the room was discovered? [...] I should walk into it immediately” (135). From the start, it is clear that enigmatic space, haunted by a family secret, instead of merely frightening, appeals tremendously, drawing Rosamond to it.

The seductive quality of the secret has spatial consequences, since it has literally found a dwelling, as Rosamond tells Leonard: “now we are on the spot I feel as if we had driven the mystery into its last hiding-place. We are actually *in the house that holds the Secret*” (emphasis added 240). This admission initiates the search for the secret, a search that makes Rosamond keep moving through the house to explore its different passages and rooms: “don’t let us stop on this cold landing. Which way are we to go next?” (240). The answer to her question comes in a letter by a friend, who had “seen the transcribed Plan, and had ascertained that it really exhibited the positions of doors, staircases, and rooms, with the names attached to them” (251). The road to uncovering the secret, then, requires a meticulous study of the home’s architectural and spatial mapping.

Despite the room and the secret’s appeal, the prelude to entering the Myrtle Room is full of suspense and fear, as Rosamond herself admits: “ ‘I don’t know what has come to me [...] I feel as if I was afraid to push open the door’ ” (258). The idea of opening the main partition which holds or retains the secret is the source of as much anxiety as desire for her, and her husband advises to “ ‘lock the door again—put it off till another day’ ” (258). As with passages of “The Empty House” (commented in the last chapter), this episode is an example of how Gothic fiction places great importance on the moment when an architectural threshold is about to be crossed, suggesting the effect of the surroundings on characters, and the presence of something remarkable within haunted space. The sense of awe and of being in the presence of this type of haunted sublime⁵ continues when Rosamond opens the room, when the feeling of

5. David B. Morris looks at the juncture between haunting and the sublime in his article “Gothic Sublimity,” in *New Literary History* 16 (1985) 299-319. In this provocative discussion, Morris claims that the extensive

anticipation materializes and becomes a specter that haunts the room that lies ahead: “the vague Something which the room might contain, which might rise visibly before her, which might sound audibly behind her, which might touch her on a sudden from above, from below, from either side” (259). Even her husband Leonard, who is blind, uses all the senses except sight in order to grasp the seemingly material presence within the room, as “his disengaged hand was outstretched, and moving backward and forward and up and down” (259). It is clear from these passages that the Myrtle Room is the kind of space that architectural phenomenologists refer to when discussing highly suggestive and appealing places. As I mention in the initial chapter, these theorists insist that one must employ all senses in order to experience these suggestive zones: “every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory, qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle” (Pallasmaa 41). The fact that Leonard is blind,⁶ instead of limiting his involvement with his surroundings, actually heightens it, because, as these critics insist, a productive experience of space rejects a merely ocularcentric approach.

The dynamic of secrecy that operates throughout *The Dead Secret* is one of tension between the disclosure of the mystery and its admission or confession which is predictably drawn out until the end, when the secret does in fact die. In the initial stages of secrecy, however, Sarah Leeson begs her mistress to “let the secret die with

and limited use of Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beauty* (1757) to explain Gothic sublimity should be questioned, and instead directs Gothic theorists to Freud’s “The Uncanny,” which he considers more valuable for understanding the concept. While Burke’s theories suggest that terror arises from wild, exotic and external phenomena, Freud’s uncanny identifies internal, familiar and repressed elements as the sources of terror. I argue that in some of the works that I have considered, the Gothic sublime is certainly present, and in the case of *The Dead Secret*, the terror that materializes within the Myrtle Room is clearly a projection of Rosamond’s repressions and fears about her real family. This last point would certainly coincide with Morris’s suggestion to employ Freud’s text in order to understand Gothic sublimity.

6. According to Ira B. Nadel in his introduction to *The Dead Secret*, previously cited, Leonard’s blindness is an example of Collins’s fascination with physical handicaps. In this particular case, Collins seems to be employing it as a way of drawing attention to a social problem, as “a criticism of medical practice, which is unable to prevent his blindness” (xxi).

you and die with me, and be never known in this world” (16), but Mrs. Treverton insists that “the Secret must be told” (16). Sarah’s recommendation—to let the secret die—ironically inaugurates secrecy in the novel, while Mrs. Treverton’s desire to disclose the truth would have in fact dispelled it. Moreover, Sarah’s beloved uncle, upon finding out that burden of the information was the cause of his niece’s unhappiness and frail state of mind, points out how Sarah’s need to hide the truth has in fact ruined her life: “better, [...] a thousand times better, my child, if you had told the Secret!” (330).

Abraham and Torok’s work on the phantom⁷ enables an understanding of the pernicious consequences of keeping a secret alive. First of all, they say, the secret has the ability to cross over generations and haunt through time; this is what these critics call *transgenerational communication*, in which shameful information from the past revisits its youngest members, exerting a negative influence that operates at an unconscious level. In *The Dead Secret*, the presence of this silenced, shameful thing is kept within the Myrtle Room, and Rosamond actually intuitively senses its frightening contents and link to a shady past: “and, supposing we discover the Secret of the Myrtle Room, might it not turn out to be something concerning my father or my mother which we ought not to know?” (257). Coincidentally, Rosamond mentions her parents, who, for the psychoanalytic critics mentioned, are the key players in *transgenerational communication*. As in Collins’s novel, this heavy burden passes from the parent’s unconscious to the child’s, and in Abraham and Torok’s words, “works like a ventriloquist, like a stranger within the subject’s own mental topography” (*The Shell and the Kernel* 173). Furthermore, these theorists’ observations about a patient’s horror when discovering his/her parents’ secrets, matches Rosamond’s cautious attitude before stepping into the room and its contents:

7. In the section “Haunting” in my first chapter, I discussed Abraham and Torok’s concept of the *phantom* and its role in *transgenerational communication*. I compared these theorists’ work with that of Derrida and his *specter*.

the special difficulty of these analyzes lies in the patient's horror at violating a parent's or a family's guarded secret, even though the secret's text and content are inscribed within the patient's own unconscious. The horror of transgression, in the strict sense of the term is compounded by the risk of undermining the fictitious yet necessary integrity of the parental figure in question" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 174).

According to these psychoanalytic critics, one should speak to the ghost in order to annul its existence: "to exorcise it one must express it in words" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 188). Moreover, this vocal confession is necessary, because that which became "phantomized" during the preceding generation was "unspeakable in words, because it had to be wrapped in silence" (*The Shell and the Kernel* 189). In *The Dead Secret*, the critical information is finally exposed, and through this, it is exorcised. The secret is released from its hiding place when the truth is spoken and expressed outloud, contrasting with its prolonged existence in written form, within the infamous letter. When Rosamond visits Sarah, whom she finally recognizes as her true mother, the former says " 'Mother! For God's sake, what is it! What has changed you so?' " (346). The word "mother" acknowledges the confession of the secret, thus driving out the phantom that possessed the Myrtle Room and the household for so many years. Sarah finally accepts to let go of this phantom, by saying " 'That's right! Say 'mother.' If she [ghost of Mrs. Treverton] does come she can't stop when she hears you call me 'mother.' " (346). Mrs. Treverton's ghost and the greater secret which it represents vanish by being vocalized: " 'Gone!' [...] 'Oh merciful God! Gone at last!'" (347). The secret and the haunted space that it had generated are finally exorcised, freeing Sarah, Rosamond and Porthgenna Tower from its revenant presence.

Castle Gowrie and its Secret Chamber

Margaret Oliphant begins "The Secret Chamber" (1876) with a description of Castle Gowrie as a classic Gothic setting: "Castle Gowrie is one of the most famous and interesting in all Scotland. It is a beautiful old house, to start with, –perfect in old feudal grandeur, with its turrets and walls that could withstand an army, –its labyrinths,

its hidden stairs, its long mysterious passages that seem in many cases to lead to nothing, but out of which no one can be too sure what they lead to” (1). The spatial setting in the tale is a repository of a feudal past (as its defensive architectural form proves), but is also an “old house,” a domestic setting that connects the ancient lineage of the family with the new. Architecturally speaking, Castle Gowrie meets all the classical Gothic requirements, remitting to obscure medieval times and containing features such as labyrinthine passages that disorient and confuse; like the hallways and staircases that I discussed in the previous chapter, these tortuous passages “seem in many cases to lead to nothing.”⁸ Nevertheless, the main focus of the tale lies not in the home’s passages, but in a particular room, a secret chamber: “the story went, that somewhere hid amid the massive walls and tortuous passages there was a secret chamber in Gowrie Castle” (2). The disorienting and frightening qualities of Castle Gowrie, then, mainly derive not from its interminable and confusing corridors, but from a dark nucleus within the household, a secret room, whose existence (or at least reputation) radiates outwards throughout the dwelling, weighing heavily upon it.

In my discussion of *The Dead Secret*, I discussed how a regard for privacy and concealment could turn a domestic setting into a haunted space. In the case of Oliphant’s story, I concentrate on the importance placed on seclusion (a quality related to but not completely synonymous to privacy) and its inevitable ties to secrecy, to see how a Victorian household is easily gothicized. The existence of such a mysterious area within a domestic setting in fiction can be better understood by considering how design parameters of the Victorian household created isolated and sequestered areas. When discussing common defects of planning large Victorian households, William

8. In “Other Worlds: Oliphant’s spectralisation of the modern,” in *Women’s Writing* 6.2 (1999) 201-213, Penny Fielding mentions this phrase and employs it to draw attention to the issue of reading and readability, first of the house’s history or its historical passages, secondly of the passage of time, and thirdly, of the narrative passages themselves. I propose to read the structure of the home instead, as when I considered the hallways and staircases in the previous chapter. In Oliphant’s story, I read the secret chamber, to see how this enigmatic nucleus functions within the household.

Kerr reveals the possibility of this type of space: “the Corridors spread out in dreary blanks of wall, suggestive of *secret chambers* here and there within” (emphasis added 75). Furthermore, nineteenth century and modern critics often comment on how “continental plans” such as those in Italy favour publicity, whereas the English domestic layout stems from a medieval setting favouring seclusion and separation; the medieval aspect of Castle Gowrie in the story is a fitting example of a setting that is both domestic and defensive.

Victorian critics also attribute the regards for isolation in British domestic plans to the country’s Northern location and climate: “the old English model, the growth of Northern soil, displays a character of domestic seclusion which seems to be more natural to the indoor habits of a Northern home” (Kerr 69). This topic of how design could reflect a national character that had been forged by the environment continued when critics claimed that the plans of a home that favoured retirement, reflected an insular identity. This aesthetic nationalism would come to play an important role in the Battle of the Styles⁹ that ensued in the architectural arena. The notion that the isolated and autonomous nature of Britain as an island was the main force shaping domestic design is debatable, but I argue that, in conjunction with other social elements, it helped shape an insular household, with small “islands” composed by separate rooms and areas, along with occupants that withdrew into each of these havens:

of the characteristics of the planning of modern English houses, the most striking, when compared with the planning of former times, is its Multifariousness. Keeping pace with our more complicated ways of living, we have not only increased the number of rooms, in ordinary houses, but have assigned to each a special use [...] the plan must give Isolation to the several parts. (Stevenson 47)

In my third chapter, when I discussed the “centripetal aesthetics” of the home, which drew inhabitants away from an inclement and unsafe outside, and towards a sheltered nucleus within the home, I commented on how this generated feelings

9. Refer to “The Battle of the Styles” in Chapter Three of my thesis.

of seclusion and entrapment. Perhaps one of the best quotations that captures how a preference for isolation penetrates and shapes the layout of a Victorian home, principally its rooms, is the following: “the English room is a sort of cage, in which the inmate is entirely cut off from the next room” (Muthesius 79). The English author of *House Architecture* (1880), J.J. Stevens, embraces Muthesius’s perspective as a foreigner (as a German national). Stevens discusses British domestic idiosyncrasies and their manifestation in the home: “with us, from our love of seclusion and retirement, each room must be isolated” (48). The isolation of the room in Victorian households is a materialization of the need for privacy, which, as I have pointed out, was the reigning principle in domestic settings. Even the way in which the term “drawing-room” came into being sheds some light on this issue: “the term was derived from the ‘with-drawing room’ of the seventeenth century, usually situated near the bedrooms, where the ladies withdrew after dinner” (*The English Terraced House* 45,46). I argue that all rooms in Victorian homes were, in a way, “with-drawing rooms,” in the best of cases creating feelings of safety and coziness, but in the worst, feelings of entrapment. It is not difficult to see how this need for excessive defensive sheltering from the world and from other regions within the home could contribute to the appearance of secret chambers within the houses of fiction, as in Oliphant’s story.

The secret chamber in Oliphant’s story contains a mysterious and malignant presence, in the shape of Earl Robert, an evil ancestor of the family, whose cruel and shameful deeds haunt the lives of the family, principally of the male heirs. The reason for the haunting lies in the family’s feudal history: “rebellions, revenges, insurrections, conspiracies, nothing in which blood was shed and lands lost, took place in Scotland, in which they had not had a share; and the annals of the house are very full, and not without many a stain” (1). But the family’s participation in battle is by no means an extraordinary fact that would differentiate it from other ancient Scottish families. The story insists that it was disgraceful acts that were to blame for the haunting, since these filled the annals of the house, leaving a stain. Furthermore, the current Earl mentions

how ashamed he is about “doing unjust things” in his day, supposedly under the evil influence of the wicked ghost; for instance, he admits: “there were these Highland people I turned out. I did not mean to do it, Lindores; but he showed me that it would be better for the family” (25). The image of the family records being filled with evil deeds—under the direction of the apparition—corresponds with that of the wicked Earl filling up the space with his noxious presence, within the Secret Chamber and the home: “there was something hidden in it [the chamber] which assuredly the race could not be proud” (3). This story then, does not only remit to the Gothic theme of the Sins of the Father revisiting the children, but to the notion of a space containing a veritable skeleton in a closet.

Despite the reputed existence of this room, its exact location is unknown to those who live around the castle and even to most family members. This uncertainty or ambiguity, instead of discouraging interest in the room and in the secret, augments it, and brings us to the topic of the seductive power that the chamber exerts:

but save the earl, his heir, and one other person, not of the family [...] no mortal knew where this mysterious hiding-place was. There had been countless guesses made at it, and expedients of all kinds invented to find it out. Every visitor who ever entered the old gateway, nay, even passing travellers who saw the turrets from the road, searched keenly for some trace of this mysterious chamber (3).

Furthermore, the mystery surrounding the existence of such an area adds prestige to the Gowrie family: “a ghost is a sign of importance not to be despised; a haunted room is worth as much as a small farm to the complacency of the family that owns it” (3). The existence of this presence excites some members of its younger generation: “the younger branches of the Gowrie family [...] were proud of their unfathomable secret, and felt a thrill of agreeable awe [...] when they remembered the mysterious something which they did not know in their familiar home” (3). The knowledge but also the ambiguity surrounding the enigmatic, hidden space is appealing to those around the home, and to the family itself; one might venture to say that it is this keen

interest and fascination with the room and its enigma which actually keeps it alive, as will become obvious later on.

The enthusiasm that everyone feels towards the chamber¹⁰ is based not on its mere existence, however, but on what it contains: “the fact was, that the Secret Chamber was entirely secondary—thrown back, as all accessories are, by a more pressing interest. The overpowering thought of *what was in it* drove aside all healthy, natural curiosity about itself”(emphasis added 10). This phrase sheds light on a main topic in both Oliphant’s story and Collins’s *The Dead Secret*—rooms as architectural and symbolic materializations of the link between containment and secrecy. In both stories, the secret is related to an event or a person in the family past that is regarded as disgraceful by ensuing generations. This embarrassment to the family becomes a revenant or a ghost that haunts the family for generations within the space that shelters and embodies it the most—its home.

Even before entering the chamber, John Randolph Lindores senses its dishonourable and frightening contents, but this only fuels his excitement about entering. His interest in the chamber is initially based on a sense of duty towards his family, as he is about to embark on a rite of passage into manhood: “he too, felt his own pulse as he followed his father. To spend the night perhaps amongst the skeletons of that old-world massacre, and to repent the sins of his ancestors [...] His heart and spirit rose” (9). Accompanying this sense of duty, however, is what the narrator calls a “less serious impulse of curiosity” about seeing “at last what the Secret Chamber was, where it was, how it fitted into the labyrinths of the old house” (10). I would argue

10. In “The Restless Labyrinth: Criptomomy in the Gothic Novel,” in Fred Botting and Dale Townshed, eds. *Gothic: Critical concepts in Literature and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2004), Jerrold E. Hogle offers a fascinating discussion of the image of the crypt at the heart of the classic Gothic setting. Hogle identifies the seductive effects of this enigmatic space on those who seek to find and penetrate it: “A desire spawned by crypts and pursued across crypts turns out to be a desire only for more desire and thus announces the crypt’s self-expansion as the power and the movement behind all longing” (158). I argue that the secret chamber in *Castle Gowrie* acts in the same way that Hogle proposes for the crypt—as a space that generates a desire for more desire.

that this personal sense of curiosity is actually more “serious” and potent than his mere sense of duty towards family, since it is motivated by the seductive qualities of secrecy. In “Thresholds of Desire and Domestic Space in Nineteenth-century French Fiction,” Tony Williams highlights the component of seduction in the setting of home in fiction: “it would seem that once a culture defines certain spaces as secret, the forbidden entry into them, whether imagined or real, falls into the paradigm of the peep-show”(49). Like Williams, I argue that secrecy automatically leads to desire, especially in an intimate, domestic setting. Young Lindores senses that this enigmatic chamber functions like a “peep-show,” tantalizing its viewers with the promise of seeing something that is powerful precisely because it is meant for the eyes of a selected few, in this case, for the male heirs of his family. Like Rosamond in Collins’s novel, young Lindores must traverse several ante-chambers and doors that function as vestibules to the powerful contents of the room. After entering a disused lumber room full of cobwebs, a symbol of hidden and corrupt contents, Lindores must pass two other doors, the last one leading to a “little intermediate place—this debatable land between the seen and the unseen” (11). Like Derrida’s specter,¹¹ this area is ambiguous and unnerving, announcing that which is neither dead nor alive, present or absent—that, which in other words is spectral. This liminal space only heightens Lindores’s feelings of anticipation and sense of curiosity for what he is about to encounter.

Inside the secret chamber, Lindores encounters a malignant-looking man, sitting on a chair in an antiquated room.¹² This terrible presence has a mesmeric hold over

11. Jacques Derrida describes the specter in *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994): “this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge [...] One does not know if it is living or if it is dead”(6).

12. In “Secrets of the Forbidden Chamber: Bluebeard,” in Fran Lloyd and Catherine O’Brien, eds. *Secret Spaces, Forbidden Places* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), Tivadar Gorilovics analyzes the tale that must be addressed when discussing this kind of secretive and containing space—Charles Perrault’s “Bluebeard.” Gorilovics identifies the significance of this kind of chamber in fairy tales and suggests its implications in the actions performed as well as in the space in which they take place: “the forbidden chamber or door is a familiar element in the world of fairy stories [...] The theme of prohibition, which may appear in other combinations in this type of narrative, is here associated with a particular action (entering a room, opening a particular door)”(17)

Lindores, since the latter “tried to look round him, but could not; his eyes were caught by those other kindred eyes, which seemed to dilate and deepen as he looked at them, and drew him with a strange compulsion. He felt himself yielding, swaying towards the strange being who thus invited him” (15). The controlling capacity of this presence equals that of the malignant man in Bulwer Lytton’s “The Haunted and the Haunters,” which I discussed in the previous chapter, but in this case, the hypnotic hold derives from a family relation between the mesmeriser and the mesmerised; after all, it is the apparition’s “kindred eyes” that are able to exert such a strong influence over him. Furthermore, Lindores is not the only one targeted by the awful presence, but is in fact a single link in a long chain of unfortunate descendants; when he looks at a mirror in the terrible room, he sees how “a crowd of other faces came behind, all looking at him, some mournfully, some with a menace in their terrible eyes” (18). The wicked Earl wants to trap young Lindores in the same way that he has trapped those before him, and commit him to this sort of ancestral limbo that we see reflected in the mirror—another type of secret chamber—where his family is doomed to inhabit for all eternity.

After facing the awful contents of the room, Lindores must now decide how to manage the secret that his family has disclosed. When the Earl tries to entice young Lindores by declaring: “ ‘you are my flesh and blood. Give me your hand’ ” (14), the youth is the first in his family to oppose the apparition’s power and its call: “he thrust forward the cross of the old sword between him and those appealing hands. ‘In the name of God!’ he said” (15). The young man rejects the idea that those before have not questioned—to share in the secrecy, and in this way to preserve it within the household. Furthermore, he confronts the specter: “ ‘who are you? [...] You that live here and oppress this house?’ ” (16). By questioning the apparition, Lindores is clearly doing what psychoanalysts Abraham and Torok suggest to patients who wish to exorcise a phantom that haunts them; Lindores must talk to the phantom “so that its noxious effect on the living can be exorcised” (Davis 5). Moreover, Lindores accuses the ghost of *living*, thus confirming its ambiguous status as Derrida’s specter, as that

which is neither alive nor dead, present nor absent;¹³ it is the apparition's unnatural ability to continue living, which enables it to oppress the house. The mere action of addressing and questioning the specter is a challenge, since by forcing a confession out of him, Lindores could be objecting to his family's fate and annulling the presence.

In spite of the young protagonist's intentions, the malignant nucleus of the household remains alive. After challenging the specter, the heir also questions his own father: "Father, promise to expose him, to turn him out—promise to clear out that accursed old nest!" (21). Lindores refuses to be an accomplice to the secret, like his own father and those before him, whose leniency has been the real cause of the haunting: "It is your own fault. Why have we left such a place shut out from the eye of day?" (21). After Lindores's father refuses to listen to him, the young heir leads some visitors on a tour to the secret chamber, hoping to expose the specter and to ultimately destroy it and its mysterious enclosure. However, when he goes through the lumberyard room and looks for the first door that leads into the chamber, he is unable to find it. Throughout the guests' visit, his father does not support Lindores's decision: "Lord Gowrie knew that no one believed him. He took them to the adjoining room, and told them some easy story of an apparition that was supposed to haunt it. 'Have you ever seen it?' the guests said. 'Not I.'" (28). These two last words that negate the existence of the apparition seal the fate of the family—to keep being haunted. Lord Gowrie ensures the survival of the family's secret, when he adds: "'We don't mind ghosts in this house'" (28).

Whereas in *The Dead Secret* the ghost and its presence are dispelled from Porthgenna Tower by a confession, in "The Secret Chamber," the presence is allowed to continue residing and polluting the family home by Lord Gowrie's weak admittance of

13. In *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), Esther Rashkin describes Derrida's specter as a "deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence, and making certainties vacillate."

“not minding ghosts in the house.”¹⁴ In Collins’s novel, the ghost is exorcised when the characters closest to it—Sarah and Rosamond—acknowledge a shameful occurrence of the past. In Oliphant’s work, however, the ghost is allowed to live on when the current head of the family—young Randolph’s father—engages in a relationship of secrecy with the ghost without challenging it. This attitude towards the ghost is compatible with Derrida’s concept of the specter, who insists that one should enter into a dialogue with the specter not to annul or somehow overcome it, but to share in a “dynamics of secrecy”: “the ghost’s secret is not a puzzle to be solved [...] the interest here, then, is not in secrets, understood as puzzles to be solved, but in secrecy” (Colin Davis 5). Despite poor young Lindores’s attempts, his father’s decision to not tell the secret to those outside the family ensures the specter’s evil rule over the family and the continued existence of the chamber that is frightening, yet ultimately appealing.

An Open Door and its Restless Secret

In both *The Dead Secret* and “The Secret Chamber,” a heavy load from the family and home’s past has been contained and suppressed, at least temporarily, within the enclosure of a room. The next story “The Open Door” (1882), by J.H. Riddell, one of the most popular writers of her time, also presents the notion that a terrible act, this time a murder, was committed within a home, thus tainting the space within it. However, the variation presented by this tale in relation to the two aforementioned

14. Lord Gowrie’s refusal to disclose the location of the secret chamber as well as the family secret that inhabits it, supports Margaret Gray’s view about many of Oliphant’s stories having “a preponderance of male characters who disappoint or fail their women [...] alcoholics, moral degenerates, or physically ill characters who hold back the women or drag them down” (viii) in *Selected Stories of the Supernatural* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985). Even though Lord Gowrie principally disappoints his son (and not just women), clearly he lets his whole family down. According to Gray, Oliphant went to extreme measures to provide for her children, but her two sons, Cyril and Francis never achieved much, and in their thirties died of tuberculosis. Lord Gowrie in “The Secret Chamber,” is just one in a long chain of male heirs in the Gowrie family who has done nothing to dispel the pernicious presence that resides in the ancestral home. What really “drags down” the family, is not the wicked Earl himself, but the apathy of the male heirs who do nothing about his presence and what he represents.

is that the haunting secret is not hermetically shut within a room; in fact, the secret refuses to be contained when a door of a room refuses to shut, until the murderer is discovered.

The narrator of Riddell's story is a clerk at an auctioneer's office, who hears from a colleague that Ladlow Hall has not been rented or sold because it is haunted: " 'What is the matter?' " (27), the protagonist asks, and his friend simply says " 'A door that won't keep shut' [...] A door that will keep open, if you prefer that way of putting it' " (27). My analysis of this story focuses on these fairly straightforward yet significant statements about the nature of the haunting. In this section I review the importance and role of doors within a Victorian domestic plan, as well as their intercommunicating but also blocking and repellent function; whereas in the previous examples I focused on the condition of privacy and secrecy within a household, in this section I concentrate on an architectural feature that enables these conditions to occur. I argue that anxiety about infiltration and violation of privacy, as well as its spatial manifestation in the form of the door, shape Gothic tales such as Riddell's, where an open door is at the nucleus of the haunting.

Why is a door, rather, an open one, such a source of anxiety for the Victorians? What is so horrific about a door that refuses to remain shut in a nineteenth-century home? In order to answer these questions, we must look at the basic function of a door, in a general context. J.J. Stevenson comments on the following simple but essential notion about house planning throughout the ages: "During all the long ages through which the human race has passed one prominent feature of house planning has been the necessity of defence from attack by enemies [...] during all the Middle Ages this risk was at the door: houses had to be fortified, and this influenced their plans and arrangements" (4). While the focus of this study is not on medieval domestic plans, several of the critics that I have addressed repeatedly draw comparisons between ancient defensive structures and the Victorian attitude towards withdrawn domesticity, reaffirming the saying that "an Englishman's house is his castle." This same critic

comments on the English need to retire: “when we settle to read or work, we prefer to be in a room where we can shut the door, uninterrupted by the traffic of the house” (115). Whereas plans in other European countries favoured features that connected the inside with the street, in the shape of balconies or terraces, (or the porch, popular in the United States), in order to see the world go by, Victorian households demanded spaces of seclusion in order to concentrate, and the door was the feature that sealed the occupant within these spaces. The assumption presented by Riddell’s text is that a proper Victorian door should be able to be shut properly and remain that way as required, in order to procure the conditions of retirement that are essential to a British nineteenth-century lifestyle.

In the story, it is clear that all doors, not just the single haunted one, are significant features in the home. As soon as the narrator steps into Ladlow Hall in order to investigate and hopefully solve the haunting, he notices the main feature of his surroundings: “I looked around me—doors—doors—doors. I had never before seen so many doors together all at once. Two of them stood open—one wide, the other slightly ajar” (39,40). But his mission pertains to the single “haunted” door, as his employer explains, when he asks him to “stay in the house for a week; if at the end of that time you keep the door shut, locked, bolted or nailed up, telegraph for me, and I will go down—if not, come back” (29). We can gather from this statement that a sure sign that the abnormal has been “cured” is the door’s ability to be shut and secured; moreover, the refusal of potential renters to let or buy the home unless this anomalous door and room have regained normality, manifests the significance of enclosure in Victorian domesticity.

In addition to acting as a main barrier with the outside world, the door in the nineteenth-century home played a crucial role in relation to the encapsulation of rooms and in the dynamics of intercommunication. As with other aspects of the house, nineteenth-century critics set the example of continental homes as contrasting with English ones, remarking the secluded nature of rooms in the nation’s homes: “perhaps

the most striking difference is the lack in England of communicating doors between the rooms, which means that the only access to a room is from a passage or a hall (Muthesius 79). The hermetic quality of these rooms results in great part from the fact that the chambers may only be accessed thorough these lengthy passageways; these liminal transit zones connect, but also act as buffers, forcing people to pass through them before entering another room. As a Victorian architect remarks:

the plan must give Isolation to the several parts. With our present habits we could not live in those old palaces, in which the only communication for a suite of twenty rooms, is by passing through each in succession. We must have separate communication to each room. This is a special characteristic of modern planning in England as compared with France, where the ordinary and regular entrance to one room is through another [...] With us, from our love of seclusion and retirement, each room must be isolated. A room loses its value to us if it is a passage to another. (Stevenson 47,48)

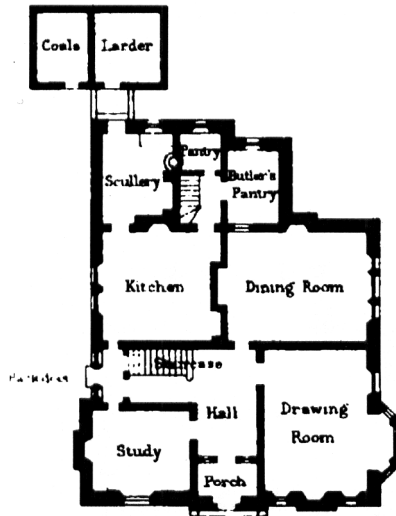
This issue of limited and highly regulated intercommunication is yet another symptom of Victorian concerns for seclusion. We can contrast the seclusion of the British room (Fig. 1) with the more open French room below (Fig. 2). While in the British plans, the dining-room is not connected through a door to the drawing room or study, in the Parisian home one can clearly see the existence of intercommunicating doors from day room to day room (from the Salon Chinois to the Salon de Jeu, Salon de Famille, Grand Salon, as well as in the rooms below) without the need to step out into a corridor in order to move to another chamber, as in the British household.

Interestingly enough, there are some instances where intercommunication was allowed and welcomed within nineteenth-century homes: “there are only a handful of cases in which exceptions are made to the rule, as, for example, in rooms that by their nature belong together, like bedrooms and dressing-rooms, kitchens and sculleries, etc.” (Muthesius 79). Notice that these few exceptions can be analyzed in terms of the people who moved from one room or space to another. In both cases cited above, the people that travelled from one area to the other are not invading a space that is assigned to a member of another class—servants travel freely from the scullery to the kitchen (the practical reason being that carrying of heavy things would not permit

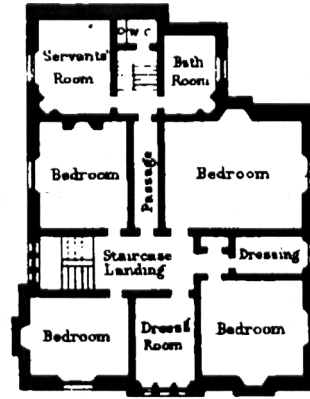
FILLONGLEY VICARAGE, WARWICKSHIRE.

By Mr. Murray, 1859.

From the Civil Engineer
& Architect's Journal



GROUND FLOOR.



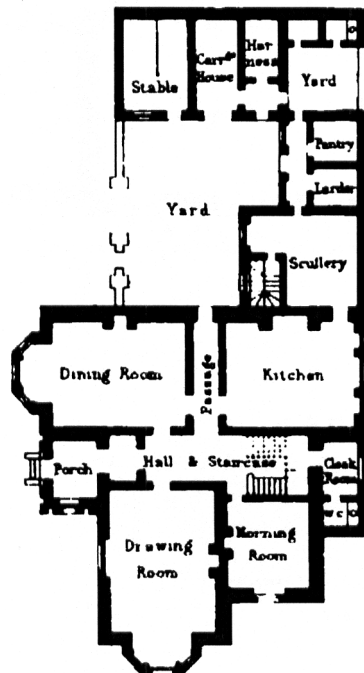
FIRST FLOOR.

Scale: 1 Inch to 30 Feet.

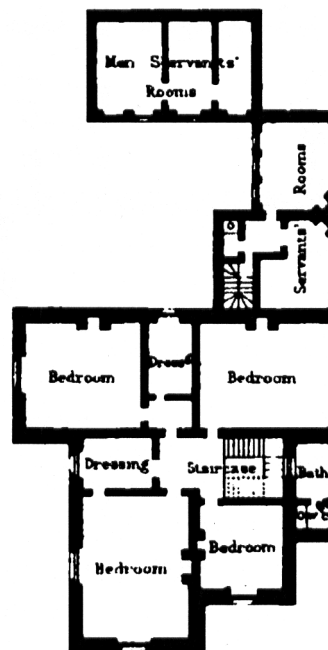
WOODHEYES PARK, NEAR MANCHESTER.

By Mr. Horace Jones, 1858.

From the Civil Engineer
& Architect's Journal



GROUND FLOOR.



FIRST FLOOR.

Fig. 1. Limited communication in two British households, in Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House* 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1865) Plate 25.

HOUSE IN PARIS.
By M. M. Nolan & Convents, 1860.

From Daly's *Architecture Privée*

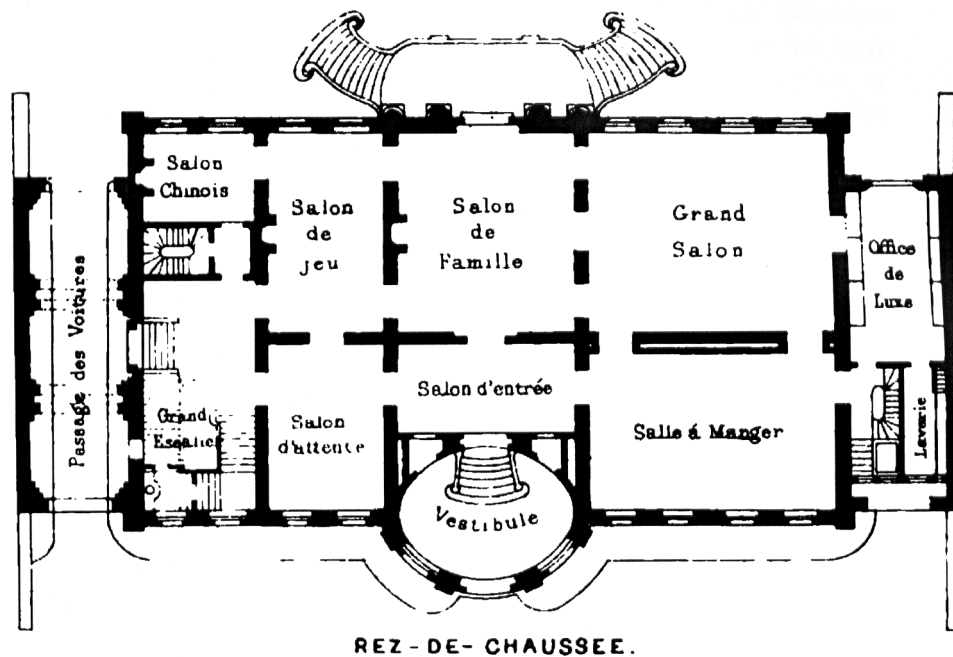


Fig. 2. Fluent intercommunication between rooms in a Parisian home, in Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House* 2nd.ed. (London: John Murray, 1865) Plate 44.

opening doors), while the husband and wife are free to move from the bedroom to the dressing room, from one intimate space to the other. Another less common example of connection between rooms is cited by two critics of the time: “sometimes also a client will decide that he wants the two main rooms of the house such as the dining-room and drawing-room [...] to communicate by means of folding doors” (Muthesius 79); “a door of *intercommunication* may connect the Morning-room with the Drawing-room in any case; perhaps with the Dining-room [...] but, as a rule, such arrangements, unless very judiciously considered, are liable to prove more inimical to privacy” (Kerr 105). The last author does mention an interesting advantage to “such arrangements,” as “it provides for the ladies what is called *escape* in a manner the most legitimate of all” (Kerr 105). All of these examples point to how sensitive Victorians were to the flow of different individuals through the household; the door

was most certainly one of the key players in what could sometimes turn into a social game of hide-and-seek. Riddell's story transmits this sense of anxiety and friction between intercommunication and seclusion, by focusing on the feature that enabled these conditions to occur—the door.

In addition to an attack on privacy, an open door within a nineteenth-century home and in Riddell's story also points to the unsettling possibility of intrusion; not only does an open door signal that which could leak out of the room in the form of a private conversation or sight, but worst—that which could enter and somehow corrupt the interior of a room. The theme of intrusion is central in this story, beginning with the crime itself and continuing with the instances that the narrator experiences himself. The haunting has occurred because an intruder entered Lord Ladlow's room and killed him: "as in that room my uncle was murdered, they say the door will never remain shut till the murderer is discovered" (46). As the days pass in Ladlow Hall, the narrator attempts to solve the mystery of the crime with the help of one of the murdered man's descendants. The narrator soon realizes that in addition to the mysterious door not shutting, there is another problem at the hall of a more mundane nature: "though feeling convinced that no human agency did or could keep the door open, I was certain that some living person had means of access to the house which I could not discover" (50), since it is obvious that objects have been misplaced when the protagonist has not been present. I argue that the issue about an open door in Riddell's story highlights Victorian fears about the infiltration of threats into the home that could dismantle the very core of the home; I have discussed this point previously, but in this particular case, the nature of the infiltrator merits some discussion.

After the narrator realizes that the house has been broken into repeatedly, he decides to hide behind some curtains in order to discover the intruder: "the locked door opened—so suddenly, so silently, that I had barely time to draw back behind the curtain, before I saw a woman in the room. She went straight across to the other door and closed it, securing it as I saw with bolt and lock. Then, just glancing around, she made her way

to the cabinet, and with a key she produced shot back the wards searching through the drawers” (53). The woman is the late Lord Ladlow’s widow, and his murderer, and she is looking for a will that he had written, where he disinherited her. When the narrator apprehends her, “she fights like a wild cat, biting, kicking, and scratching” (139). The woman’s unladylike behaviour and her criminal intentions and deeds clearly mark her as the antithesis of the “angel in the house” that so much Victorian literature had propagated. But it is her fighting the narrator that stands out the most, and that gives us a clue about the type of infiltrator that has caused the haunted door to remain open in Ladlow Hall. In her study on Victorian women writers, Vanessa Dickerson points out how authors like Oliphant, Marryat and Riddell herself, “were in fact earning their own bread at a time when women were more openly challenging ideas of female submissiveness and economic powerlessness” (137), and that they had clearly identified ghost stories (such as “The Open Door”) to be highly marketable. Furthermore, their ghost stories were “written in a climate of change and reform marked by such developments as the agitation of women’s rights to education, employment, and suffrage; the passage of the married woman’s property bills; and the rise of the New Woman” (133). I argue that the type of intruder that is presented to us in Riddell’s story confronts a Victorian public with a type of woman that transcends a domestic setting where traditionally men, not women, were responsible for securing money and dealing in a ruthless business world.¹⁵ Riddell’s fighting and kicking infiltrator does reinforce gender stereotypes of the time, by being classified as an evil woman who murders, plots and steals; however, at the same time, this

15. In *Keeping the Victorian House, A Collection of Essays* (New York: Garland Publishers Inc., 1995), Vanessa Dickerson points out the significance of money in Riddell’s career as a writer: “Because Riddell was a novelist of the London business world, it is only natural that a greater portion of her ghost stories dwell on the power of materialism and financial knowledge” (139). According to Dickerson, like Riddell, Oliphant and Marryat also wrote “supernatural tales strongly preoccupied with money and murders committed for that money” (139). These works obviously voiced the concerns of their writers, who as women, managed to write for a living, but did so in a world that favoured male entrepreneurship while denying economic autonomy to women.

aggressive woman signals the fear of a Victorian public who were sensing the infiltration of a new type of woman into the household.

In Riddell's story, the open door signals abnormality—unless the crime is solved, the room will not return to its normal state, as a sequestered space, and the door will not function properly, as a feature that enables seclusion. By looking at issues of intercommunication and blockage, we are able to comprehend the significant role of a single architectural feature in a setting that invested so much forethought to the regulation of the internal flow of the home. I argue that this strict supervision of movement responded to the aforementioned primary condition of privacy, as well as to a great fear of infiltration. Furthermore, in this particular story, the curious behaviour of the female infiltrator and villain suggests that Riddell's tale is projecting the Victorian public's discomfort about the emergence of a new type of woman, who, like the widow in the story, was willing to kick, bite (and even murder) in order to achieve economic and social autonomy. But before the wild woman is finally tamed by the male narrator, the specter of the murdered husband manages to make one last appearance: "I saw, as in a momentary flash, that the door I had beheld locked stood wide—that there stood beside the table an awful figure, with uplifted hand" (54). This gesture reminds the characters as well as the Victorian readers, that in this socio-historical context, even a deceased man still has the power over his wife, and that he may come back from the grave and demand things to return to "normal." Once his widow has been apprehended, things can in fact return to normal, and the door that signalled haunting and a woman's struggle to rebel, may finally be shut. The house can now be restored to its rightful male owner, the murdered man's nephew.

Rooms with Dissolving Partitions

The Price for Eavesdropping

In this section, I also discuss rooms that are disturbed and that disturb those who enter them, the difference being that the terror arises not from an unhealthy encapsulation

of a secret, but from partitions or walls that dissolve or mutate in unsettling ways. Most importantly, these haunted rooms are within boarding houses or hotels, and I argue that their haunted aspect derives from the liminality of their nature—even though hotels are domestic, in the sense that they are meant to be inhabited by people, their occupants are strangers to one another and must still reside, at least temporarily, under the same roof. I argue that this sense of spatial promiscuity inevitably shapes these mutating rooms, and this drastic flexibility or shifting of boundaries in the stories is greatly unnerving to a Victorian audience, because it defies the rigid compartmentalization that characterized the nineteenth-century household. Whereas in the previous section the sense of the horrible derived from claustrophobic entrapment as well as from veiling and hiding, in the following stories, the terrifying stems from a renunciation of spatial and architectural divisions that were responsible for ordering and making sense of a domestic world.

What is particularly fascinating about the existence of Victorian Gothic fiction that is set in hotel rooms is the fact that it reflects the development of a more professional hotel industry in Britain during the nineteenth century. In “Railways, Hotels and Tourism in Great Britain,” Jack Simmons discusses how the hotel industry developed alongside and because of the railway expansion in Britain. Simmons explains how, before the railroad, horse-drawn coaches would convey passengers from a well-known inn to another across the country. With the deployment of the railway, these inns which were at times good, but often deplorable, were replaced by more specialized enterprises, some which were opened up by the railway companies themselves. During Victorian times the emergence of a more serious hotel industry was one of the many results of the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of transportation, and the commercialization of goods that had previously been managed more informally.

The appearance of hotels that were more professional meant that the more family-like and intimate types of inns were being replaced by more impersonal affairs.

I argue that the liminal nature of these semi-domestic, semi-public spaces provided fertile ground for Gothic imaginings. Furthermore, the emergence of lodgings greatly detached from a once more domestic formula, generated a sense of spatial uncertainty that could be exploited in fiction. In this section I will analyze a stories by Algernon Blackwood and M.R. James, but before embarking on this discussion, I would like to briefly mention two other works that prove the nineteenth-century Gothic potential of settings in hotels. Wilkie Collins's sensational novel, *The Haunted Hotel* (1878), features an old palace in Venice that has been converted as a fashionable hotel. In the story, nauseous smells and the apparition of a severed head announce the discovery of a murdered man's head in a secret compartment in one of the rooms. Like other stories of the kind, space in the hotel is haunted by a crime, but more importantly, by the memories of a domestic past and its now ghostly inhabitants, since the site was once the residence of the murdered man. Another example is M.R. James's classic tale, "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad," in which an academic goes to a seaside hotel and stays in a room that has two beds, a fact that, from the beginning, disturbs the protagonist. In addition to the homoerotic nuances of the story, and the horror that the protagonist feels when coming face to face with his repressed desires, one might interpret the haunted aspect of the room as profiting from the indistinct and unsettling spaces offered by hotels. M.R. James's story, like the ones that I will be discussing next (one of which is by this same author), proves the potential for haunting that hotel rooms had in a time when the hospitality industry was blossoming and competing with the ideal of the withdrawn domesticity offered by the household. In a society that revered domesticity and intimacy, these spaces, haunted by the close presence of other lodgers, as well as by the memories of the previous occupants, could easily stage Gothic plots.

The first story that I would like to analyze in greater depth is Algernon Blackwood's "A Case of Eavesdropping" (1906). In it, Jim Shorthouse, the protagonist, rents a room in a "gaunt-looking place in a side street, with dirty windows and a

creaking iron gate” (55). The grim surroundings do not seem to have an effect on the protagonist, who appreciates the opportunity to rent a very large and cheap room. However, one night he hears a loud conversation in German that seems to be coming from the room next door;¹⁶ when he complains to the landlady the next day, she reveals that no one is occupying that room. Furthermore, she explains how “the two rooms [...] were originally one. She had put up a partition—just a row of boards—to increase her income. The doors were adjacent, and only separated by the massive upright beam between them. When one was opened or shut the other rattled” (57). Right away, this arrangement, in a sense forcing two strangers to occupy the space intended for one, fosters discomfort; the partitions are thin and the doors rattle when shut, generating a sense of uncomfortable closeness or spatial promiscuity, a feeling that will increase throughout the story.

The topic of eavesdropping is, as the title of the story indicates, of supreme importance in the unfolding of events. An etymological consideration of the words “eavesdrop” and “eavesdropping” serves as an interesting vantage point when analyzing how this issue in Blackwood’s story reflects spatial and social anxieties. From the start, both terms anchor this particular action to a domestic and architectural setting, coinciding with the emphasis on space in Blackwood’s story. Eavesdrop is defined as “to stand within the ‘eavesdrop’ of a house in order to listen to secrets; hence, to listen secretly to private conversation” (O.E.D.). The noun eavesdrip-drop includes: “the space of ground which is liable to receive the rain-water thrown off by the eaves of a building. Chiefly used with reference to the ancient custom or law which prohibited a proprietor from building at a less distance than two feet from the boundary of his land, lest he should injure his neighbour’s land by ‘eavesdrop’” (O.E.D.). Two main facts

16. In the introduction to the 1938 edition, appearing in *Best Ghost Stories of Algernon Blackwood* (North Yorkshire: House of Stratus, 2002), Algernon Blackwood comments on the biographical content of this story, since the story is based on memories “of a dreadful house I once lived in (New York City) where unaccountable noises, voices, slitherings at night and so forth seemed a commonplace setting for the “eavesdropping” re-enactment of a gruesome murder of twenty years before...” (vi).

arise from these definitions, the first being that to eavesdrop refers to a specific space around the house, formed by the eaves, which are extensions of the structure of the house, but also borders of the home itself. The second fact is that to eavesdrop involves a spatial transgression—an intruder trespasses a physical border around the home, as well as a social one—an outsider listens to private matters.

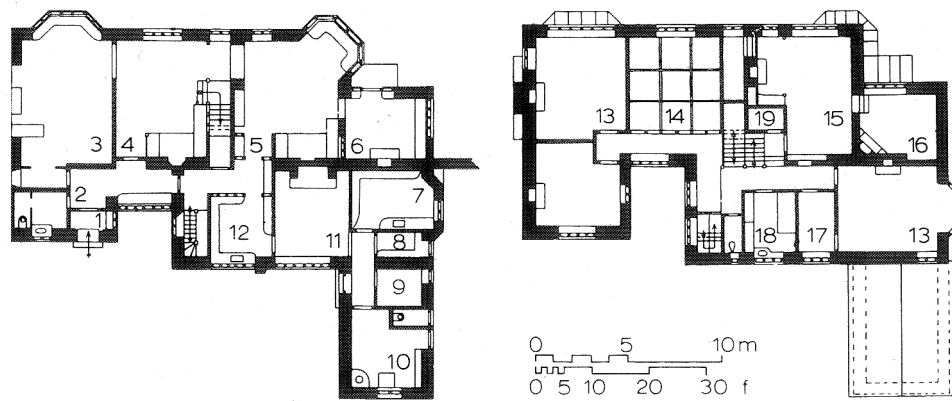
This invasion of “private” and domestic space by an outsider is at the heart of feelings of both anxiety and fascination that Jim Shorthouse feels towards the room next door. The protagonist’s mixed feelings about listening to intimacies once again point to my argument about the frightening yet strongly appealing qualities of haunted space. In *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust*¹⁷ Ann Gaylin explains that this secretive activity is alluring because “it acts out the urge to know and the fear of others knowing” (5), a comment that illustrates Jim’s feelings in the tale. What mainly haunts space in the story is a disregard for the notion of discretion, an aspect that was highly esteemed in Victorian domesticity. The narrator tells us how Jim “stood listening for the very first minute or two, an eavesdropper in spite of himself” (57). Conveniently enough, Shorthouse understands German perfectly, and predictably, the information that he overhears is sensitive, as it refers to how the father asks Otto, his son, to borrow money from the latter’s wife, so that they can avoid the financial ruin of what is later revealed to be their firm in Wall Street. The father tries to manipulate his son by commenting on their shameful position: “ruin and disgrace are already in the house [...] Am I to be arrested for the misuse of trust moneys? Is our honoured name to be cursed and spat on?”(58). Upon listening to the delicate position that the family is in, Shorthouse feels guilty: “at this point he realized that he had listened

17. In *Eavesdropping in the Novel from Austen to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Ann Gaylin, examines scenes of eavesdropping in nineteenth-century British and French novels. The author points out how covert listening has spatial implications: “eavesdropping suggests a particular sense of space: one that indicates boundaries of public and private areas, and transgressions of the former into the latter. It represents liminality”(2).

too long and that he must inform the two men that they could be overheard to every single syllable. So he coughed loudly, and at that same time rattled the handle of his door” (58). Realizing that his transgression is allowed by the transmission of sound, Shorthouse uses the same strategy to communicate with the two men, trying to lessen the embarrassment of having to tell them directly, but they take no heed, and the voices continue.

Nineteenth-century architectural writers comment extensively on the need to respect social conventions and ensure that the areas of the house are as hermetic as possible, in order to discourage eavesdropping as much as possible. When referring to privacy as the primary quality in domestic design, Kerr draws attention to the fascinating aspect of sound within the household, and to problems that arise from it travelling through partitions, as in the “most unrefined arrangement whereby at one sole entrance the visitors rub shoulders with the tradespeople, how objectionable it is we need scarcely say when a thin partition transmits the sounds of the scullery [...] to the Dining room” (67). Sounds originating in the least refined of the domestic offices, the scullery, threaten the integrity and sophistication of the dining room, a space fabricated for family and guests, where manners and civility must prevail. Notice how in the plan below of a small country house, even though it is not entirely possible to avoid a proximity between the scullery (no. 7) and the dining-room (no. 5), there is a thick wall that divides the two, and the room that abuts the scullery is the smoking-room, an area that need not be as “civilized” as the dining-room. Furthermore, the more refined areas, such as the drawing-room (no. 3), are placed as far away as possible from the scullery, and as close as possible to the main entrance.

Like the inhabitants of the household, sound was expected to stay within bounds, but a close look at the internal walls in nineteenth-century homes presents an obvious problem in this respect. Internal walls in most middle-class households were usually made of timber: “solid interior walls are not as common in the English house as in the German; instead, the widest use is made of wooden partitions” (Muthesius 164).



40, 241 The White House. Plans of ground floor and first floor

- 1 Porch
- 2 Vestibule
- 3 Drawing-room
- 4 Hall
- 5 Dining-room
- 6 Smoking-room
- 7 Scullery
- 8 Meat-larder
- 9 Coal
- 10 Laundry or Washing-place?
- 11 Kitchen
- 12 Pantry and larder
- 13 Bedroom
- 14 Upper part of hall
- 15 Nursery
- 16 Night-nursery
- 17 Dressing-room
- 18 Bath and WC
- 19 Cupboard

Fig. 3. Ground floor and first floor of the White House, in Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1979) 131.

However, what is fascinating is that, because of the light nature of the wall, sound-proofing was one of the main issues that needed to be addressed in an especially sensitive house; thus, the hollow space in walls was usually “filled with coke breeze, mineral wool or other similar material as a means of preventing sound passing from one room to another and also to make the walls warmer” (Muthesius 165). Moreover, the surface of these dividing walls was plastered, and often covered by wallpaper or by wood panelling in certain rooms. Therefore, even though internal walls were not as solid as those in the continent, the social conventions of the time demanded that this light partition be treated in such a way that it was sturdier, by sound-proofing it from within and covering it from without. Blackwood’s “A Case of Eavesdropping,”

illustrates how faulty partitions that have not been sound-proofed at all undermine privacy in the living quarters and bring about other horrific consequences.

Blackwood's story also presents another major issue that is reflected in domestic topography—the compulsive need to divide space almost infinitely, by placing solid partitions as an attempt to map, control, and label the functions and occupants that should be using each room. There is a memorable episode in which these partitions, so prevalent and necessary in Victorian households, are severely compromised. After the protagonist in the story coughs and rattles the door as a signal to his “neighbours” that they should be more discreet because he can hear them, Shorthouse decides to go out into the passage and knock on their door. When he receives no response from within, the protagonist feels frightened and decides to go back into the safety of his room, but “the draught closed the door slowly in his face as if there were someone pressing against it from the other side. When he pushed it open and went in, a hundred shadowy forms seemed to dart swiftly and silently back to their corners and hiding-places” (59). This incident fills him with insecurity about his room having been penetrated by something from without, through his own door. But the most terrifying intrusion into his room occurs not through the opening of the doorway, but through the weakened or dissolved partition between the two rooms:

with shaking fingers but a determined heart he lit the gas, and the first thing in which his eyes corroborated the evidence of his ears was the horrifying detail that the lower portion of the partition bulged unnaturally into his own room. The glaring paper with which it was covered had cracked under the tension and the boards beneath it bent inwards towards him. What hideous load was behind them he shuddered to think. (64)

In addition to the powerful Gothic imagery provided by words such as “unnaturally,” “bulging” and the imagining of the “hideous load” which lay behind this division, is the fascinating topic of how the partition and the structure of the room itself becomes monstrous. In this Gothic setting, architectural elements such as form are now abnormal—a wall that should be straight bulges. Other basic elements of architecture—materials—also suffer because of this intrusion. Paper—meant to cover

and to provide warmth and a domestic appearance to a wall, and boards—meant to provide structural support and shape—are all under attack in this Gothic portrayal of a horrific, haunted space.

The radical transformation and deterioration of the materials in the story coincides with the nineteenth century lively debate concerning the “truth” and “honesty” of architecture, a discussion that involved the “proper” use of materials. Edward Kaufman discusses this topic in “Architectural Representation in Victorian England,” and identifies Pugin’s “True Principles” and some of Ruskin’s texts as essential contributions to this discussion. In 1849 John Ruskin had published *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and in “The Lamp of Truth,” he passionately defended the mission to uphold the true and honest use of materials in architecture.¹⁸ Ruskin lists three deceits that are common in architecture in the nineteenth century and that should be avoided at all costs: employing a mode of support for decorative and not structural purposes; painting or treating surfaces in a way that makes them appear to be a different material; using machine-made ornaments of any kind. In the story, the materials that I have cited suffer a monstrous transformation that utterly ignores the truth and honesty that architecture should express. This debate on the “truth” of architecture went hand in hand with the infiltration of morality into the Victorian household; like architecture in general, the home was a repository of the moral condition of its inhabitants and of a whole nation. Blackwood’s story presents a horrific inversion of a building that, in

18. In the introduction of “The Lamp of Truth,” Ruskin denounces what he considers to be a worrying tendency in nineteenth century: “The violations of truth, which dishonour poetry and painting, are ... for the most part confined to the treatment of their subjects. But in architecture another and a less subtle, more contemptible, violation of truth is possible; a direct falsity of assertion respecting the nature of material, or the quantity of labour. And this is, in the full sense of the word, wrong; it is as truly deserving of reprobation as any other moral delinquency; it is unworthy alike of architects and of nations; and it has been a sign, wherever it has widely and with toleration existed, of a singular debasement of the arts... We may not be able to command good, or beautiful, or inventive architecture: the meagreness of poverty may be pardoned, the sternness of utility respected; but what is there but scorn for the meanness of deception?” (124) in John D. Rosenberg, ed., *The Genius of John Ruskin, Selections from his Writings* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

Victorian times, had to express the positive moral qualities of a family and of a nation. In “A Case of Eavesdropping,” haunting deforms domestic space and its design, and the partitions that have been placed by the Victorian rationale in order to classify, subdivide, and ultimately tame domestic space are subverted by this frightening penetration.

Significantly, the apparition itself is deformed: “It was something dark and serpentine in shape, and it came from the place where the partition bulged [...] Silently, slowly, from side to side like a thick worm, it crawled forward into the room beneath his frightened eyes” (65). Upon touching it, Shorthouse notices how “it was sluggish—and it was warm!” (65). This slug-like primitive “life” form that crawls or slithers (instead of walking upright) points to an atavistic danger in which spatial organization and anything that is “civilized” can revert to the primitive. The monster and monstrous space are inseparable in Blackwood’s tale, a fact that becomes apparent when the morning after the awful incident, Shorthouse takes the landlady up to his room, to show her the ghastly spectacle. However, in the light of day, a healthy architectural form and the lack of the creature indicate a return to normality: “the partition no longer bulged. The paper was not torn. There was no creeping, crawling thing on the faded old carpet” (66). It is clear that in haunted space, a civilized room and any form can revert to the monstrous; when the haunting ceases, deformity itself ceases and the wholesome domestic setting is restored.

The Incredibly Expanding Room

In Blackwood’s story, boundaries, in the shape of a wall become deformed and weakened to the point of being traversed by an apparition that replays a past, revisiting crime. In M.R. James’s “Number 13,” the haunted dimensions of a room suffer an even greater change—at night the dimensions of adjacent rooms shrink to give way to Number 13, a chamber that does not exist during the day. When Mr. Anderson arrives to Viborg in Denmark to conduct research on the country’s church history, he stays at

a boarding house, where he chooses room number 14. At night, he is unable to enter it, and then he realizes that he has made a mistake by trying to open the wrong door and room, numbered 13. When he finally enters his own chamber, however, he notices a “curious effect,” since the room seemed to “have contracted in length and grown proportionately higher” (43). The next morning he is told that, in order to not unnerve superstitious customers, Number 13 was never created. Being the researcher that he is, Mr. Anderson is curious to solve the mystery, and tries an experiment, by inviting the owner of the lodgings to his room at night, so that the latter can witness the nocturnal change. Having confirmed the strange alteration in dimensions, the owner and Mr. Anderson embark on an investigation of the phenomenon.

In this story, great anxiety arises from the variation in dimensions of both room number 14, occupied by Mr. Anderson, and the adjacent room number 12, rented by Mr. Jensen, a solicitor. Because of these nocturnal mutations, architectural features are affected—the number of windows in each room is reduced: “ ‘my room has three windows in the daytime,’ said Anderson, with difficulty suppressing a nervous laugh,” “ ‘By George, so has mine!’ said the lawyer, turning and looking at Anderson” (51). The realization about this anomaly is what finally convinces the men of the existence of the mysterious room Number 13. Furthermore, as in the case of “A Case of Eavesdropping,” a sinister form accompanies physical and spatial deformity: “his back [Mr. Jensen’s] was now to the door. In that moment the door opened, and an arm came out and clawed at his shoulder. It was clad in ragged, yellowish linen, and the bare skin, where it could be seen, had long grey hair upon it¹⁹” (51). The glimpse at the tattered and hairy creature that inhabits Number 13 highlights the sense of uncanny

19. In *The Weird Tale* (Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990), S.T. Joshi comments on how this creature’s hairiness is further proof of James’s preference for primitive or hardly evolved monsters: “The Jamesian ghost embodies all those traits of primitive human beings that are most frightening to the civilized and rational: not merely ignorance but aggressively violent ignorance. The effect is achieved in remarkably subtle ways: hairiness is frequently used as a symbol for barbarity” (135).

reversion that occurs at night, in which the very form of the adjacent rooms is severely compromised.

It is clear that terror is present because of the evil contents of the chamber, but mostly because of the sudden and abnormal appearance of a room that engulfs part of the neighbouring areas, thus threatening the safety of its occupants and the structural soundness of the rooms themselves. This spatial anxiety in fiction can be related to architectural concerns about the soundness of party walls that negotiated the relationship of adjacent homes, during the residential frenzy that took place in the Victorian period.²⁰ I have made reference to how several Building Acts were passed from the mid to late nineteenth century. In a letter to the editor, dated Sat. 10, June 1843, the writer points out that clauses 90 and 91 of the new Bill discuss “old party walls” as being characterized by “insufficiency and thickness” (*The Builder* 221). The new bill is “meant mercifully to meet the case of ancient walls erected prior to 1774” (221).²¹ Furthermore, according to the Victorian critic Stevenson:

the Building Acts at present in force [1880] in most towns compel a solid wall of stone or brick between each house rising eighteen inches above the roof. To this regulation we are indebted to our immunity from great fires in our modern rows of houses. This mode of constructing the walls of houses was stopped at last only by stringent laws, which compelled the party-walls between the houses to be of stone. Afterwards the use of wood as a building material for walls was altogether forbidden in our towns. (164)

The emphasis of these regulations falls on the separating boundaries between attached or semi-detached homes. The fear of fire consuming combustible materials and entire houses was well-founded after the mass destruction of 1666, but the passing of the Victorian Building Acts coincides with the emergence of the concept of domesticity and the need to defend and seal the home from the outside. I argue that

20. Refer to my first chapter, in which I refer to the issue of suburban growth in the nineteenth century.

21. The Fires Prevention (Metropolis) Act was passed in 1774. The Great Fire of London had ravished the city in 1666.

the need for stronger and more impervious party-walls mirrors the domestic need to be shut off from external influences, especially when attached or semi-attached homes brought about an uncomfortable proximity between strangers.

I have already discussed how the discourse on ventilation had physical but also symbolic functions. Similarly, regarding party walls, moisture and the need to combat it responded to health issues, but also to deeper cultural needs. Stevenson insists that “to build a good house, the bricks should be impervious to moisture” (174), and “these expedients for keeping damp out of walls will be needless if we can make them absolutely non-porous. Walls of cement concrete [...] satisfy this condition” (173). This emphasis on enclosing homes as safely as possible on one level from fire, and on another from any external damaging influence like moisture was channelled through the regulation of party walls.

In “Number 13,” the walls that shift are, in a sense, both party and internal walls, since they divide the internal space of the lodging house, but into separate rooms that are to be occupied by complete strangers. This ambiguity about strangers inhabiting separate quarters, but under a same roof, contributes to the sense of uneasiness that haunts space in the story; the confusion about whether the walls separate different residences or the same one conveys this feeling of spatial confusion and discomfort.

M.R. James’s story and its concern for shifting walls reflect worries about physical and social spaces becoming destabilized. As I have shown in my third chapter, the Victorian household, with its clearly defined compartments, gave a sense of security to its inhabitants about the predictability of life, away from a-not-so-predictable environment. James’s story employs Gothic tropes of cursed dwellings or spaces and even deals with the devil;²² the story’s emphasis on spatial instability also reflects how this excessively organized setting could at times show the feeling of uncertainty that

22. In the story, the justification for the haunting is the corruptive presence of a document, hidden in a copper box under the flooring, in the space where the mysterious Number 13 appears. The parchment is a contract between an academic, Daniel Salthenius, and Satan, to whom he sold his soul.

was behind this façade. Two mid-nineteenth-century articles in *The Builder* reveal the problem of massive, and at times faulty, house building. Ironically, as the sense of domesticity and the home became consolidated after the 1850's, extensive urbanization often led to the construction of inferior structures. James's story of unstable boundaries can also be related to the rise of deficient middle-class suburban housing, resulting from very low building standards. In a letter to the editor, the writer says: "I cannot walk the environs of London without seeing at every turn houses built with the filthiest old bricks and bats, timbered with wormeaten or other thin and defective wood" (June 3 1843: 211). In 1844, the front page editorial reveals how widespread and real the previous impression was. The editor argues that the government should not just be concerned with tearing down ruinous buildings, but should look into the quality of the new construction, primarily houses. He goes on to say how recent newspapers are plagued with news of new houses collapsing: "it is not merely in the matter of the condemnation of ruinous buildings that amendment is needed, but in the construction of new works [...] of late the public journals have teemed in a most extraordinary degree with accounts of the fall of buildings" (Nov. 23 1844: 577).²³

M.R. James's story presents an eerie environment where walls and the rooms that they enclose come under the attack of anomalous, haunted space. I argue that the shifting of boundaries in different rooms and the threatening proximity of a cursed room is related to the growing concern during the nineteenth century to regulate proximities and most importantly, separation between neighbours; the significance of Building Acts that concentrated on numerous aspects of party walls attest to this. Furthermore, the story's sense of spatial instability can also be related to the unique nature of the

23. An example that the editor cites is that of incidents in London Road, Southwark, "falling of two houses, Nos. 32 and 33, on the west side of the street [...] the foundations were disturbed on Monday for the purpose of erecting a wall at the rear; and the heavy rain that has fallen since has been the principal cause of the falling in of the houses" (577). The Editor derides the supposed cause for the collapse, attributing it to inferior building quality instead: "so it seems the dense humidity of the weather is to cause such ruin! A pretty kind of building truly! How much of such humidity, how much rain, how much storm have passed over the buildings of ancient Rome, or those of our country, leaving many of them untouched?" (577).

setting, in which strangers must share the same building, sometimes in uncomfortable closeness. As in Blackwood's "A Case of Eavesdropping," James's story displays this social ambiguity, fictionalised through the image of walls that act as both internal and party walls.

Infiltrated Rooms

Ineffective Windows and Monstrous Guests

I have discussed hermetic rooms that are intended to contain and preserve secrets. I have also presented the case of rooms with moving or deformed boundaries that manifest a Victorian preoccupation with rigid confines within the household, but also an anxiety about these borders dissolving, under the pressure of incoming social and architectural conventions. Now, I would like to address a more extreme situation, that of rooms that have been completely penetrated; the negative consequences that result from intrusion attest, once again, to the fear that Victorians had about their home being infiltrated and corrupted. In this section I discuss two stories by M.R. James, "The Mezzotint" and "The Ash-Tree," (published in 1904 in *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*), in which intrusion occurs through windows, an opening that is perceived as extremely dangerous. Later, I analyze the novella *Carmilla* (1872) by Sheridan Le Fanu, in which the port of entry is the door and the chamber that is violated is the most intimate of all family rooms—the bedroom. I consider how Victorian domestic design supports the view that rooms should contain only the necessary openings, a notion that would later be dramatically challenged at the onset of Modernist architecture.²⁴ Victorian domestic design, favouring a withdrawn lifestyle and rooms that contained as few gaps

24. Modernist architects like Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier would tear down the heavily compartmentalized Victorian interior and propose an open-plan domestic setup, where spaces and movement through them flowed more easily. I will explore this point further, in the conclusion of the thesis.

as possible, contributes to formulating the rooms of Gothic domestic fiction. In these, the main fears that arise are penetration and corruption.

In “The Mezzotint” and “The Ash-Tree,” windows are dangerous openings through which the home is breached, resulting in death, not only of a family member, but also of the family itself, when the entire lineage is annihilated. “The Mezzotint” is an account of what befalls Dennistoun, an academic in charge of collecting objects for the museum at Cambridge, when he comes across a seemingly plain mezzotint, depicting an old manor-house; upon closer inspection, in the company of friends, he realizes how the picture changes, gradually revealing terrifying scenes, culminating with one in which a sinister figure enters a home and leaves with a small child. Similarly, in “The Ash-Tree,” strange creatures resembling spiders, infiltrate an ancestral home and murder the male heirs that dare sleep in a bedroom that is next to an ash-tree. The creatures are the “offspring” of Mrs. Mothersole, a woman who was once very influential, but who was hung after being accused of witchcraft; the testimony of one of the ancestors of Castringham Hall is what led to her execution, and also what provoked the awful curse.

In both stories, the sense of the frightening arises in large part from the ambiguous nature of the creature or entity that enters the home. “The Mezzotint” presents a progression of scenes that reveal, in an almost cinematographic manner, the advancement of an eerie creature towards the house.²⁵ The description of the being remains a rough sketch at best, even as it begins to emerge on the surface of the paper: “and indeed there was—hardly more than a black blot on the extreme edge of the engraving—the head of a man or a woman, a good deal muffled up, the back turned

25. In *Gothic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), Andrew Smith comments on the contrast between the awful reality depicted in the mezzotint, and the detached attitude of the Cambridge dons that watch it, apparently unfazed by the tragedy; however, I would disagree, and argue that, despite the dons’ relative distance from the work of art, their frightened response to it reveals their fear of the revenants’ potential capacity to penetrate their reality, in the same manner in which it has penetrated the mezzotint.

to the spectator, and looking towards the house” (22). The figure remains elusive, as we are not certain of its gender, and because it is covered and turning its back to the passive and terrified spectators—both the characters and us the readers watch, helplessly. In “The Ash-Tree,” the sense of mystery and discomfort that surrounds the infiltrator is even greater, since the story does not present a picture of it until almost the end of the story, when the narrator relates the scene of death of the last descendant of Castringham Hall. Once again, the narrator pulls the reader in as a spectator, and we are made to witness something moving on top of the man as he lies in bed: “There is very little light about the bedstead, but there is a strange movement there...” (39). Firstly, there is the issue of limited vision because of darkness, but also of its illusory qualities, since we are told that “so deceptive is the half-darkness.” Secondly, there is a bizarre sexual undertone to the whole scene, also contributing to the sense of unsettling ambiguity. Thirdly, the narrator claims that what he sees “is a horrible illusion,” (39) only to immediately destabilize his assertion by posing the question: “Is it nothing more?”(39). In both stories, then, fear derives from the infiltrator’s ambiguous nature; furthermore, these creatures are not only unsettling because of their blurred shape (and the refusal of the narration to correct their diffuse outline), but because of their atavistic qualities, rendering them non-human or even worse—partly human but not quite so. Thus, the creature in “The Mezzotint” crawls on all fours, and the infiltrators in “The Ash-Tree” belong to a much lower rung in the evolutionary ladder, by resembling spiders.

It is clear that in both stories the ambiguous and uncivilized nature of the infiltrator creates great fear. But more importantly, in both cases these elusive beings enter the home and the room where a crime is committed through a window, an opening that has a double function—to allow the passage of light and air into the home, but also to impede the entry of unwanted entities. In my third chapter, I pointed out the importance of ventilation as part of the hygienic but also moralistic discourse in the nineteenth-century home. Properly ventilating a room became indispensable,

but this need competed with the fear of unwanted ingress of any entity (draughts or otherwise), which might endanger the wellbeing of household occupants. I argued that this tension between the need to maintain physical health on the one hand, and the desire to preserve the moral fabric of the family on the other (by carefully regulating contact with the outside), dictated the preference for certain architectural or design features in the home. For instance, both excessive window coverings and the use of the bay window reveal the Victorian preference for features that did not allow direct contact with the outside, and that in the case of windows, did so in a regulated and sheltered way.

I argue that in M.R. James's stories, the port of entry into the home—the window—is not coincidental, and that it reflects fears of invasion into the middle-class household, through one of its most vulnerable openings. In "The Mezzotint," one of the characters, Nisbet, tells the main character, Williams, what he sees in the scene, interestingly focusing on the windows: "The house has one-two-three rows of windows, five in each row, except at the bottom, where there's a porch instead of the middle one [...] Why, one of the windows on the ground-floor—left of the door—is open" (25). A surprised Williams answers "Is it really? My goodness! He must have got in" (25). Nisbet agrees and adds "I expect you're right: he has got in. And if I don't mistake there'll be the devil to pay in one of the rooms upstairs" (25). Whether both men are imagining the sequence of events—an open window signalling an intruder entering and going upstairs—or not, one thing is for sure, both characters express the sense of vulnerability that is generated by a window that has been left open or unguarded in a Victorian home. Similarly, in "The Ash-Tree," the window in a bedroom, more than the room itself, is the source of fear. One morning "Sir Richard woke after a night of discomfort [...] Also something had so rattled about the window that no man could get a moment's peace" (36). Because of this, Sir Richard decides to defy one of the home's unwritten but respected rules—to avoid occupying the bedroom in which Sir Matthew, his grandfather, was found dead. What is even worst, in order to air the room, "Sir

Richard crossed to the window, and, impatiently, as was his wont, threw the shutters back, and flung open the casements” (36), a gesture that is considered impulsive and reckless. Furthermore, a guest and friend of the family discourages Sir Richard from sleeping in that particular room, because of the proximity to the ash-tree,²⁶ since “it can hardly be wholesome to have the air you breathe strained, as it were, through all that leafage” (38). Once again, we confirm how the Victorian household staged a constant struggle between a healthy home and an impenetrable one.

At the end of both stories, the danger represented by windows as sites of fatal entries, a feeling that was foreshadowed in both tales, reaches its climax as death of the family members and of the lineage literally enters through these openings. The last terrifying scene that is played on the surface of the mezzotint is especially eerie:

The window that had been open was shut, and the figure was once more on the lawn [...] Now it was erect and stepping swiftly, with long strides, towards the front of the picture [...] the head was bent down, and the arms were tightly clasped over an object which could be dimly seen and identified as a child [...] “ (27).

Some research that Williams does into the family history of Anningley Hall explains this final uncanny scene: “The family is now extinct, the last heir having disappeared mysteriously in infancy in the year 1802”(28). The intruder represents a poacher who was executed for killing a keeper at the Hall, and as a revenant, he takes the last heir of the Hall’s family as revenge for his own line’s obliteration. Similarly, in “The Ash Tree,” Sir Richard is killed by the mysterious creatures that we get a glimpse at, and with him dies the line of Castringham Hall. According to Terry W. Thompson,²⁷

26. The story draws from the superstition of placing an ash-tree next to a home. The turn of events reflect how the ash-tree is a symbol of ill omen. After Sir Matthew Fell, proprietor of the hall renders testimony of Mrs. Mothersole gathering sprigs from his ash-tree, she is accused of witchcraft and hung. The story ends when the spider-like creatures are followed into their nest—the ash-tree of course—and a skeleton of a woman (implied to be that of Mrs. Mothersole) is found at the bottom of the trunk.

27. In “I Shall Most Likely Be Out on the Links”: Golf as Metaphor in the Ghost Stories of M.R.James” in *Papers on Language and Literature* (40.4 2004: 339-353), Terry W. Thompson employs golf and the manicured courses as symbols of man’s compulsion to control his surroundings. In the case of “The Ash-Tree,” Thompson concentrates on the issue of the clearing of ancient forest land, and on the dark consequences that ensue.

“The Ash-Tree” draws attention to the “towering old-growth forests of ash and oak and elm, that once dominated the region,” which had been eliminated by the English squire class, represented in the story by Sir Edward of Castringham Hall. Furthermore, the story exploits old fears generated by “displaced pagan beliefs—Celtic and Druid and Wiccan.” I would elaborate on Thompson’s remark and argue that the creatures that are literally spawned in the ash-tree represent the vengeful forces of the once dark and mystical forest that has been violated, and that their crawling into the home points to nature’s ability to claim what is man-made and revert it to its wild state.

Considering the use of windows in nineteenth-century homes gives us a clue about Victorian domestic needs, and about the reason why they would pose such a threat in the homes portrayed in the James stories. Nineteenth-century architects offer practical reasons for not incorporating too many windows in a domestic plan. Some, for instance, cite a “necessity of providing sufficient wall-space for the quantity of bulky furniture which a drawing-room usually contains” (Stevens 59). Others blame the weather: “one of the most frequent mistakes of modern planning is excess of window light. This not only loses valuable wall space but it makes the house a worse shelter against the weather” (Stevens 68). However, if we compare the nineteenth-century British home to others on the continent, we soon realize that the reason for providing few windows was due to the British need for privacy and seclusion that I have discussed previously; because of the enclosed nature of the room and the home in general, windows and doors are avoided as much as possible: “in the English room there are almost always two entire walls without openings, whereas we in Germany are only too fond of sacrificing wall-surfaces to communicating doors” (Muthesius 78). Furthermore, apertures are avoided as much as possible not only because of draughts, but because of other factors which go against the need for privacy: “openings in the walls are not in the least desirable and can only be considered necessary evils. Windows and doors are sources of draughts, doors let in noise from adjoining rooms” (Muthesius 79). Incorporating these voids or “necessary evils” into a house plan inescapably results

in discomfort: “glass doors or borrowed lights in a sitting-room or bedroom destroy their privacy and produce a sense of discomfort” (Stevenson Vol. II 50). This last phrase is key to understanding my argument—Victorian Gothic texts like the ones that I have discussed highlight a preoccupation about hermetic domestic settings becoming too permeable through voids, like windows. This “sense of discomfort,” which was an absolute reality in a domestic setting with rooms that were perceived to be too permeable, is exploited and amplified in Gothic literature.

As a conclusion, in both “The Mezzotint” and “The Ash-Tree,” revenge for an act committed by an ancestor literally comes crawling through the windows, pointing to the common worry over household penetration. In the mezzotint, the work of art itself is penetrated—by being a picture that is framed by borders, it acts like the window of a home, the suggestion being that both the space in art, as well as that in real life, are penetrated by this awful revenant. Similarly, in “The Ash-Tree,” this invasion of domestic space results in the death not only of an entire lineage, but also of the invasion of the bodies of the victims. When Sir Matthew, the first to be murdered, is found dead in his bedroom, two facts emerge: “The window was open” (33), and “upon examining the body, “a couple of small punctures or pricks, which we then concluded were the Spotts by which the Poyson might be introduced” (34). The underlying terror in both stories, then, is that an evil and lethal influence is capable of entering a home, the bosom of the family and of annihilating both. In *House Architecture*, Stevenson summarizes the Victorian appreciation of domestic space, which clearly summarizes the anxiety about a wrongful entry into the home, and the belief that windows should be employed more as a prolongation of a wall, and not a discontinuation of it:

For ordinary dwelling-houses, a more suitable and more beautiful effect may be gained by treating the windows, not as unenclosed openings without glass, but, as they really are, portions of the enclosure of the rooms—continuations of the surface of the wall. Looking at the window from the outside, we ought to feel that it is not an open hole; and when inside the room, we should be conscious that we are protected from the outside atmosphere. (Vol. II 194)

Both stories discussed dramatize and amplify this domestic fear of intrusion, which in turn derives from a heightened need for seclusion and safety. In “The Ash-Tree,” Mothersole’s last words to Sir Matthew—“There will be guests at the Hall” (32)—clearly express this Victorian preoccupation, and the belief that windows, as ports of entry of unwanted guests, should be used sparingly and above all, with extreme caution.

Breached Bedrooms and Pierced Bodies

Sheridan Le Fanu’s novella has become a classic in Gothic and vampire literature, preceding and shaping its famous descendant, *Dracula* (1897). In this section, I will concentrate mostly on issues of spatial penetration, although it is impossible not to mention bodily penetration and issues of infection when approaching this work. I focus on the infringement of the most intimate family room—the bedroom—this time not through the window, as in James’s stories, but through the door. As in previous sections, I consider architectural features and aspects about domestic design that point to certain preoccupations, highlighting elements about doors, as well as the layout of this most intimate of rooms. Lastly, I discuss one of the most significant aspects of the work—the issue of attraction—and I relate it to space, arguing that spatial prohibition on the one hand, and spatial penetration on the other, accentuate feelings of arousal and seduction that the protagonist experiences.

From the start of the novella, and from the first encounter between Laura, the protagonist, and Carmilla, her vampiric companion, there is a reference to an infiltrated bedroom, and wrongful entry through the door. The protagonist has a “dream” in which she feels “a stinging pain as if two large needles darted [...] deep into [her] breast a little below [her] throat” (237). What really comes across in this vision or dream, however, is the way in which “the figure that attacked her” behaves spatially. The protagonist remembers that this being moves within the bedroom, but always in relation to the door: “[it] appeared to have changed its place, and was now nearer

the door; then, close to it; then the door opened, and it passed out” (237). When she wakes from this “dream,” the girl once again focuses her attention on the door: “my first thought was that Carmilla had been playing a trick on me, and that I had forgotten to secure my door. I hastened to it, and found it locked as usual on the inside. I was afraid to open it—I was horrified. I sprang into my bed and covered my head up in the bedclothes, and lay there more dead than alive till morning” (237). Thus, we can conclude that despite the blurriness of the dream-like attack, Laura’s vision centers on the door, as the feature that has enabled this intrusion; I argue that this emphasis reveals domestic worries about this barrier’s efficacy.

Carmilla’s entry into the bedroom and into her companion/victim’s bed is one and the same. The first encounter takes place before Carmilla had been officially invited into the narrator’s home, the suggestion being that she had previously infiltrated the girl’s home illegally. The young narrator describes this first visit, once again, unsure about whether it is a dream or not: “a young lady was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again” (210). Right after this episode, full of sexual and orgasmic undertones, the girl says that she “was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast, just below my throat, very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly” (210). In this description, in which the infiltration into the bedroom is followed by the penetration of a body, the bed is signalled as the key site for this kind of activity, with Carmilla attacking in bed but also seemingly slipping underneath it, as if she could remerge from it, for her next attack: “the lady started back with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, as I thought, hid herself under the bed” (210). Here, the bed is clearly the site and source of a sexual activity perceived as abnormal and prohibited, because of the sexually precocious and lesbian elements that are present.

The matter of lesbianism and vampirism renders these nightly encounters monstrous, and so the infiltrated bedroom and penetrated bed and body swiftly lead

to the issue of infection or corruption. The presence of vampirism in Gothic literature has been connected to historical fears of contagion and corruption numerous times.²⁸ Like Carmilla, Dracula recurrently visits his “victims,” turning them into willing participants in a vampiric courtship, and eventually, into vampires like himself. Instead of relating this fear of contagion to historical issues, such as imperialism, I propose that we consider the way in which contagion travels through architectural domestic space in the novel, specifically within the bedroom. Despite her disregard for physical and social norms, Carmilla displays a curious interest in protecting herself from uninvited intrusions into her bedroom. She clearly expresses this by saying: “I am haunted with a terror of robbers. Our house was robbed once, and two servants murdered, so I always lock my door. It has become a habit” (223). The terms “haunted” and “habit” emphasize the returning and compulsive nature of her anxiety, thus strengthening the issue of uncanny or haunted space in this tale. Furthermore, the narrator of the story is influenced by Carmilla’s habit:

the precautions of nervous people are infectious,²⁹ and persons of a like temperament are pretty sure, after a time, to imitate them. I had adopted Carmilla’s habit of locking her bedroom door, having taken into my head all her whimsical alarms about midnight invaders and prowling assassins. I had also adopted her precaution of making a brief search through her room, to satisfy herself that no lurking assassin or robber was ‘esconced’. (237)

28 See Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Kathleen L. Spencer, “Purity and Danger: Dracula, the Urban Gothic, and the late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis,” in *English Literary History* 59 (1992): 197-225; Daniel Pick, “‘Terrors of the night’: Dracula and degeneration in the late nineteenth century,” in *Critical Quarterly* 30 (1984):71-87. The last work contains a thorough list of references on the debate on degeneracy and the vampire.

29. In “The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious,” in *The Modern Language Review* 86.1 (1991): 19-34, Helen Stoddart considers late nineteenth-century psychoanalytic discourse in order to discuss Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* and “Green Tea,” both published in his collection, *In a Glass Darkly*. Stoddart notes how Laura’s admittance about having been “infected,” allows Carmilla to have power over her mind and body; furthermore, the “condition” that ensues from this “infection” is examined carefully by the character of Dr. Martin Hesselius, who frames both stories in the collection, and who represents psychoanalytic discourse at the time.

On a superficial level, one might justify Carmilla's behaviour by arguing that, as a vampire, she needs to be watchful of any intruders who might want to kill her, after realizing who or what she is. However, there are two more elaborate notions that spring to mind after analyzing this quotation. The first, is that the vampire's obsessive behaviour coincides with Victorian notions of extreme privacy and retirement within rooms; despite her unique condition as a monster, Carmilla's regard for her own safety within a room might be considered a magnified version of Victorian domestic needs. The second notion that derives from this quotation is the fact that the narrator admits that she is "infected" by Carmilla's anxieties, proving that the issue of sensations and attraction that I will refer to later on, is connected to that of spatial management, and in this case, both to the need to feel enclosed within a bedroom, and to be aroused by this seclusion.

I argue that Carmilla's and Laura's fixation on the door and on the enclosure of bedrooms is an extension of design parameters concerning this room, which were in place during the nineteenth century. As the site of nightly visitations, the bedroom is clearly the site of the greatest anxiety in this work. Whereas in the Georgian house internal divisions were not as rigid, the Victorian house had two strikingly different types of rooms—sitting rooms and bedrooms.³⁰ Furthermore, during the nineteenth century, the bedroom became a distinctly intimate room: "the older fashion of the bedroom's serving as a quasi sitting rooms was, in theory at least, disappearing" (Flanders 37). It is clear that the Victorian bedroom (as were the other rooms in the home) was meant to be single-purposed; unlike the other rooms, however, the bedroom was meant to accommodate its occupants during their most intimate and vulnerable times. The ever-present concern for privacy within the household dictated design conditions that were

30. In the Georgian House in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, the lady of the house's bedroom is placed on the ground floor, overlooking the back garden; this bedroom also functioned as a sitting room, since guests would come in and sit on the chairs placed in front of the fire, and have tea with their hostess.

meticulously described in home and architectural manuals. One of the most fascinating details has to do with the way in which the door opens into a room:

The rule known to every Englishman says that the door must open towards the main sitting area in the room, which usually means towards the desk [...], in a bedroom towards the bed. The idea behind is that the person entering shall not be able to take in the whole room at a glance as he opens the first crack of the door but must walk round it to enter that room, by which time the person seated in the room will have been able to prepare himself suitably for his entry. The striking feature about the opening of the door as it appears there is that the person entering seems at first to be walking into a wall and sees nothing inside the room until he opens the door wide [...] It is only like passing through a kind of porch or small vestibule. (Muthesius 79)

In the plans below (Fig. 4), one can confirm how doors initially open up into a wall, and later onto the rest of the room, thus creating this sort of virtual vestibule or ante-room to the rest of the chamber. Furthermore, we can contrast this arrangement with that of an American Victorian layout (Fig. 5), where the door clearly opens in

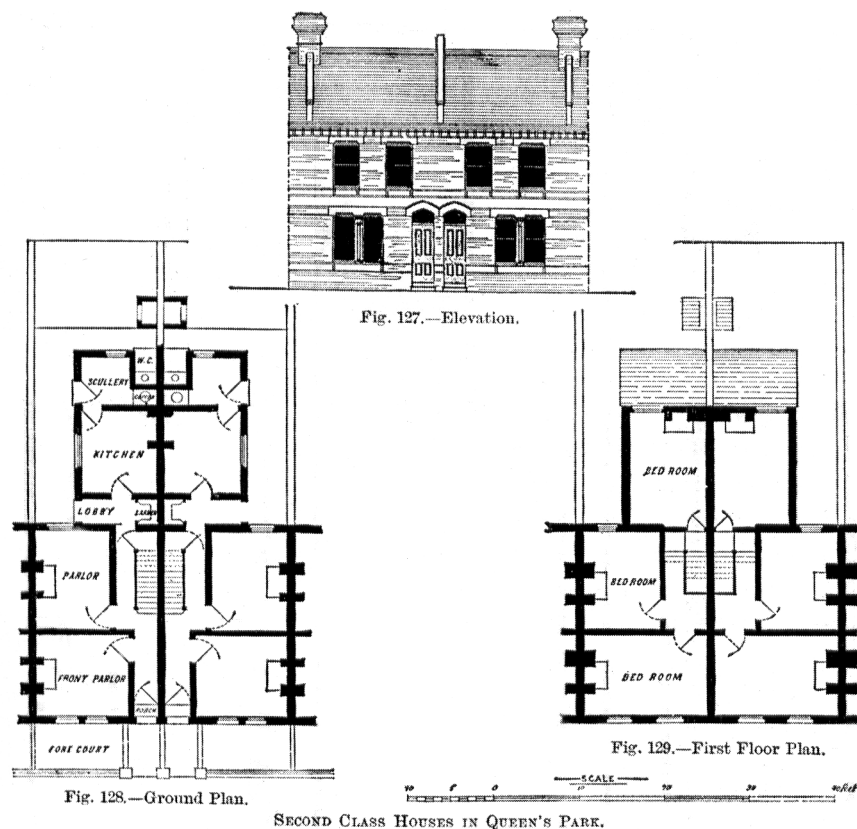


Fig. 4. Plan of a second-class home in Queen's Park, in Helen Long, *Victorian Houses and their Details* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2002) 3.

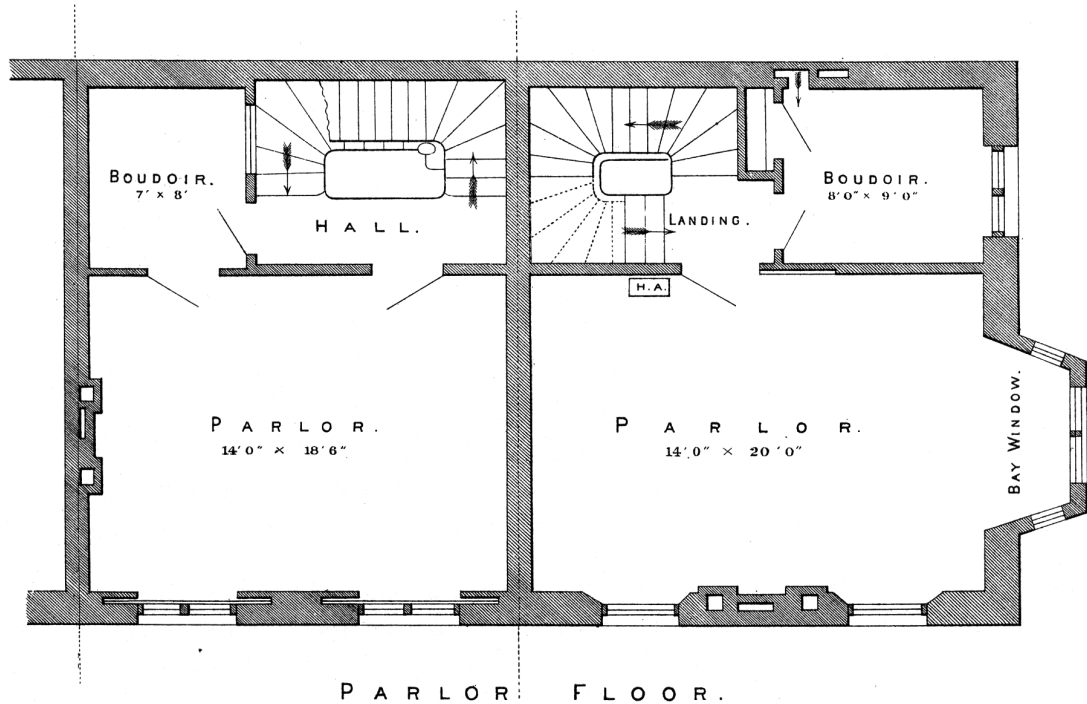


Fig. 5. Parlor floor plan in an American Victorian home, in Geo. E. Woodward, *Victorian City and Country Houses* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996) 5. Originally published as *Woodward's National Architect* Vol. II (New York: The American News Co., 1877).

the opposite manner, with no regard for providing a pause between the initial entry into a room and the complete opening of the door. For instance, the door that opens up from the hall to the boudoir, if present in a British plan, would open in the opposite direction, as would the door that opens from the boudoir onto the parlour (first you would get a glimpse of the corner closest to the door, instead of the middle of the room). Furthermore, the fact that the boudoir—an intensely private and feminine space in British Victorian homes—is accessed from the hall, a transit area, is unacceptable by British standards. In Fig. 6 we see how this disregard for spatial privacy in the American plan carries through to the most intimate bedrooms, where the door, does not force the person who is walking in, to follow the door as it opens gradually towards the room.

This rule superbly illustrates how sensitive Victorians were about privacy within rooms, about entries that were always perceived as intrusions (even when allowed)

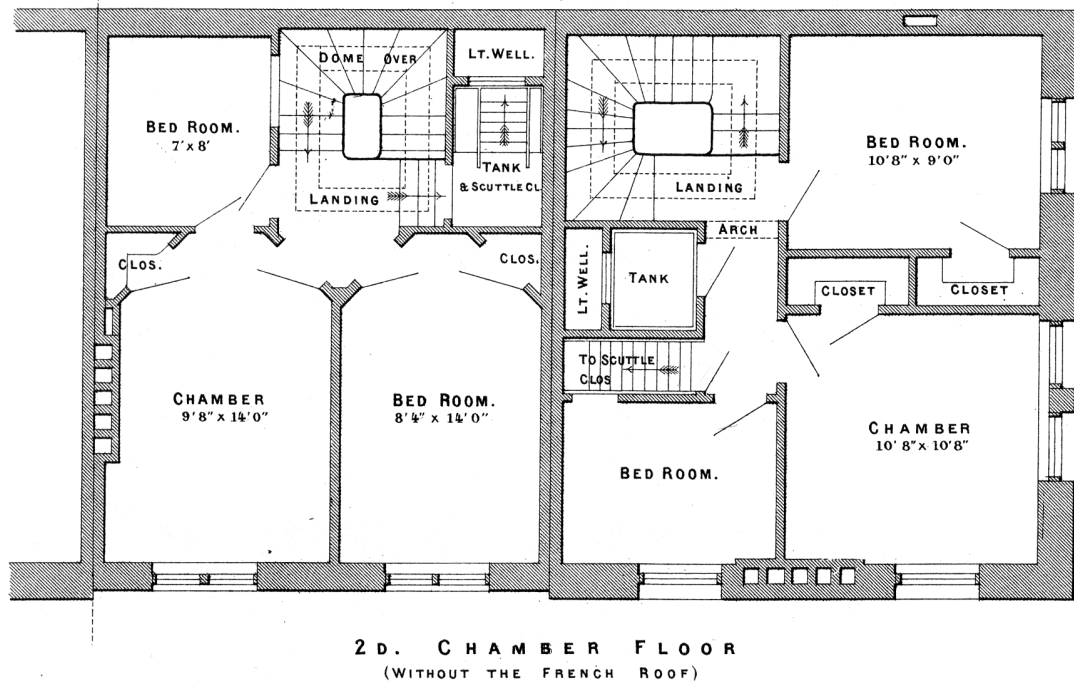


Fig. 6. Bedroom floor plan in an American Victorian home, in Geo. E. Woodward, *Victorian City and Country Houses* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996) 8. Originally published as *Woodward's National Architect* Vol. II (New York: The American News Co., 1877).

and about spatial dynamics within the home in general. In *Artisans and Machinery*, Peter Gaskell provides a vision of the artisan's household that has none or very few partitions as the antithesis of what a respectable British household of the nineteenth century should be: "the promiscuous way in which families herd together—a way that prevents all privacy, and which, by bringing into open day things which delicacy commands should be shrouded from observation, destroys all motions of sexual decency and domestic chastity" (89). Having read phrases like these, it is possible to assert that the Victorian middle-class household fought hard against a sort of spatial promiscuity, and seemingly minor elements, like the way in which a door opened, was part of a larger picture in which "sexual decency" and "domestic chastity" were meant to be preserved.

A close look at the layout of the bedroom will support this idea about this preservation of family morality through the use of space; it will also shed light on

the significance of the haunting infiltrations into the bedroom in Le Fanu's novella. "For planning a bedroom the rules are few and simple," claims J.J. Stevenson, from his nineteenth-century perspective; however, as with other rooms in the home and domestic design in general, Victorian manuals are highly legislative, imposing spatial norms that in turn reflected rigid social ones. The layout of the bedroom was determined first by positioning the bed in a certain way: "the English bed always stands with the head against the wall and the long sides jutting into the room clear of the wall" (Muthesius 92). To this simple remark, however, we have to add the matter of how the bed relates to other important elements: "a position should be provided for the bed, out of the way of the draughts between window, door, and fireplace; not with the object of excluding air, but rather that it may be admitted without danger of cold to the sleeper" (Stevenson 67). These very practical instructions correspond to the recurring issues of ventilation and lighting—the foot of the bed is not recommended to face the window in order to avoid a glaring awakening. However, the same author indicates how privacy and concealment play a significant role within the bedroom.³¹ The illustration below indicates two possible placements for the bed as well as doors, but one of the door placements is clearly preferred.

"In this case the bed may occupy either of the positions dotted; and the door may be at D or C. D is the worse position, as when opened it exposes either the bed or the fireplace" (67). Exposing the fireplace could lead to the kind of sights that Gaskell referred to previously which "should be shrouded from observation" (89). Once again, this concern for shrouding explains the manner in which the door opens, especially in the bedroom in order "to ensure that the door opens with its back towards the bed and not the other way, for the desire to avoid embarrassing situations is specially opposite here. The modern [nineteenth-century] custom whereby a maid takes an early

31. My analysis of a bedroom scene in *The Dead Secret*, earlier in this chapter, illustrates the bedroom layout suggested by these critics.

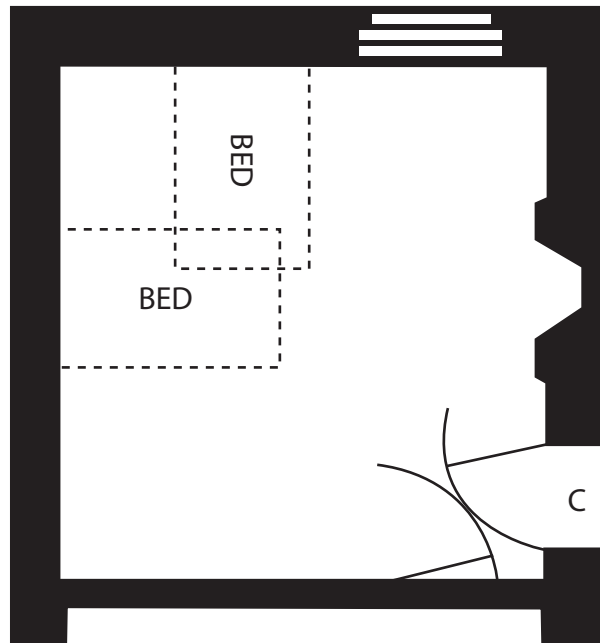


Fig. 7. Bedroom layout, in J.J. Stevenson *House Architecture* Vol. II (London: Macmillan and Co., 1880) 67.

cup of tea to the couple's bedside before they rise makes the point clearly enough" (Muthesius 92). The incursion of the servant, who lives under the same roof, but is clearly separated from the family, is an action that is not devoid of threat, even when it is an integral part of daily routine.

Entering the Victorian bedroom was also a sensitive issue, because of the way that this room had evolved during the nineteenth century. In "Thresholds of Desire and Domestic Space in Nineteenth-century French Fiction," Tony Williams discusses the eroticization of the nineteenth-century bedroom:

in the eighteenth century in the upper classes the practice was to have separate bedrooms but in the nineteenth century there was an increasing tendency for the bourgeois couple to share a single bedroom. As the bedroom becomes less public and more private there is an increasing scope for it to be constructed as a secret space within the bourgeois household, with entry into it forbidden to all males apart from the husband [...] The bedroom is viewed as a sanctuary and, precisely because it is viewed as a secret space, it becomes invested with a powerful erotic charge. (41)

In Le Fanu's novella, the nineteenth-century bedroom becomes a site of monstrous visitations, but instead of merely conveying the horrific, this room is equally appealing and sensual. I argue that the nineteenth-century concern for incorporating spatial precautions into the design of a bedroom actually magnified this room's potential to stage sexuality and other types of activities that were meant to be concealed. As Williams notes above, then, by becoming more private and secretive, the Victorian bedroom's erotic potential was unleashed.

The sensuality that is contained and conveyed by the bedroom clearly relates to one of the main topics in *Carmilla*, that of intense attraction. Carmilla soon infects Laura with the ability to seduce and to be seduced, qualities that are advertised by the text as accompanying vampirism. Interestingly, seduction is illustrated as being especially powerful because of the tension between attraction and repulsion that structures it: "I did feel [...] 'drawn towards her,'" admits Laura about Carmilla, "but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging" (222). Moreover, Carmilla manages to seduce in the powerful way in which she does, because she exhibits an equally strong attraction for her "victim": "I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you," she asks the protagonist, and then, "she sighed, and her fine dark eyes gazed passionately on me" (222). Carmilla's ability to seduce, in other words, is based largely on letting herself be seduced by her victims, or in at least being able to convey this impression. Moreover, intimate domestic space, which is already highly sensual because of its particular development during the nineteenth century, not only frames, but intensifies Carmilla's designs, as well as Laura's complicit involvement³² in them.

32. In "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*," in *Criticism* 38 (1996): 607-632, Elizabeth Signorotti comments on how Le Fanu "allows Laura and Carmilla to usurp male authority and to bestow themselves on whom they please, completely excluding male participation in the exchange of women"(607), something which Stoker would later reinstate, with his domineering male figures that subjugate both women and vampires. Signorotti's reading on transgressive desire supports my observations about the complicit relationship between Carmilla and Laura, the latter being more of a companion than a mere "victim."

The intensely private bedroom, meant to repel strangers' curiosity, actually generates a sort of spatial voyeurism, whereby strangers' gaze (and that of readers) is drawn towards this intimate space.

Le Fanu's tale transmits Victorian concerns about the sensitive nature of bedroom space, and ultimately, about the incapacity of architectural features to contain the intimate. In the novel, corruptive forces mainly take the form of the vampire, but also of "dreams," that, due to their incorporeal nature, manage to defy barriers: "dreams come through stone walls, light up dark rooms or darken light ones, and their persons make their exits and their entrances as they please and laugh at locksmiths" (237). The exclusive and restrictive nature of the Victorian bedroom, instead of discouraging transgression, actually fuels it, when the impulse to conceal and contain the private turns over, and reveals a site of pleasurable horror, such as the one portrayed in Le Fanu's novel.

In this chapter we have confirmed how in *The Dead Secret*, "The Secret Chamber," and "The Open Door," haunting results from a keen desire to contain a secret within four walls, behind closed doors, and preferably under latch and key; the reclusive nature of the Victorian room, hermetic and disconnected from other chambers, serves as a perfect stage for Gothic plots concerned with privacy and extreme discretion. In the following section, we saw how Gothic expressed concerns over dissolving social and architectural conventions through the portrayal of rooms with equally unstable boundaries, as in "A Case of Eavesdropping" and "Number 13." Lastly, we considered rooms that had been completely infiltrated through barriers perceived as ineffective and weak, such as the windows in "The Mezzotint" and "The Ash-Tree," and the bedroom door in *Carmilla*. What all of these analyses prove is that Victorian social concerns regarding the home can be better comprehended by reading the way in which they were portrayed spatially, within the topography of the haunted home; furthermore, this chapter specifically addressed the way in which rooms, the most secretive and enclosed areas of the house, are magnified to Gothic and horrifying dimensions in the homes of fiction.



Chapter Six

Exploring Surrounding Space: Grounds around the Haunted House

The previous two chapters looked closely at space within haunted domestic sites. This section continues to travel through the Victorian house in Gothic fiction, but this time the focus shifts to an extension of the home: its surrounding grounds. In supernatural tales and novels of the nineteenth century, the garden and the grounds in general are often the site of intense haunting. This chapter shows that space enveloping the Victorian home is haunted, first, because it is a continuation of the home, featuring the same cultural anxieties that result in certain spatial qualities that support this condition, and second, because the grounds are a liminal area, acting as a buffer between the hermetic home and an outside world, constantly advertised as dangerous. Moreover, this defensive area is not entirely effective, since its borders, often comprised of vegetation or low walls, are porous, and as such, the source of great concern. The works to be considered are Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Oliphant's "Earthbound," M.R. James's "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Much has been written on the history of Victorian gardening, both during the nineteenth century, when there was a boom in magazines and books dealing with the topic, and recently, in publications that express a renewed interest in the matter, such as Jennings's *Victorian Gardens* (2005), Wilkinson's *The Victorian Gardener* (2005), and works that look at the conjunction between gardening and literature,

such as Waters's *The Garden in Victorian Literature*¹ (1988). Although studies like Jennings's and Wilkinson's emphasize horticultural and technical aspects, I wish instead to focus on spatial aspects of the gardening of the time, in order to see how these factors contribute to haunting in fiction; furthermore, my study is concerned with pleasure gardens, which I define later, and not with the more utilitarian segments of the grounds, such as the kitchen garden. It is necessary, however, to begin with a brief historical context of this activity, before embarking on a deeper analysis of specific literary works. According to Jennings, British gardening in the nineteenth century reflected the nation's industrial and imperial status, as: "professional horticulture embraced the innovations² [scientific and technological] with enthusiasm and great creativity"(3). Some of these scientific discoveries included "developments in plant breeding, together with the influx of imported exotics" (Waters 109), which ensured access to an unprecedented variety of plants. Furthermore, advancements in designing glass structures in the shape of greenhouses, hothouses and conservatories, greatly promoted domestic gardening during this time. Building these structures was made possible in large part by the abolition of the window tax in 1851 (coinciding with the erection of the Crystal Palace) as well as by technical improvements, which together explain the popularity of these structures in most households of the time: "glasshouses and conservatories eventually became cheap enough for the middle classes in terraced houses in the suburbs" (Wilkinson 84). Interestingly, Joseph Paxton (1803-65), the

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1. Michael Waters's *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1988) is an engaging study that intends to "treat imaginative 'garden' literature and technical garden literature as separate but historically parallel kinds of writing" (6). He discusses various types of gardens or areas within these as horticultural and symbolic entities. Waters insists that a close analysis of garden literature and fiction reveals a wide social picture of the age. Like Waters, I employ technical garden manuals, in the same way that I had employed architectural and home manuals, in order to shed light on issues that surface in fiction. Unlike Waters, however, I concentrate on Gothic, not realist fiction; thus, my study only considers qualities of these gardens that foster the supernatural in the texts discussed.
 2. For example, the first lawnmower, a heavy and noisy contraption, was created in 1830 by engineer Edwin Beard Budding (1795-1846) and was inspired by the technology used in the woollen industry.

amateur architect and expert gardener who designed the building for the 1851 Great Exhibition (which I discussed in depth in my second chapter) was responsible for the spread of domestic indoor gardening, not only because of building innovations that he proposed, but because of the visibility and popularity of his masterpiece, the Crystal Palace, which had a great impact on the British public, who wanted to emulate aspects of the structure in their own home. I have discussed how the Great Exhibition claimed to exhibit Britain's imperial power to control and own territories by collecting and showing objects from these faraway lands; this impulse continued in domestic greenhouses—in a sense, minute copies of the Crystal Palace—that could also exhibit exotic plants from remote corners of the empire. Now homes could be like the empire, showcasing Britain's status as a world power through a collection of plants, safely contained and exhibited in the house's drawing room, garden or conservatory. Another factor that contributed greatly to the widespread interest in horticulture was the appearance of a great number of gardening magazines.³ Finally, the popularity of public parks was on the rise from the period of 1830 to the 1880s,⁴ something that signalled and fuelled the excitement over this pastime.

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3. There were early publications like Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* in 1787, but it was during Victorian times that gardening magazines acquired tremendous popularity. John Loudon, one of the greatest forces behind gardening of the times, published his *Gardener's Magazine* (1826-44), which continues today after a merger, as *Horticulture Week*. Jane Loudon, John's wife, was a major figure in Victorian gardening in her own right. Her books *The Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden* (1840) and *Gardening for Ladies* (1841) prove the link between the rise of domesticity, women and gardening at the time. Moreover, Joseph Paxton published *Horticultural Register* beginning in 1831 and *Magazine of Botany* in 1834, after which he decided to join botanist John Lindley (1799-1865) in order to create *Gardener's Chronicle* in 1841. William Robinson, another important gardening figure and an opposer of Loudon's gardening aesthetic, created *The Garden* (1871-1927) and *Gardening Illustrated* (1879-1956).
 4. Sarah Downing's *The English Pleasure Garden 1660-1860*, (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2009) explores the popularity of pleasure gardens and parks, from their peak during the seventeenth century, to their slow decline in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a descent due in part to the Victorian preference for seaside resorts, such as Brighton. Despite this decline in the popularity of pleasure gardens in the latter part of the nineteenth-century, sites such as Hyde Park in London were clearly a central part of social life for middle-class and upper-class Victorians, who enjoyed strolling and riding in their carriages in order to see and to be seen.

In order to understand the importance of gardening during the nineteenth century, it is imperative to consider how this activity was related to the home, and to the onset of domesticity. As Catherine Alexander points out, “gardens are rarely included in analyses of domestic space, which tend rather to focus on the built space of the house” (838), but I argue that the grounds can offer as much insight on domestic space as internal features of the home. Furthermore, domestic landscaping developed alongside the emerging suburban lifestyle, thus reflecting issues that were also present in the middle-class home. As I have mentioned, the massive urbanization that took place from the mid 1800s onwards coincided with the cult of middle-class domesticity, and in this context, even minute gardens became a sought-after commodity: “building land in towns had become scarce and houses were built closely together in a uniform pattern, on as small a scale as possible [...] the world became dark. Soot made the buildings black and fog often obscured the daylight” (Wilkinson 5). In addition to this need to possess a green area on plots that grew increasingly smaller and fewer in number, there was a clear connection between the importance of gardens, homes, and the women who were the main caretakers of both.⁵ Moreover, domestic fiction reflects the acute interest in the pastime:

little wonder, then, that the garden, the dominant bourgeois version of the locus amoenus and the aristocratic spatial model of gracious living, should have played such an important part in Victorian fiction. It was in their gardens more than anywhere else that privileged Victorians sported, courted and conversed. As an extension of the country house or suburban villa, the garden was an integral part of the domestic living space. (Waters 223)

Furthermore, Gothic fiction, which was highly domestic at this time, turned to haunted gardens as apt settings for the supernatural.

But what qualities exactly did the grounds have, whether in relation or in contrast to the home, that contributed to haunting? I would like to introduce these

5. In *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1988), Michael Waters dedicates chapter nine to the discussion of gardens, home and women, arguing the insoluble link between the three.

characteristics now, in order to address them in depth later on, in the analysis of fiction. The first quality is the most obvious: the continuation of the rigid spatial demarcation that was displayed inside the home, which generated feelings both of anxiety and of arousal. I argue that this restrictive internal mapping, as well as the feelings that it promoted, continued in the grounds of Victorian properties. Secondly, there was an emphasis placed on outer walls and boundaries that separated the grounds from the outside world; once again, as in the strict demarcation of internal space, the use of dividing walls between a home's outer boundaries and its neighbours' highlighted anxieties about protecting the private from the public. Thirdly, despite the symbolic significance of external borders in nineteenth-century plots, Victorian gardens were often surrounded by low walls or hedges, in other words, by porous and ineffective barriers; the permeability of these borders turned the grounds into a dangerous liminal area, where the need to repel invasions was seriously compromised. Fourthly, the issue of nostalgia and a yearning to recreate an idealized moment of the past invested gardens with a sense of the uncanny. For the rising suburban class of the nineteenth century, the moment that needed to be frozen in time and displayed on the canvas of the garden was that of a pre-industrial world: "that old-fashioned gardens recall old-fashioned worlds is obvious enough...what has not sufficiently been recognized is that the qualities of the gardens like Mr. Jeromes [in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*]-variety simplicity, harmony, unforced abundance [...]—are precisely the qualities which so many Victorians associated with pre-industrial England" (Waters 51). This longing for a past that preceded the imperialistic and industrial Britain advertised by the Great Exhibition of 1851 survives today, in the realm of domestic gardening: "the horticultural propaganda that surrounded the part-myth of the Victorian cottage was powerful enough to stand the test of time, and the style is still regarded with affection today, with many people considering it typical of the English country garden" (Jennings 28). In the following sections, these and other related issues will be developed to a

greater extent, in order to approach the terrifying yet appealing grounds that surround an equally troubled home.

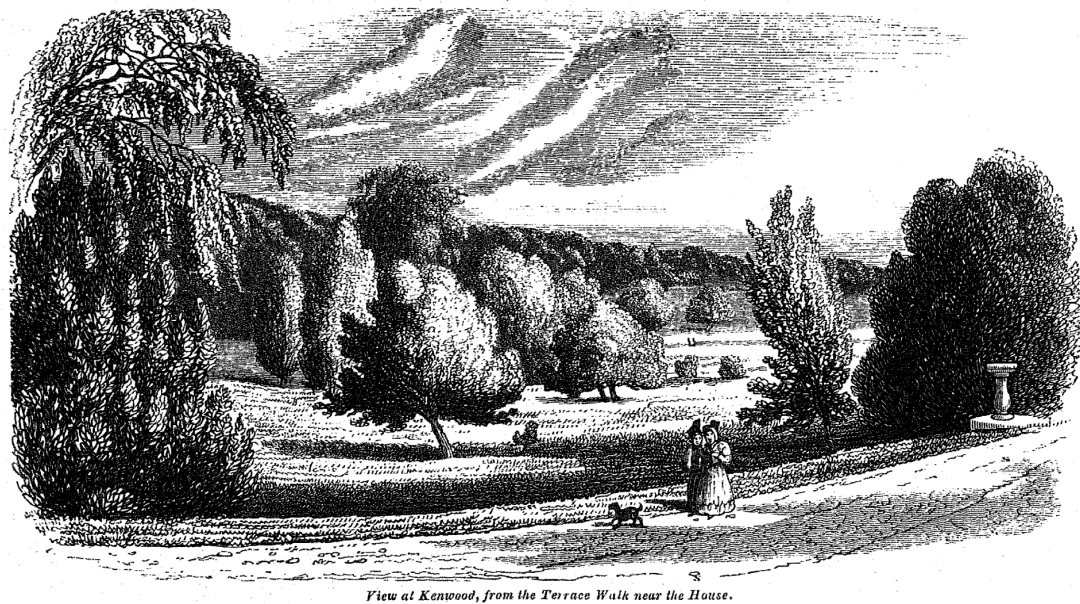


Fig. 1. The terrace walk at Kenwood, in John C. Loudon, *The Villa Gardener* 2nd.ed. (London: Wm. S. Orr & Co., 1850) 461.

Menacing Shrubbery in *Lady Audley's Secret* and "Earthbound"

In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*⁶ (1862) and Margaret Oliphant's "Earthbound" (1880), the grounds, more than the home, provide a dark backdrop where furtive or sinister actions take place. In this section, I contemplate passages in fiction and in Victorian gardening manuals to consider how different areas of the Victorian garden were perceived, to focus on the regions in the grounds that were believed to be dangerous, and finally, to argue that it is in these liminal and

6. Braddon's sensation novel, as other sensation texts that I have analysed, such as Richard Marsh's *The Joss* and Wilkie Collins's *The Dead Secret* can be approached as Gothic texts in the sense that they portray a darker domestic reality. In David Punter's and Glennis Byron's *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), the alliance between these two genres is addressed: "this domestication of the Gothic is partly the result of its appropriation by the sensation novel" (26). Furthermore, these critics suggest a fusion between the two genres, when they talk about "Gothic sensation novels" (26).

haunted regions that women portrayed as seductresses exerted their greatest power. Braddon's sensation novel follows the seemingly innocent governess, Lucy Graham, as she charms her way into marrying a wealthy and older widower, Sir Michael Audley. Robert Audley, his nephew, initially portrayed as an utterly useless solicitor, eventually develops into the hero of the story, when he investigates Lucy's past and finds out that she had been married to George Talboys, his best friend, who has recently disappeared. The novel culminates when Robert confronts Lady Audley with her past, unveiling all the evil deeds that she has committed, and she is conveniently admitted into a mental institution, where she dies. In Margaret Oliphant's "Earthbound," young Edmund Coventry is invited to the Beresford estate for the Christmas holiday. While strolling through the grounds, he meets an unusual lady that only he seems able to see. Furthermore, she is called Maud, like one of the Beresford daughters, whom the family wishes Edmund to marry. After falling in love with the enigmatic lady, Edmund falls ill, upon realizing that his love had been dead for over a hundred years; predictably, order is restored in the end when he marries the real, flesh-and-blood Maud.

Before approaching the grounds in both works, we must understand the general layout of Victorian gardens. Several critics comment on how, regardless of the aesthetic style that was chosen, the grounds of the period usually presented a certain structure that was defined as much by function as by the type of vegetation planted there. A critic comments on how "most gardens consist of no more than a formal layout of flower gardens and lawns on the residential side of the house with a similarly formal kitchen-garden beyond it to one side" (Muthesius 96). As I have commented before, my study is not concerned with the more utilitarian sections of the grounds, such as the kitchen garden, but with the pleasure garden instead, since the latter offers opportunities for a rich Gothic analysis because of its link to pleasure and fantasy: "the term Pleasure Garden conjures up elegance, flowers, garden parties and romance" (Wilkinson 112). Pleasure gardens usually included a terrace, a paved area closest to the home, used for the contemplation of the rest of the garden. The middle area was the most manicured

section, comprising flowerbeds and the usually well-kept lawn,⁷ an area characterized by a sense of freedom deriving from spatial openness and from its relaxing function, as Shirley Hibberd declares in *Floral World* (1875): “the spacious lawn, with not a tree or interruption of any kind, is the very first necessity for promotion of garden games [...] Its nice green carpet gives me a twofold pleasure—as grass turf it is beautiful in

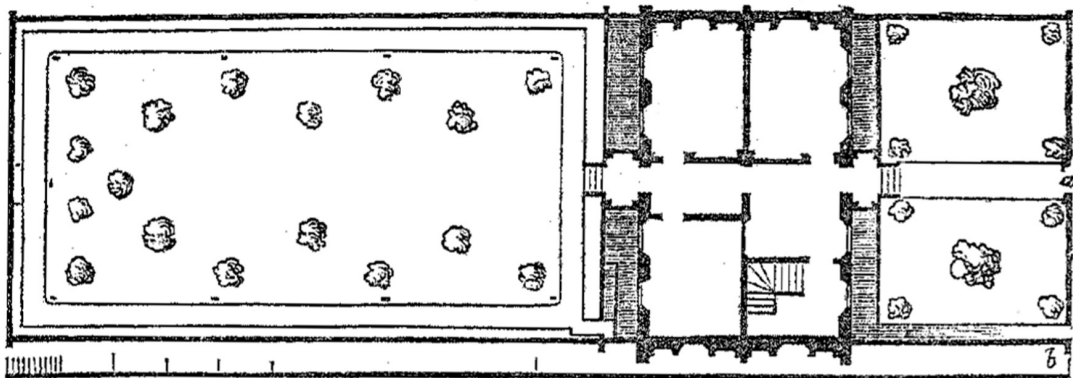


Fig. 2. Proposal for a simple and economic suburban garden, in John C. Loudon, *The Villa Gardener* 2nd. ed. (London: Wm. S. Orr & Co., 1850) 66.

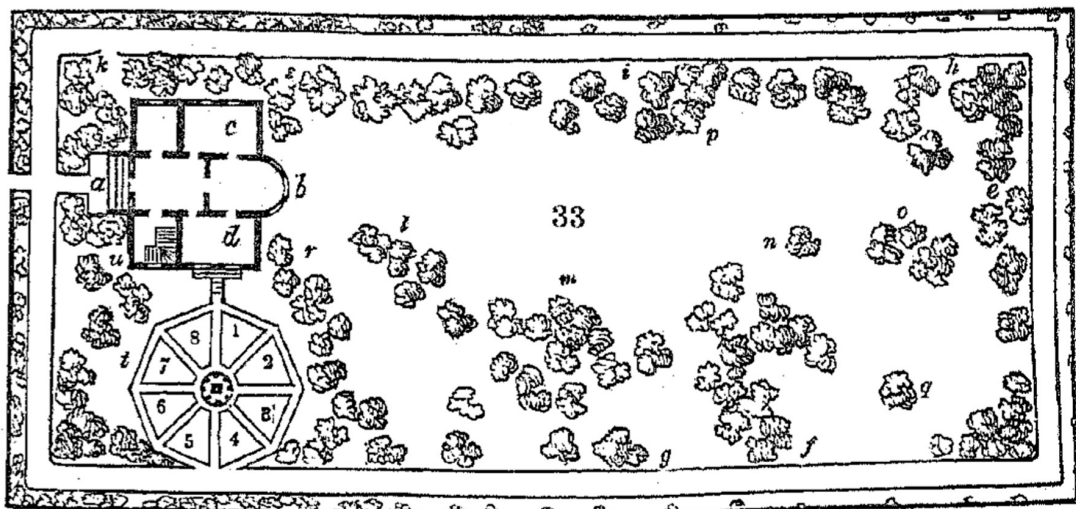


Fig. 3. Design for a more elaborate suburban garden, complete with flower garden, lawn and shrubberies, in John C. Loudon, *The Villa Gardener* 2nd. ed. (London: Wm. S. Orr & Co., 1850) 67.

7. Jane Loudon explains in *Gardening for Ladies* (1841), that a lawn could be present even in the smallest of suburban gardens: “the word lawn may conjure up ideas of too large an extent of ground to be managed by a lady; but when I use the term, I do not mean an extensive park-like surface [...] but one of those beautiful verdant glades that produce so delightful an effect even in the smallest gardens” (315).

all seasons; as a playground it is the scene of joyous assemblages in the pleasant days of summer” (qtd. in Wilkinson 138). Finally, a third area, which was the one farthest from the home, would often include shrubbery and at times woods. In Fig. 3, one can clearly see clusters of shrubs in the outskirts of the whole arrangement.

The various areas of the garden are clearly identified in Braddon’s novel and Oliphant’s story. In fact, *Lady Audley’s Secret* begins with a thorough description of the grounds at Audley Court:

a smooth lawn lay before you, dotted with groups of rhododendrons, which grew in more perfection here than anywhere else in the country. To the right there were kitchen gardens, the fish-pond, and an orchard bordered by a dry moat, and a broken ruin of a wall [...] to the left there was a broad gravelled walk [...] a wall bordered with espaliers, and shadowed on one side by goodly oaks, which shut out the flat landscape, and circled in the house and gardenings with a darkening shelter. (1)

In the careful inventory of garden areas presented above, two notions stand out. The first is that the original defensive features surrounding the home are no longer operational, since the moat is dry and the wall is in ruins. This has significant repercussions later on in the story, when it becomes clear that the grounds are open to invasion and corruption. Secondly, a circle of vegetation that provides a “darkening shelter” has replaced these original borders. Further on we will also see how this dark border is capable of staging equally shady encounters.

In “Earthbound,” readers also encounter a detailed account of the grounds. Here, we are faced with an Italianate, formal layout of a garden: “on the south side of the house was a green terrace, as high as the windows of the sitting-rooms, ascended by handsome marble steps ornamented with vases as in an Italian garden and separated by the brilliant parterres of the flower-garden from the house” (34).

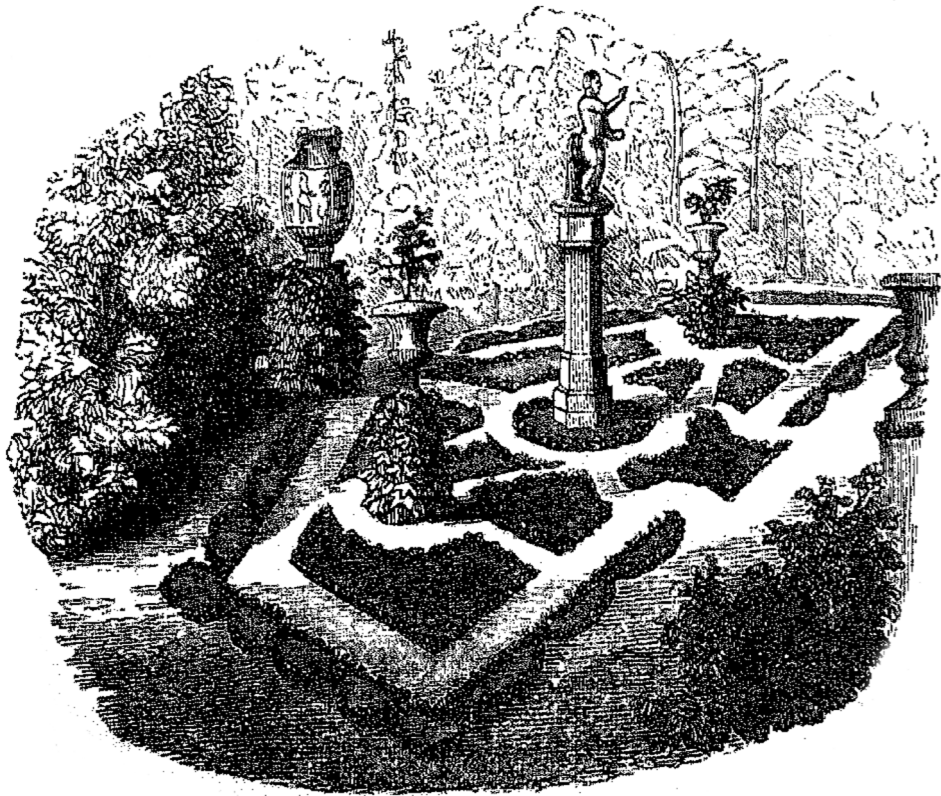


Fig. 4. Statuary employed in an Italianate garden, in John C. Loudon, *The Villa Gardener* 2nd. ed. (London: Wm. S. Orr & Co., 1850) 272.

In this setting, the emphasis is placed on the walks that lead away from the home and towards a curious arrangement:

Running along the upper end of the garden and connecting it with the west end of the house was the lime-tree walk⁸, a noble bit of avenue at right angles with the terrace. Both of these were beautiful—but the little square corner which connected them was not beautiful. Here, for no apparent reason at all, a wall had been built of the date of some hundred years back, a high brick wall, quite out of place, screening in a square and rather gloomy angle of grass, in the midst of which stood a high pedestal surmounted by a large stone vase. (34)

The odd enclosure in the story, with the urn as centerpiece, is the perfect stage for the supernatural for several reasons. First of all, it is distant from the home, and

8. The use of walks and statuary in British gardens was especially popular during the eighteenth century, which is when the story dates the layout of the grounds, or at least the unusual segment of it, featuring the wall and the pedestal. Furthermore, both features derived directly from French gardens, which had a great influence on British arrangements during the eighteenth century.



Fig. 5. Urns employed in Italianate gardens, in Henry Inigo Triggs, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland* (1902) 2nd.ed.(Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, c1988) 215.

the wall shelters vision to what lies behind, creating feelings of anxiety. Furthermore, we are told that the urn itself “was very funereal and ugly” (34), even though no one knew for certain whether it was commemorating an event, such as a death, or was merely ornamental. Lastly, the door in the wall⁹ which Maud (the apparition) and her suitor pass through regularly, clearly signals liminality and a suspended state of being, a condition that is ideal for haunting: “in the side of this wall farthest from the house was a door which opened into the byway through the park. Perhaps the wall had been built to stop some right of way” (35). Like the ineffective barriers presented in *Lady Audley's Secret*—the ruined wall and the dry moat—the wall in Oliphant’s story is worthless as an obstruction and does not stop ingress into the property; in fact, the door in the wall actually connects the inside of the property with the outside, the past with the present, and the world of the dead with that of the living.

It is clear that the grounds are of extreme importance in both works, because of the amount of detail dedicated to their description; furthermore, the portrayals of gardens in these stories signal the presence of a more ominous element that becomes stronger and more apparent as the stories progress. It is here that female protagonists unfold their full potential as dangerous seductresses who lure men away from a household that is portrayed as safe. In Braddon’s novel, the protagonist is described as having a remarkable power of enthrallment over those around her, even before marrying Sir Michael Audley: “Miss Lucy Graham was blessed with that magic power of fascination by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile” (6). Words like “magic” and “intoxicate” emphasize her bewitching and menacing abilities. When

9. Penny Fielding presents a provocative analysis of this odd enclosed space in “Oliphant’s Spectralisation of the Modern” (*Women’s Writing* 6.2:201-213, 1999). Employing Abraham and Torok’s work on mourning and the notion that a grief that is not expressed generates a vault-like space within the individual where the lost one may inhabit, Fielding argues that in Oliphant’s story this mysterious enclosure acts in the same way. It is here that Edmund may contain and ultimately possess ghostly Maud. Even though at the beginning of his infatuation Edmund supposedly does not realize that his love interest is dead, applying Abraham and Torok’s notion to the story would imply that Edmund has always known or at least suspected this; consequently, this enclosure is an outward sign of his desire to house the object of his mourning.

Robert Audley meditates about the fate of his disappeared friend George Talboys, Lady Audley's first husband, he cannot help but suspect the conniving nature of all women and their power over men: "before he has time to recover his bewilderment, hey, presto! the witchcraft has begun: the magic circle is drawn around him, the spells are at work, the whole formula of sorcery is in full play" (247). For Robert, all women are potential sorceresses, capable of misleading good men like his best friend George Talboys, and his uncle, Sir Michael.¹⁰ After Robert has confirmed that Lady Audley is in fact bigamous and could also be George's murderess, he confronts her in a lonely spot away from the house. Here, surrounded by the darkness of trees and shrubberies, Robert fears for his life in the presence of the woman that he has so successfully demonized: "a shiver of horror, something akin to fear, chilled him to the heart, as he remembered the horrible things that have been done by women, since that day upon which Eve was created to be Adam's companion and help-meet in the Garden of Eden" (274). The biblical story frames the liminal areas of this garden and remits to the most ancient seductress of all—Eve. In his dreams as well as in his conscious mind, Robert sees Lady Audley in various mythological and biblical shapes, all of which point to her capacity for deception and corruption.

In "Earthbound," the willing "victim" of the female protagonist's charms is Edmund Coventry, who is the ward of Sir Robert Beresford and has grown into a very desirable suitor for Maud, one of his daughters. Edmund has been invited to stay at the family home for Christmas, and while exploring the grounds, he sees a woman in white¹¹ walking ahead of him, towards the wall with the door. Something about the unexpected encounter excites Edmund: "it made his heart beat; he was seized with

10. Robert Audley's obtuse views about what honourable women should be like provides ample opportunity for an extensive feminist analysis, but one which unfortunately falls outside the limits of my study.

11. There might be an interesting connection between Wilkie Collins's female protagonist in *The Woman in White* (1862) and Oliphant's ghostly Maud, also curiously attired in white, since Oliphant's story was published in 1880.

a great desire to follow, to ‘get a good look’ at her, to know what she could be doing here and who she was” (36). Part of what interests Edmund is that this lady looks like Maud, the girl that the family expects him to marry: “he was charmed with the pretty graceful figure—certainly a little like Maud [...] with a pretty droop in it of fragility and dependence” (37). However, unlike Maud, whom we only see outside the home once, this lady compulsively wanders the grounds, a behaviour that is deemed unusual: “for unknown ladies do not walk about in a park in the country, or go to and fro between the village and the great house, without being easily traceable” (37). Moreover, Edmund interprets her behaviour as coquettish, interpretation that reveals more about his wishes than about the lady’s initial motivations: “he followed her softly [...] she reached the door [...] though she must have perceived him, she closed the door upon him as she passed through—not very civil, he thought; but perhaps she was *espiègle*, and could not resist a little merry affront to him, innocently provocative, as is the fashion of girls” (37). Edmund’s search soon grows into an obsession, overpowering other possible thoughts. This fascination is based on the sense of ambiguity that this apparition provokes; on the one hand, she looks like Maud, a proper lady, but on the other, she acts unlike any respectable lady that Edmund has encountered.

We have already established that in both works the female protagonists, Lady Audley and ghost Maud are described as having powers that charm men to the point of misleading them, not only away from the notion of respectability, but also spatially away from the house and into remote areas of the grounds. In Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her* (1864-5), a setting is described as a “happy interconnection of house and garden, the exclusion of nature in its wildest forms” (11). In *Lady Audley’s Secret* and “Earthbound,” the grounds *do not* exclude nature in its wildest forms, since we are told that the grounds continue far off into wooded areas that are not entirely visible from the homes. Moreover, as Waters comments in *The Garden in Victorian Literature* (1988), there is a clear difference between the social potential of lawns, which were visible from terraces, and the more distant parts of the garden: “lawns provided Victorian

novelists with ideal settings for social rituals and, interpersonal exchanges of the more leisurely and ‘overt’ kinds. For the staging of private or secret encounters, writers turned to other popular features of the larger garden: in particular to shrubberies, summer-houses and conservatories” (266). About shrubberies in particular, he adds: “because it is dense and distanced from the house, the shrubbery is the pre-eminent setting for amatory and often clandestine meetings of youthful lovers” (267). Notice how in the plan below, one can clearly discern the contrast between an open lawn,

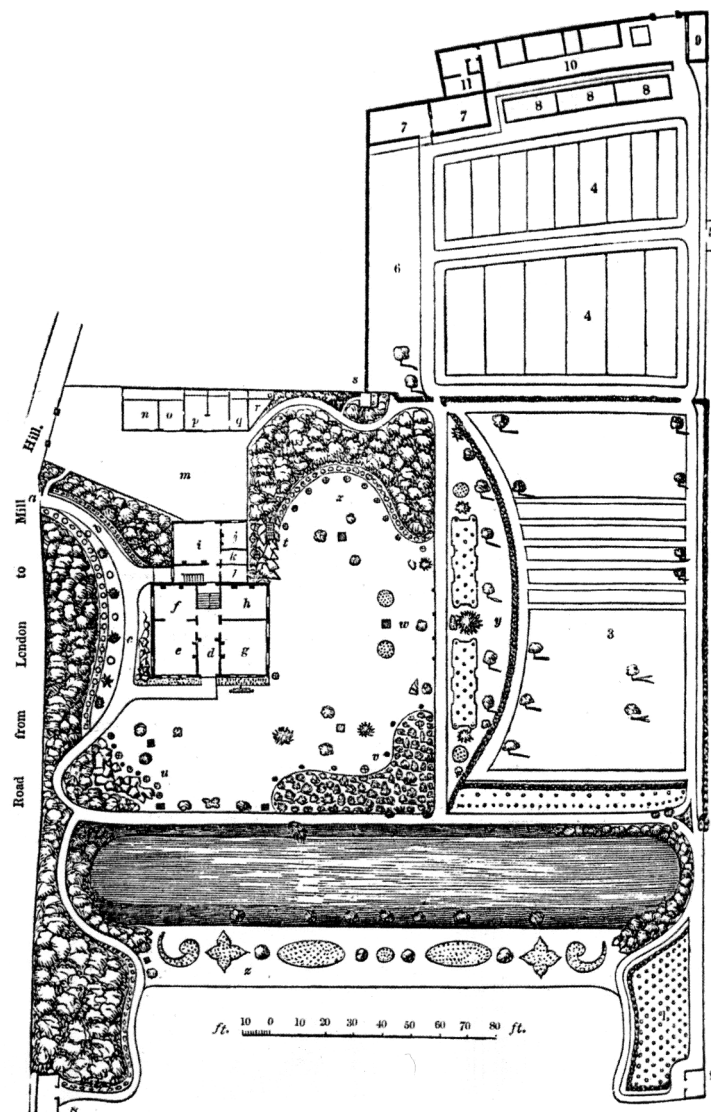


Fig. 6. Plan of the gardens at Hendon Rectory, suburbs of London, in Anne Jennings, *Victorian Gardens* (London: English Heritage, 2005) 44.

which is completely visible from the home, and the outlying shrubbery and trees that frame this open expanse, and which could very well screen shady encounters.

I have already mentioned how in “Earthbound,” the walled-in space that is distant from the home serves as the main meeting ground for Edmund and the seductive Maud; however, the narrator also tells us about the clear demarcation of space in the grounds that Edmund traverses, with the lawn being visible but the shrubbery concealing more “subvert” activity:

He went hastily through the Lime-tree Walk, following exactly the course he had taken the previous evening with her. There he contemplated the park in the clear daylight with wondering and anxious scrutiny. The little road down by the back of the green terrace, which led to the keeper’s cottage, was the only one by which she could possibly have gone. A little plantation of young trees was at the corner, and as it wound downwards, though the declivity was slight, there were various scattered bushes, furze and broom, and a few old knotted hawthorn thickets [...] There any mischievous girl could have played hide-and-seek with a petulant lover for hours together. (50)

Furthermore, the first time that Edmund sees Maud walk through the door and beyond the mysterious wall, he assumes that she is hiding: “she had slipped beyond a bush, no doubt, to bewilder him. There were several byways running in different directions—one towards the deserted cricket-ground, another towards the keeper’s cottage, beside the straight road which led to the village. Probably she had tucked up her dress and made a dart among the brushwood out of sight” (37). Both descriptions tell us an immense amount about what could have transpired in respectable Victorian gardens.¹² Because Maud is presented in an ambiguous light, partly because of her ghostly nature, but partly because of Edmund’s desires to see her as an appealing

12. Sarah Jane Downing’s *The English Pleasure Garden 1660-1860* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2009) discusses the rise and fall of public pleasure gardens, not domestic ones, as is the focus of my study. However, her insight on the capacity for these public parks to accommodate sexual liaisons (paid and otherwise), proves how the screening capacity of thick vegetation was the ideal site for the kind of behaviour that Edmund Coventry in Oliphant’s story longs for: “as Tom Brown, writing of the darker walks of the garden, notes in his *Amusements of 1700*: ‘both sexes meet, and mutually serve one another as guides to lose their way, and the windings and turnings in the little Wildernesses are so intricate, that the most experienced mothers have often lost themselves in looking for their daughters’ (13,14).

woman, yet respectable enough to marry, he imagines her as capable as other “mischievous girls” of the time who would hide in these natural shelters in order to avoid detection and possibly carry on illicit deeds. Therefore, it is clear that gardens, especially large ones, comprised various areas destined for different activities, just like the home itself. However, in the outer regions of the grounds, what I have termed the centripetal aesthetics of the home were weaker, and there was in fact a centrifugal force towards the outside, which resulted in the placement of the most socially-permissive areas in the remote outskirts, as Oliphant’s story suggests.

At the beginning of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, the narrator presents an idyllic picture of domestic bliss, as Sir Michael and his seemingly innocent and dutiful wife take a stroll on the grounds:

Often in the cool of evening Sir Michael Audley would stroll up and down smoking his cigar, with his dog at his heels, and his pretty young wife dawdling by his side; but in about ten minutes the baronet and his companion would grow tired of the rustling limes and the still water [...] and the long green vista with the broken well at the end, and would stroll back to the white drawing-room, where my lady played dreamy melodies by Beethoven and Mendelssohn till her husband fell asleep in his easy chair (4).

Here, the couple soon tire and return to the home, exhibiting the centripetal force of the home and stressing their adherence to the domestic sphere and indifference towards what lies beyond it. However, cracks begin to appear in this bucolic picture, when it becomes obvious that Lady Audley might be hiding something that can destroy her impeccable social standing. One of the elements that tarnishes this perfect picture is Lady Audley’s insistence to stray away from the home, into the dark area composed of shrubbery and an old well: “at the end of the arcade there was the shrubbery, where, half buried amongst the tangled branches and the neglected weeds, stood the rusty wheel of that old well” (4). The isolation of the area make it ideal for the type of clandestine activity that critics and writers have assigned to the most remote parts of the Victorian grounds: “I have said before that this was a neglected spot: it lay in the midst of a low shrubbery, hidden away from the rest of the gardens”(25). Furthermore, the mention of the well clearly signals the Garden of Eden subtext. Here, Lady Audley conducts

her role as seductress and murderess in perfect freedom, away from the confining and moralizing sphere of the home. In fact, this is the site where Lady Audley pushes her first husband, George Talboys into the well and leaves him for dead. This is also the place where Luke Marks, described as a brute and as utterly corrupt, convinces his cousin Phoebe (personal servant of Lady Audley) to marry him and to blackmail her mistress in order to buy a public-house.

The other place in the grounds at Audley Court that stages furtive meetings is the lime-tree walk:

the broad outer moat was dry and grass-grown, and the laden trees of the orchard hung over it with gnarled straggling branches that drew fantastical patterns upon the green slope. Within this moat there was, as I have said, the fish-pond [...] and bordering which there was an avenue called the lime-tree walk; an avenue so shaded from the sun and sky, so screened from observation by the thick shelter of the over-arching trees, that it seemed a chosen place for secret meetings or for stolen interviews, a place in which a conspiracy might have been planned or a lover's vow registered with equal safety; and yet it was scarcely twenty paces from the house. (3)

This place, leading away from the safety of domesticity is also sheltered from view, creating the ideal place for “secret meetings,” and worst—conspiracies. One of the most terrifying aspects about this screened walk is its proximity to the home, rendering the latter extremely vulnerable. Robert Audley, the detective-like character who finally reveals Lady Audley's true past and evil deeds, employs the lime-walk as a place of secrecy, when he talks to her about his suspicions: “will you come into the lime-walk, Lady Audley [...] I wish to talk to you without fear of interruption or observation. I think we could choose no safer place than that” (264). Perhaps because Victorians knew about the morally-ruinous potential of walks, gardening critics like Jane Loudon, insisted in 1841, in the creation of wide walks, so that they could accommodate more than two people, thus avoiding any romantic trespasses between couples: “the walks in pleasure-grounds should be hard and dry; and they should also be sufficiently wide to admit of three persons to walk abreast occasionally; as nothing can be more disagreeable than the situation of the third person, whom the narrowness of the walk obliges to walk before or behind his companions” (*Gardening for Ladies*

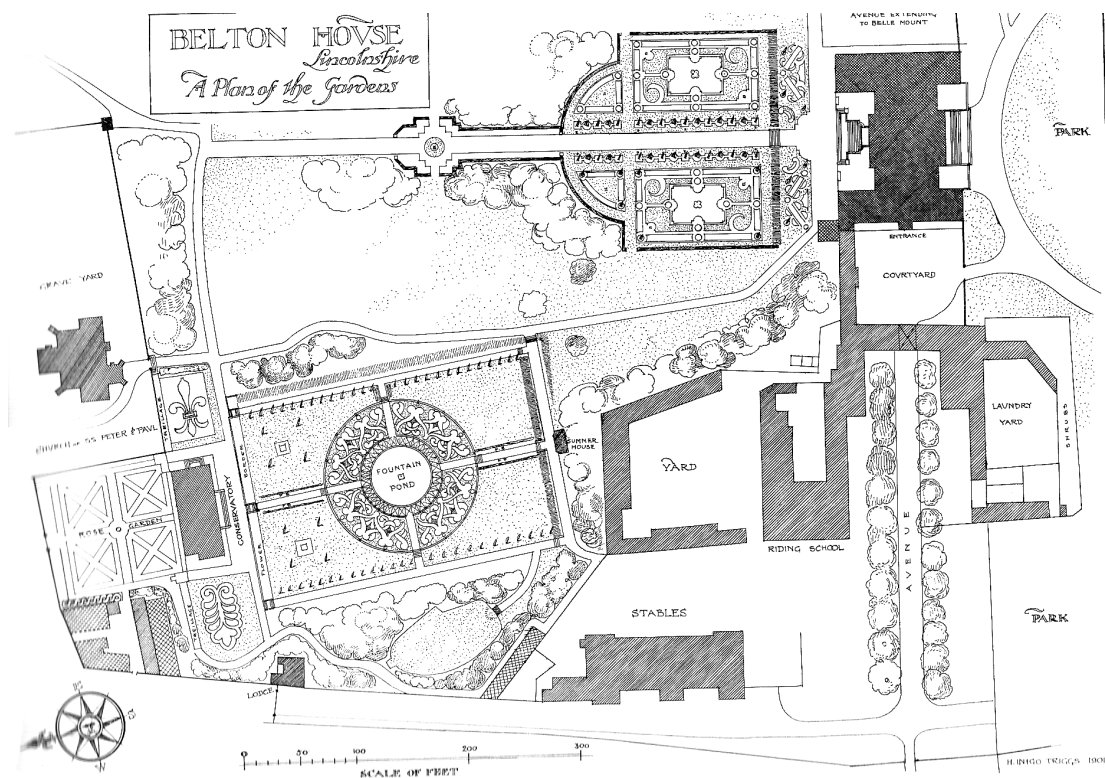


Fig. 7. Garden walks at Belton House, Lincolnshire, in Henry Inigo Triggs, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland* (1902) 2nd.ed. (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, c1988).

326). One can see how this third person could very well be a “third wheel,” with supervising responsibilities over an accompanying couple. Notice how in the design of this large garden at Belton house (Fig. 7), there are several walks, some visible from the house (large, darker structure, on the right) but some, like the meandering walk on the left-hand corner, are completely concealed by trees and large shrubs.

The grounds in both works contribute to the staging of darker encounters that undermine the home’s sacrosanct domesticity, not only by providing these sheltered confines that I have mentioned, but also by displaying a capacity for reversal and upheaval. Gardens are usually a place of games and play, for children as well as for adults: “for adults, the garden is also a place of games, relaxation and repose. Playing games, such as croquet or tennis, is dependent on the size of the middle area [...] There is a physical expansiveness to activities in the garden” (Alexander 867,868). Because of the essential element of play, gardens can be analysed as places with carnivalesque

qualities, and Victorian gardens are not the exception: “here there is excess, inversion, a festive exuberance. Action here is unrestrained” (Alexander 867). Furthermore, this inversion can be applied to gender roles, as well as to other categories that are more fixed within the household.

In “Earthbound,” we can see how playfulness and role reversal are present in the grounds at Daintrey. Near the beginning, the Beresfords are recovering from the loss of one of the sons of the family, but they finally decide to go ice-skating in one of the ponds that have frozen on the estate. This outdoor activity has a regenerative force, substituting mourning within the home for playfulness on the grounds, which gradually heals the family, as the narrator comments: “life must go on even though death interrupts” (30). Furthermore, when Edmund meets the apparition of Maud, he interprets her behaviour as that of a “mischievous girl,” thus rendering her playful. Edmund interprets her appearing and disappearing as a hide-and-seek game that tantalizes him and that makes him fall in love with her. In this respect, the notion of a lady leading a man through the gardens and hiding from him coincides with the issue of role reversal, because the lady is taking the initiative and making him follow her away from the home, where ladies hold a much more passive and physically-restful role. But what is particularly engaging about the role reversal that occurs in Oliphant’s story is that the haunting character—Maud—becomes the haunted, and the real-life character—Edmund—becomes in many respects, a ghost. After he falls in love with Maud, Edmund is unable to carry on normally, and he is not even able to interact with the Beresfords in a normal manner: “he was silent as a ghost at the cheerful table” (50). More importantly, his seemingly aimless wanderings around the grounds spectralize him: “after this he was continually haunting the lime-tree walk”(44). The garden is the ideal site for haunting to occur. Because it is a place where life and death are constantly inverted, where new plant growth is supported by dead organisms, and where the earth itself is in a constant state of upheaval, role reversal is a logical outcome. In Oliphant’s story, haunted grounds present those who are alive as ghostly, and the ghostly are able to maintain a vital connection with those who are alive.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, we also witness role reversal in the liminal grounds of Audley Court in two ways. The first type of reversal that occurs consists of Lady Audley, described as a charming and sweet child¹³ while in the domestic sphere, acting¹⁴ as a ruthless woman when planning and committing crimes outside, by the site of the well or off the grounds completely, when she takes a walk late at night to burn down Luke Mark's public-house. Thus, when we see her in the grounds in the company of men who are not her latest husband—Sir Michael Audley—we see her as a woman, not a child, and as an assertive and dangerous one, for that matter. The second type of reversal that takes place consists of the initially passive Robert becoming assertive and exercising his mastery over the once-aggressive Lady Audley. For instance, when Robert asks to speak to her in the lime-tree walk, so that they will not be overheard, he leads her into the shrubbery around the well: “they had been pacing up and down the dim avenue, and they were now drawing near the leafless shrubbery at one end of the lime-walk[....] A winding pathway, neglected and half choked with weeds, led towards this well. Robert left the lime-walk, and struck into this pathway” (272). In this passage, it is Robert Audley, not Lady Audley who is doing the leading, signalling reversal and the woman's downfall. Near the end of the story, the usually passive Robert assumes the active role that he is expected to have as a young and productive Victorian man.

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13. Natalie Schroeder addresses this notion of the childish Lady Audley in “Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism and Self-Assertion: M.E. Braddon and Ouida” (*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 7.1 1988:87-103). Schroeder takes the notion of her infantile condition a step further, by suggesting that Lady Audley's childishness influences her sexuality: “homoeroticism is a component of Lady Audley's childishness; thus it is not surprising that the cold, selfish Lucy Audley forms an attachment to her lady's maid, Phoebe Marks, an adolescent who so closely resembles her mistress that in a certain light one could be mistaken for the other” (91).
14. For an intriguing discussion of Lady Audley's histrionic capacity and for its relation to notions of authenticity and madness, see Lynn M. Vouskuil's “Acts of Madness: Lady Audley and the Meanings of Victorian Femininity” (*Feminist Studies* 27.3 2001: 611-639,). Vouskuil argues that Lady Audley's transgression does not derive merely from her acting, since Victorian middle-class women were expected to play roles as supporting wives and nurturing mothers; Lady Audley's crime consists in acting the part but not *being* the part, in other words, in undermining the notion of authenticity and threatening a more solid notion of domestic femininity.

Lady Audley's Secret and "Earthbound" provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the unique quality of the areas of the grounds that are the most distant from the household. As I have argued before, the centripetal pull of the home is at its weakest in these areas, thus promoting a dangerous permissiveness that results in haunting in fiction. Furthermore, the porosity of the external borders of the grounds augments the possibility for all types of natural and supernatural intrusion. In *Gardening for Ladies* (1841), for instance, Jane Loudon admits that Victorian gardening was not entirely strict about delimiting the grounds from the outside world: "a very pleasing effect may be produced by effectually concealing the boundary walls with ivy; and thus permitting the imagination to fix the boundary where it will" (327). According to this quotation, even though there was usually a boundary wall, there was an intentional effort at concealing it, and at blurring the division between outside and inside. Even formal gardens during mid and late Victorian times, then, usually presented a diffuse external border where "unspoiled nature" framed a more manicured area. I argue that Gothic fiction like Oliphant's and Braddon's takes advantage of this unsafe set-up around the home, resulting in grounds where the outlying wilderness threatens to grow over and corrupt tidy gardens and worst yet, tidy homes.

Formal Gardens and their Gothic Reversion in "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance"

In Braddon's novel and Oliphant's story, disturbance and reversal take place far from the controlling home, in the marginal shrubberies of the grounds. Nevertheless, in M.R. James's "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" (1911), haunting unfolds in a formal garden shaped by the same principles promoted by the restraining and moralizing home. Moreover, because the garden is greatly connected (literally grounded) to the house that Mr. Humphreys inherits, I argue that the strong link between home and garden manifests nineteenth-century developments—the rise of domesticity and an emerging interest in reviving older styles of gardening (previous to landscape

gardening)—that were perceived as more representative of this home-centered era. One of these styles was the formal garden, and as its name reveals, it emphasized the need for a rigorous layout, together with a clear demarcation between its different parts, all of which coincided with the rigid mapping of the home's interior. I have chosen to look at the story through the lens of the principle of formality, to see how it determines Mr. Humphrey's and other Victorian's attitudes towards gardening, and ultimately, to a conventional domestic lifestyle. We will see how, despite Mr. Humphrey's best intentions to manage, reason, and order, the uncontrollable and terrifying past is unleashed through a series of supernatural events, reminding him that he is inheriting a lot more than just a home and the grounds that go with it.

Mr. Humphrey's garden is a living relic, as it is said to contain elements that were in vogue much earlier, a fact that will infuse the story with a Gothic tinge from the start, because of its strong nostalgic component. Even before inspecting the recently-inherited property, the protagonist gets a picture of the old-fashioned grounds; when Humphreys stops at the bailiff's home, the latter's daughter comments on the gardens with great interest:¹⁵ “the Hall garden might be made quite lovely, I often say. It's very old-fashioned as it is: and a great deal of shrubbery. There's an old temple, besides, and a maze”(179). From this comment, we can conclude that for the late Victorian period when the story was most probably set (having been published in 1911), elements like a temple and a maze were regarded as outmoded.¹⁶ The setting that we face may be

15. Miss Cooper's keen interest in the grounds and in the maze points to the popularity of gardening for women in Victorian times. Miss Cooper is modest about her gardening skills when Mr. Humphreys asks about whether she is a great gardener: “Oh, I don't know about a *great* gardener, Mr. Humphreys: I'm very fond of flowers” (179), but her desire to tour the grounds and the maze proves her interest in this outdoor activity: “I've often longed to try, but old Mr. Wilson always kept it locked. He wouldn't even let Lady Wardrop into it [...] That's why I asked father if he had all the keys”(179). The other female character who is extremely interested in the maze is Lady Wardrop, who is said to be writing a book on mazes. Both ladies' appearance in a story that revolves so much around landscaping, is further proof about British women's central role in gardening at the time, an issue that is widely discussed in gardening magazines and books.

16. The story supports this by confirming that the house probably dated to 1770, because of its Queen Anne style, and that the maze itself dated to about 1780 (Lady Wardrop, the maze expert, offers this approximation).

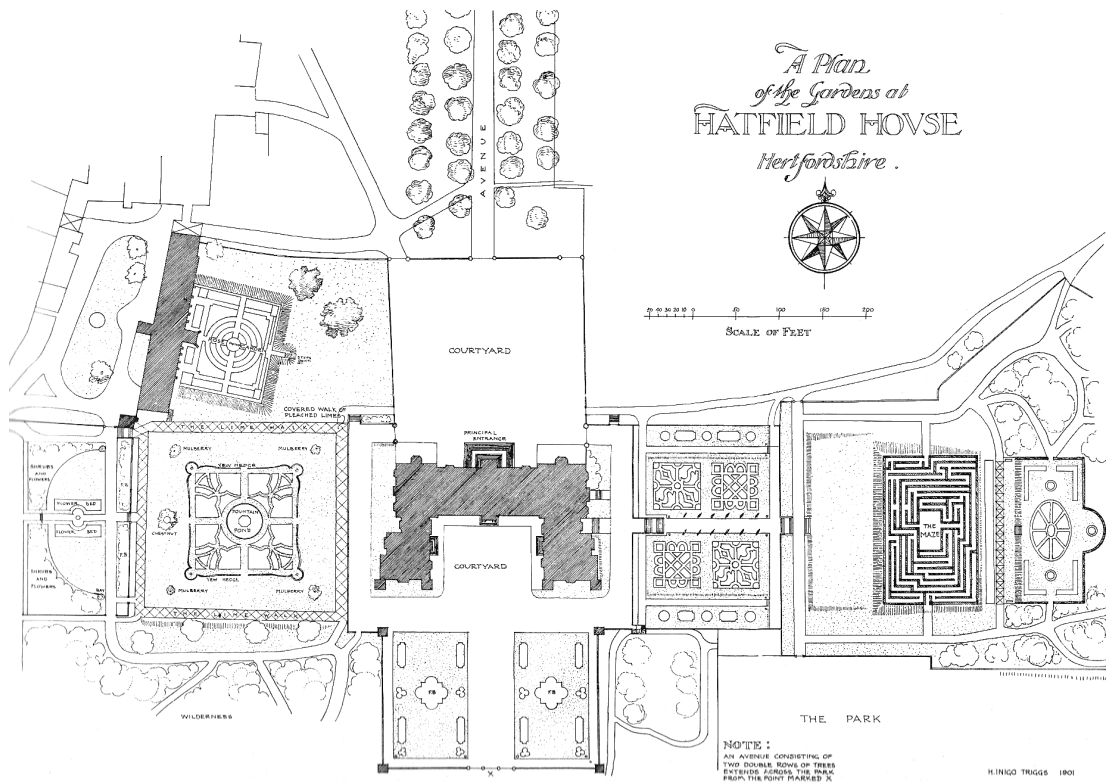


Fig. 8. Plan of a large formal garden, at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, in Henry Inigo Triggs, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland* (1902) 2nd.ed. (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, c1988)101.

classified as a type of formal garden, such as the Gothic ornamental one, common before the eighteenth century, where “pruned trees, arbours, mazes and terraces in front of the house all played an important role” (Muthesius 210 2007 ed.). Depending on the budget and on the size of the plot, formal gardens could be fantastic creations, that could include rose gardens, mazes, ponds, numerous walks, and conservatories, as in the example below.

The well-moulded shapes and geometric allotment of space were wiped away when landscape gardening stepped into the British scene, promising to deliver more “natural” landscapes, where trees and shrubs were strategically placed in order to give the sensation of wild nature. However, with Victorian culture came a melancholy

In Victorian times, with an interest in formal gardening came a renewed attention towards mazes, temples, statuary, and other elements that, although not dying out completely during landscape gardening, had been placed in the background.

reevaluation of gardening styles, which announced a change in society itself. Thus, as with the revivalist tendencies behind the Battle of the Styles in architecture (discussed in the first chapter), Victorians turned their attention to gardens that were older than eighteenth-century landscape ones, because of this renewed need for order, that they associated with a more stable and idyllic past: “the feature of the old gardens that modern designers [...] have felt bound to revive, is its ordered, that is to say, its formal, plan” (Muthesius 106). Furthermore, the issue of a garden, and not a building embodying the past is fascinating if we consider that gardens are composed of organic matter, and as such, the idea of a living past is both literal and symbolic, thus acquiring a tremendous force that supports this outdoor space’s potential for haunting.

This aesthetic formula, demanding geometric shapes vs. organic lines, together with the clear demarcation and classification of space was required in an era that advertised and defended equally rigid concepts, such as a careful allotment of internal space:

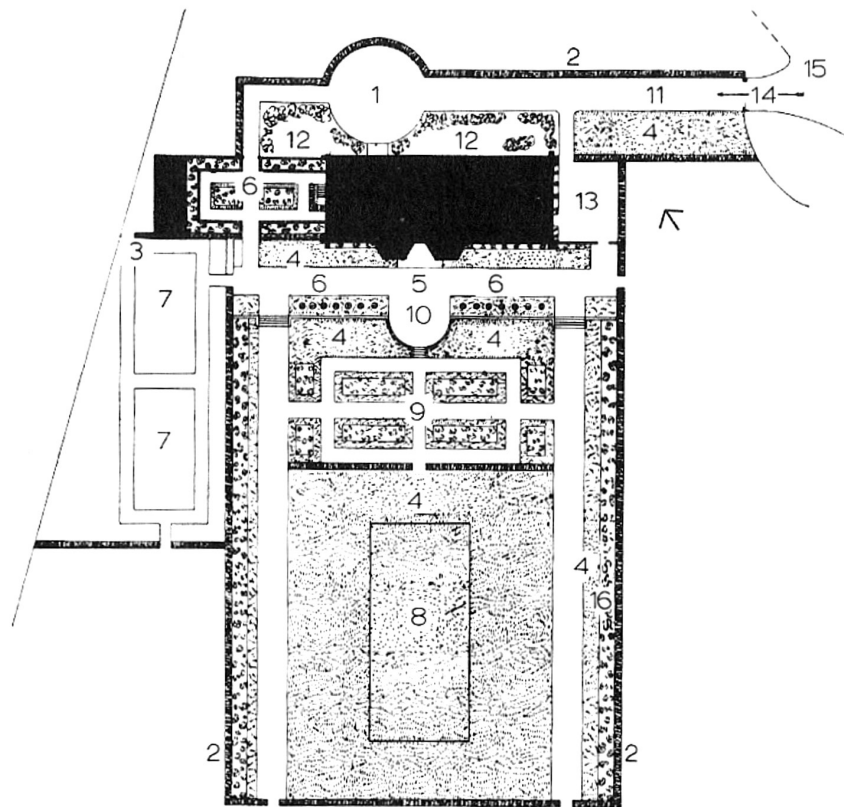
Each part of the garden lies close to that part of the house to which it belongs, the kitchen-garden to the domestic wing, the flower-garden to the drawing-room, while the lawns lie facing the residential front of the house. The garden is seen as a continuation of the rooms of the house, almost a series of separate out-door rooms, each of which is self-contained and performs a separate function. Thus the garden extends the house into the midst of nature. (Muthesius 107)

In this layout, certain types of garden are placed next to the area of the home most relevant to it; thus, the kitchen-garden is placed next to the domestic offices. Its location answers to obvious practical reasons, but it also illustrates Victorian concerns for keeping functions and people in their right place and separate from other spheres. Furthermore, the last phrase of the passage above, about the garden extending “the house into the midst of nature” is particularly fascinating, because it contrasts with the theory of landscape gardening. In landscape gardening, the idea was to bring the irregular wonders of nature close to the home, whereas in the Victorian setting described above, the house is extending out into nature, thus mirroring the expansionist and urban spirit of the times that was encroaching upon the ever-decreasing natural surroundings.

The protagonist in James's story acts upon this urge to organize and master his grounds in the same way in which urbanization deployed its control over the city's surroundings. Moreover, his desire to tame the garden, especially the hedge maze, fits into this context of prim and proper gardening. After managing to destroy the old lock that guarded the entrance to the maze (which was surrounded by a high wall), the first thing that Humphreys notices is its unkempt appearance: "it was a yew maze, of circular form, and the hedges, long untrimmed, had grown out and upwards to a most unorthodox breadth and height. The walks too, were next to impassable" (183). Because of the maze's condition, and because he wanted to show it to Miss Cooper on the following day, Humphreys orders to have the maze trimmed at once.

The need to shape unruly hedges reflects an overarching preoccupation for tidiness that went against the "unorthodox" shapelessness that the vegetation in Mr. Humphreys's garden had acquired. The description of a formal Victorian garden proves this point: "all the individual sections are horizontal and even, all the paths are straight, sloping ground is terraced, the boundaries of the several sections are clearly outlined by means of low walls or clipped hedges" (Muthesius 107).

In the illustration, one can corroborate how the notion of order is translated into the garden's canvas, through the use of symmetry and straight lines, and most significantly, by dividing areas meant for specific uses and vegetation; thus, the flower garden does not freely flow into the lawn, and the latter is subdivided into an area for lawn-tennis, while another is merely labelled "lawn" and is destined for freer pursuits. In this set up, seemingly plain elements like hedges and walks acquire symbolic potency also present in domestic architectural elements. In fact, hedges could adopt and be influenced by architectonic form. For instance, hedges functioned as a symbol of demarcation, as a wall would in a home: "clipped hedges are the walls by means of which the garden designer delimits his areas" (Muthesius 117). Hedges remit to internal architectonic space in yet another way, by signalling "ordered architectonic form": "the point about topiary work is its ordered architectonic form, which the artist,



- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Forecourt | 9 Flower-garden | 0 5 10 20 30 m
0 10 50 100 f |
| 2 Hedge | 10 Water | |
| 3 Shed | 11 Drive | |
| 4 Lawn | 12 Shrubbery | |
| 5 Terrace | 13 Courtyard | |
| 6 Rose-garden | 14 Gate | |
| 7 Vegetable-garden | 15 Road | |
| 8 Lawn-tennis court | 16 Flower-bed | |

180 Prior's Field, Compton, Surrey. By C. F. A. Voysey. Plan of garden

Fig. 9. Plan of garden in Prior's Field, Compton, Surrey, in Hermann Muthesius's *The English House* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1979)106.

taking the material that is to hand—in this case bushes—uses and applies just as he would any other material” (Muthesius 117). The gardener and architect molds the organic matter even more easily than a material that he would use in a building. Yet, as with any other building material, hedges are capable of generating an “ordered architectonic form,” because they “lend themselves to rhythmic repetition” (117), and to “geometric repetition”(117).

Like hedges, walks underlined principles of symmetry and prim gardening. For example, in an 1847 issue of *Annals of Horticulture*, a writer expresses this need to

regulate garden space, through the upkeep of gravel walks during winter time: “the sweeping and rolling of the gravel walks should by no means be neglected now, as *neatness and perfect order* must be some compensation for the absence of flowers” (emphasis added 501). While in the article, the prospect of blooming flowers elicits great excitement, the spirit of neatness seems to supersede it. Furthermore, this gardening style pointed to the need for a gardener and a domestic background that was as disciplined and rigorous as the layout that he looked after. A passage from the previously discussed *Lady Audley’s Secret* illustrates this notion perfectly. When Robert Audley visits the home of George Talbot’s father, he is struck by the latter’s stern attitude, superbly reflected in his “prim, square, red-brick mansion,” which “stood in the centre of prim, square grounds” (181). In this unnervingly impeccable garden, “the prim garden walks were so freshly gravelled that they gave a sandy, gingery aspect to the place [...] the lawn was chiefly ornamented with dark, wintry shrubs of a funereal aspect, which grew in beds that looked like problems in algebra” (185). In Braddon’s novel, the formal garden acquires an almost comic air through exaggeration, but it does illustrate how a Victorian garden in life and in fiction could be made to reflect an equally rigorous outlook on life.

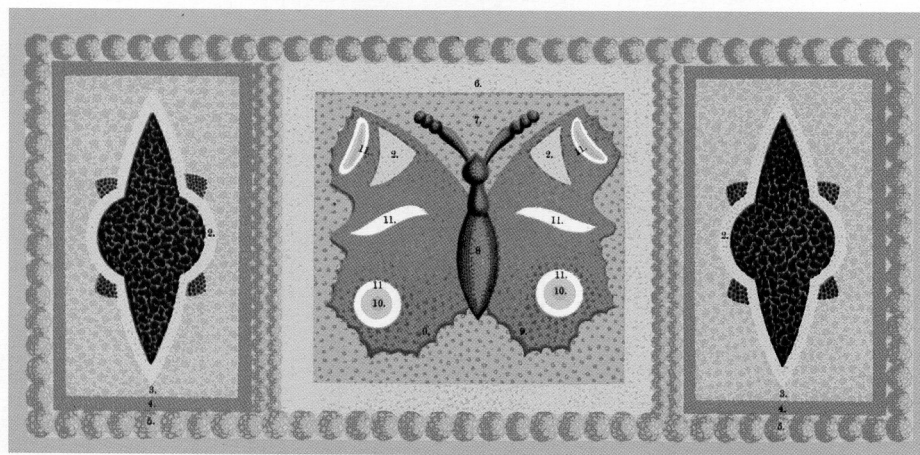


Fig. 10. Flower beds that look like “problems in algebra,” like those in Braddon’s novel. From *Thompsons’ Gardener’s Assistant* (1884), in Anne Jennings, *Victorian Gardens* (London: English Heritage, 2005) 54.

Mr. Humphreys's and other Victorians' views on trim and tidy gardens elicit the philosophy of two of the greatest gardening figures in the nineteenth century, John C. Loudon (1783-1843) and his wife Jane Loudon (1807-58). One only needs to look at the topics considered in John Loudon's *Suburban Horticulturist* (1842) to grasp the couple's belief that the hand of man had to be visible in the garden, because the latter was ultimately a work of art: cuttings; transplanting; pruning; training; accelerating vegetation; resting vegetation; and, the advantages of putting trees that are to be forced into a state of rest. According to Loudon, all of these techniques "are required to bring plants to that particular state of bulk, succulence, colour, or flavour, for which they are cultivated in gardens and garden scenery" (309). In other words, in this scheme, plants and nature in general are at the service of man, and they are meant to be shaped and modified to fit utilitarian and aesthetic needs.

We can confirm how the Loudons insisted on exercising control over nature and transforming it into "art," by the type of language that is used in the description of some of the techniques. In the work cited above, John Loudon describes pruning by saying: "pruning consists in depriving a plant of a portion of its branches, buds, leaves, bark, or roots, in order to produce particular effects on the part of the plant which remains" (336). Of training, he says: "to train a plant is to support or conduct its stem and branches in some form or position, either natural or artificial, for purposes of use or ornament. It is effected partly by pruning and thinning, but chiefly by pegging down to the ground, tying and fastening to rods, stakes or trellises, or nailing to walls" (352). Furthermore, he says that, depending on how training is conducted, one may induce blossoms or fruitfulness or quite its opposite, one may "restrain over-luxuriance" (352). The description of these horticultural techniques, in which plants are bent, deprived of portions of themselves, twisted, and forced against walls, brings to mind images of rigorous control in the best of cases, and if one were to follow a melodramatic vein, of a sort of vegetation torture.

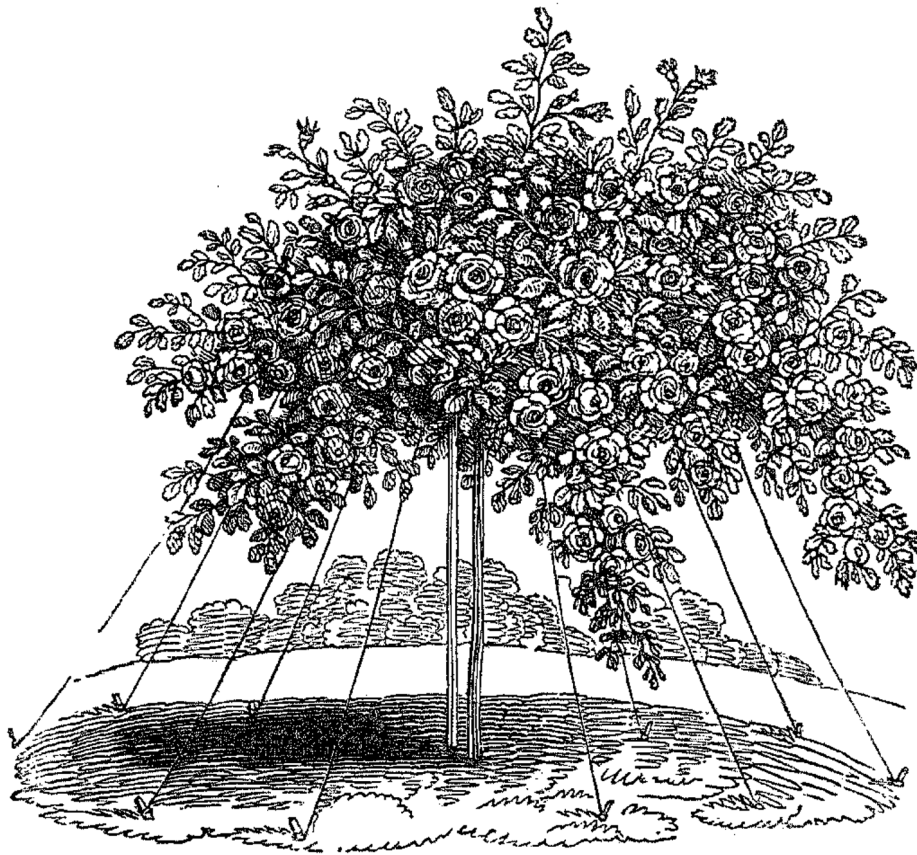


Fig. 269. *Portrait of a Bizarre de la Chine rose, trained in the balloon manner.*

Fig. 11. Rose bush being “trained in balloon manner,” in John C. Loudon, *The Suburban Horticulturist* (1842) 356.

Nevertheless, Loudon is considered to be “an ‘honest’ garden and landscape designer,” because “he detested any attempt at deception or pretence that gardens were anything but contrived artistry” (Jennings 32). Like Ruskin in the architectural realm, Loudon insisted that materials (in this case, plants) had to be employed for the purpose that they were intended, and in ways that revealed man’s mastery over them. John Loudon’s publications were directed towards the growing middle classes, as were those by Jane Loudon, who aimed her books at middle-class women. This suggests that for this class, which was defined by its cult of domesticity, gardening was yet another expression of a philosophy of control and order that permeated their home. The Loudons’s gardening techniques, as well as Mr. Humphreys’s concern about keeping his garden tidy, fit into this context that is severely defined by domesticity

and suburbia, and which, like Loudon's plants, could be so successfully twisted into Gothic shape to create fiction like M.R. James's.

The protagonist's necessity to mold and subdue the overgrown maze is overshadowed by a more powerful desire—to create a plan of it that will allow him to traverse it successfully. Once the maze has been trimmed according to his directions, Mr. Humphreys acts as the confident guide to Mrs. and Miss Cooper, but his plans are thwarted as “he was wholly unable to lead them to the centre”(189), and as “they spent the best part of three-quarters of an hour in quite fruitless wanderings” (190). The incapacity to lead the ladies by using his rational powers (advertised in the story as being masculine) proves to be too much for Mr. Humphreys, who “was vexed and ashamed at the fiasco of the afternoon, and could not be satisfied without making another effort that evening to reach the centre of the maze” (190). His real objective, however, is to draw up a plan of the maze: “next morning accordingly, carrying a drawing-board, pencils, compasses, cartridge paper, and so forth [...], he went to the middle of the maze (again without any hesitation), and set out his materials” (190). The materials that he carries in order to achieve his task underline the issue of precision and order, ultimately pointing to the protagonist's urgency to dominate space by drawing a plan of it.

This last point relates to the one that I proposed in the second chapter that dealt with the Crystal Palace; then, I argued that the careful allotment of space within the structure was symbolic of Britain's imperialism, and that the production of maps of the internal layout of the exhibition denoted a need to put everything in its place, thus to rationalize and control it. Furthermore, the greenhouse-like Crystal Palace reminds one of early botanic gardens, which displayed the same desire to recreate a microcosm where nations or continents were symbolically represented and contained but also conveniently separated from each other.¹⁷ Botanic gardens influenced Victorian formal gardens, and in turn, they inspired a need to collect, contain and regulate.

17. The Oxford Garden, for example, the oldest botanic garden in Britain (1630), originally boasted an area that was square and divided into four quarters. John Prest in *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and*

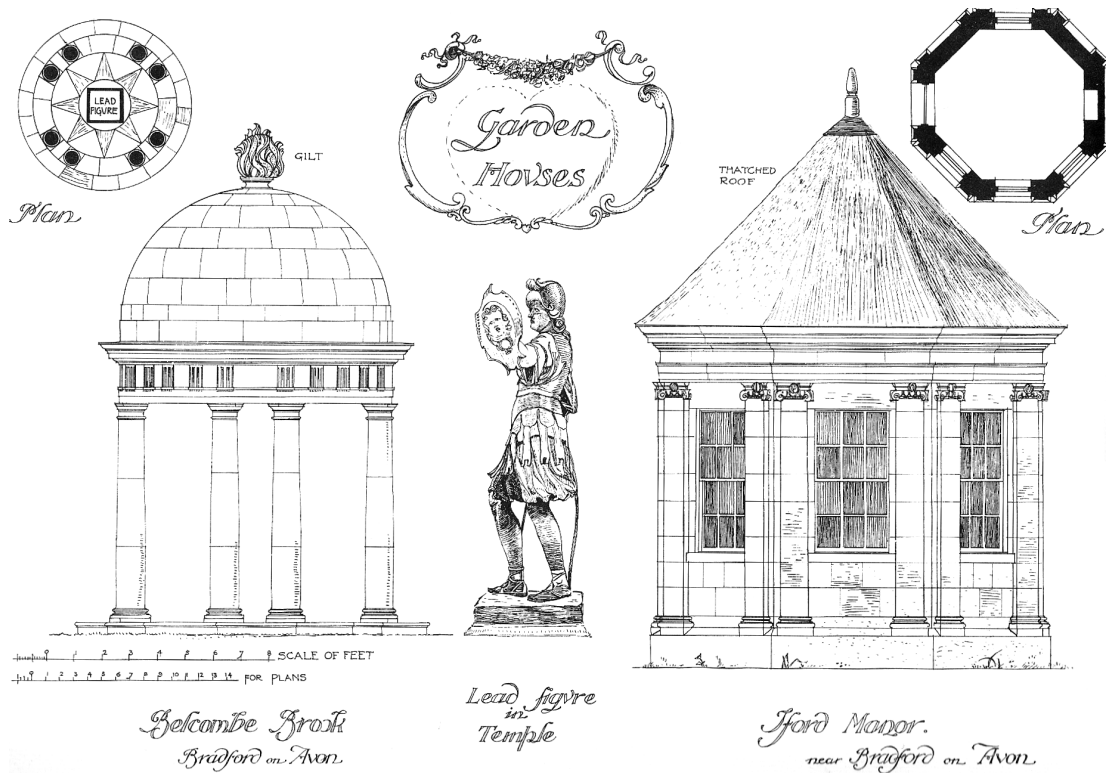


Fig. 12. Garden temples in Henry Inigo Triggs, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland* (1902) 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, c1988) 192.

The wish to map, thus control space is an extension of a wider topic that is raised by this story—the compulsive search for knowledge. The protagonist is driven by a need to decipher information that is contained and embodied by several structures on the grounds, structures that are both architectural and textual, such as a replica of Sibyl's Temple that contains enigmatic tiles, and a sinister rendering of a celestial globe in the center of the maze that eventually reveals the evil ancestor's remains. There is also a parable¹⁸ from a quarto in the library that seems to both warn and entice

the Re-Creation of Paradise (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1981) explains how this layout “represented the four corners of the earth, now stood, since the discovery of America, much more specifically for the four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America” (1).

18. The work, entitled “A Parable of the Unhappy Condition” tells of a man who “should adventure himself into a Labyrinth or Maze” (186). In the story, the man searches for a “Jewel,” and even though he is successful at retrieving it and at being able to exit the labyrinth, he tells his relatives that he regrets having done so, because what he actually acquired is a burden of horrific memories that will never leave him. The parable that Mr. Humphreys reads clearly foreshadows the terrifying encounter near the end of the story, which will be addressed later.

Mr. Humphreys in his eager search for information. Although all of these built and written texts deserve close inspection,¹⁹ I have chosen to limit this discussion to the maze, as the ultimate signifier of Mr. Humphrey's quest, and as an obvious element of the gardening context relevant to this study. The maze is a complex and ancient symbol,²⁰ but some general aspects about how it distributes space shed light on the role of the hedge maze in the story and its relation to the supernatural. In my fourth chapter I commented on the labyrinthine hallways and staircases that plagued Gothic domestic fiction. In this story, however, Mr. Humphreys has to deal with a maze, not a labyrinth: "strictly, labyrinth implies a single path and ritual aspects, whilst maze tends to be a puzzle, with junctions and choices" (Fisher & Gester 24). Even though both formations engage their visitors (I argued that labyrinths inaugurate the characters' involvement with haunted space), the maze appeals because it acts like a puzzle that the person feels must be solved. Take for instance, the following phrase from a letter written by the 11th Duke of Marlborough on the seductive effect of these puzzles, such as the one found

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19. Martin Hughe's "A Maze of Secrets in a Story by M.R. James" (*Durham University Journal* 85 1993:81-93) provides an impressive analysis of the complex esoteric and religious references contained by garden elements in this story.
20. In Nigel Pennick's *Mazes and Labyrinths* (London: Hale, 1990), the author remarks how "the maze or labyrinth is perhaps the most complex of all symbols which have been used by human beings [...] labyrinth patterns are known as far back in time as the northern European Bronze Age and, historically, from the Twelfth Dynasty period of ancient Egypt" (13). One of the most famous ancient examples, of course, is the labyrinth built at Knossos on Crete, built for King Minos around 1600 B.C., whose story about Theseus and the Minotaur has greatly influenced Western art and literature. In Britain, some of the first labyrinths were those portrayed in Roman mosaics, as well as the turf and stone formations that were of Scandinavian and German origin. The first hedge mazes, as the one represented in James's story, were created in Italy and France, and they were later adopted in Britain. Dutch mazes also had an effect on British models, to the point of inspiring the most famous hedge maze not only in Britain, but in the world: "Hampton Court Palace has probably the world's most famous hedge maze, the oldest in England" (Fisher & Gester 90). There are clear biblical and religious connotations to deciding the right way in the maze. These authors also comment on the significance of both labyrinths and mazes for the Christian tradition. They point to the prevalence of medieval Christian labyrinth design in numerous churches and artefacts. Furthermore, they cite a twentieth-century example from the 1950s, that of the Maze of the Mysteries of the Gospels, located in the garden of Wyck Rissington rectory in the Costswolds. On the 10th of August, the festival of St. Lawrence, people were led through a maze past the signs of the fifteen mysteries of the gospels (marked by signs), a tunnel of death, a garden of paradise, a gate of judgement, all to conveniently end in an area designated "eternal life."

on his estate, Blenheim Palace: “mazes have an extraordinary presence. Once seen, a maze cannot be ignored. It draws you into it like a magnet, then proceeds to puzzle, infuriate and delight in turn until its goal is reached. Mazes have been exerting this maddening fascination for thousands of years” (Fisher & Gester 7). In the story, the protagonist’s need to solve puzzles (in the shape of a maze and otherwise) clearly remits to Adam and Eve’s inappropriate search for knowledge and its ensuing punishment.²¹ Together with the urge to solve and to know is another aspect that explains the maze’s appeal—its power of deception. While labyrinths are unicursal, mazes provide several paths, including dead ends; whereas the labyrinth is ritualistic and illustrates a certain rite of passage, the maze demands its visitors to make decisions and solve a spatial enigma. Nevertheless, the maze holds deception as much as it holds the answer. Near the end of James’s story, for instance, one of the characters remembers how his aunt “about the year of 1866, had been lost for upwards of an hour and a half in the maze at Covent Gardens, or it might be Hampton Court²²” (197). The Gothic possibilities of the

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21. For the issue of how this search of knowledge relates to the biblical subtext, see Simon Macculloch’s “The Toad in the Study: M.R. James, H.P. Lovecraft and Forbidden Knowledge” (*Ghosts & Scholars* 211996: 37-42, 22 1996: 40-46). Macculloch contributes two interesting ideas to the topic of the inappropriate search for knowledge in “Mr. Humphreys.” First of all, he identifies the Garden of Eden subtext as a definite influence in the story, and he connects it to issues of trespassing and punishment: “an obsession with holding what is theirs is one of the distinguishing characteristics of James’s villains [...] the punishment of trespassers takes the same form—a chase through the woods by a supernatural being. The similarity of this to the way in which the punishment of the first trespassers, Adam and Eve, is usually depicted, can scarcely have escaped James” (39). In this story, the chase through the woods is substituted by the chase in the hedge maze, but the resulting feelings of entrapment, disorientation and terror are the same. Furthermore, Macculloch associates the topic of the search for knowledge with M.R. James’s scholarly protagonists and to anxieties related to scholarship: “he may also have been expressing the eternal dilemma of the scholar, whereby a too narrow a field of enquiry produces clear cut but fragile conclusions, while a too wide one prevents us from setting upon a conclusion at all. The ultimate source of fear in his fiction is the loss of a self-enhancing sense of meaning” (46). This last point would coincide with Mr. Humphreys’s relentless search for meaning in the esoteric and mysterious symbols and structures that are present in his garden.
22. In *The Art of the Maze* (London: Weidenfell and Nicolson, 1990), Fisher and Gester comment on how the Hampton Court maze deceives its visitors: “junctions lead off to dead ends to both left and right, and the main path is not made clear in any way. The alleyways contain twists and turns [...] and further disorientation is achieved by the different angles” (69).

maze derive first, from this seductive appeal to be solved, and second, from the spatial deception that is inherent to its form.

Together with frequent excursions into the maze, which signal Mr. Humphrey's compulsive search, there are two incidents that occur in the grounds that also display the full-blown presence of the supernatural in the story, as well as a connection to the nineteenth-century discourse on gardening and domesticity. During one particularly tranquil evening, Mr. Humphreys is admiring his idyllic grounds, from the open window in his bedroom: "the light, the perfume of the woods, and the absolute quiet called up such kind old associations in his mind he went on ruminating them for a long time"(192). The one feature that struck him with a sense of incongruity was a small Irish yew,²³ thin and black, which stood out like an outpost of the shrubbery, through which the maze was approached" (192). This plant, which bothers Humphreys because of its "incongruity" in the orderly setting, addresses an architectural issue that I discussed in my third chapter on the home, where major projections such as balconies and minor ones (signs, window cases) were strictly regulated. I argue that the shrub, just like these jutting elements of design bothered Victorians like Mr. Humphreys, because they went against a sense of cohesion and order promoted by domestic discourse. The other incident in the story that supports this view is that after the protagonist sees the yew shrub, he sees a "clump of dark growth which had *usurped* a place against the house wall, and was *threatening* to obscure one of the lower range of windows" (emphasis

23. This odd yew shrub points to a particular superstition surrounding this particular plant that was very much alive in nineteenth-century Britain and which must have had its obvious repercussion in gardening: "in this country, it has been from time immemorial reckoned a gloomy object, a tree of the night rather than of the day, generally found about desolate or ruined buildings, and not unfrequently indicating the lonely and peaceful churchyard" (*Annals of Horticulture* 20 1846). The yew's dark connotations were obviously strengthened by its use in mazes, spaces where a sense of disorientation reigned. Furthermore, the eerie qualities of yew derive greatly from its amazing longevity and its common use in hedge mazes, as Fisher and Gester comment in *The Art of the Maze* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990): "European hedge mazes are intended for permanence [...] yew provides formality, maintains a precise shape and is long-lived"(90).

added 193). Furthermore, he is bothered by it because he believes it makes the area close to the house “dank” and “unhealthy”(193).

There are obvious similarities between this and another one of M.R. James’s stories that I have discussed, “The Ash-Tree.” In both stories vegetation that is placed too close to a window threatens to somehow pollute the home, reflecting nineteenth-century concerns about disease and the need for proper ventilation, as well as the fear of intrusion of any type, not just disease, into the home. In “Mr. Humphreys,” the protagonist’s concerns over the yew shrub and this unsettling “dark growth” are founded on an overall desire to defend his home and grounds from intrusion. After all, he sees this dark growth as “usurping” and “threatening” the windows, and because of the windows’ permeability, ultimately his home. Similarly, the yew tree strikes him as an ingredient that does not fit, as an element that has intruded into his idyllic and orderly garden.

In the gardening realm of the day, the controversy about the types of plants that had to be employed addressed the wider issue of intrusion. While in the early decades leading to the 1851 Great Exhibition, the main proponent of the “gardenesque” style, John C. Loudon, “introduced almost exclusively non-native and exotic plants or specimens that had obviously been trained or adapted” (Jennings 33), others like William Robinson (1835-1935) later proposed the reintroduction of hardier, native plants in his “naturalistic” garden style. Furthermore, when Muthesius comments about the disadvantages that landscape gardening used to have, he cites:

the introduction and great predilection for innumerable exotic plants. It is precisely against these foreign intruders, among other things, that the modern English movement in gardening is aimed. The English wish to stock their gardens once more with native English plants, the quieter but more natural, and to us more congenial, charms of which had been overlooked and almost forgotten (107).

The choice of language in this passage, including “quieter” and “congenial” reveals qualities that were not only associated with British plants, but with the British way of life in general. In James’s story, plants have a power to unsettle because they do

not fit into a formal layout. Similarly, gardens across Britain were faced with the choice of whether or not to include foreign vegetation, thus reflecting wider imperialistic and nationalistic issues that the country had to contend with.²⁴ Even when plants were not being ousted from gardens because they were foreign, there was always a process of selection (consistent with Darwin's recent findings on natural selection) that went on in gardens. When discussing weeds, for instance, John Loudon provides a description that proves how subjective and culture-specific this process of selection was: "a weed is any plant which comes up in a situation where it is not wanted. It may be either an absolute weed, such as all plants of no known use; or a relative one, such as a useful plant where it comes up and is not wanted among other useful plants, or on walks, walls, &c." (*Suburban Horticulturist* 379). Whether absolute or relative, weeds were simply unwanted intruders. In James's story, anxieties about intrusion and selection surface in the shape of vegetation that is capable of unsettling because of its capacity to disrupt the otherwise regular arrangement.

The appearance of these plants that alter the formality and serenity of Mr. Humphreys's grounds presages the Gothic climax of the story. The protagonist's incautious search for knowledge, prompted by the mysterious legacy of his ancestor James Wilson, creator of the maze, comes to a terrifying end one evening, in the library of his home. The library, repository of knowledge *par excellence* contains his ancestor's mystical and secret texts, such as the aforementioned parable of the man in the maze. This room functions as a symbol of the ancestor's corrupt legacy that lives on through spaces (such as the library and the grounds) that entice Mr. Humphreys and provoke him to decipher, solve and find meanings. In the midst of this space, heavily imbued by his ancestor's spirit, Mr. Humphreys decides to make a copy of the plan of the maze

24. In my second chapter, I explained how the Crystal Palace was equally haunted by the ghosts of foreigners, including that of one of its main proponents, Prince Albert, who was simply called "the foreigner" by those who resented his power over British matters. The tension between cohesion on the one hand, and intrusion on the other, related to issues of nationalism and imperialism, influenced other more domestic concerns, including gardening.

that he has finally managed to complete, in order to give it to Lady Wardrop, who is writing a book on mazes. As he is tracing the plan with his finger, he notices what “resembled a hole [...] surely this was a very odd hole” (195) on the sheet of paper. From this emerges a horror that is described with characteristic Jamesian mastery:

far, far down there was a movement, and the movement was upwards—towards the surface. Nearer and nearer it came, and it was of a blackish-grey colour with more than one dark hole. It took shape as a face—a human face—a burnt human face: and with the odious writhings of a wasp creeping out of a rotten apple there clambered forth an appearance of a form, waving black arms prepared to clasp the head that was bending over them. (196)

The most significant aspect about the incident, however, is not the identification of the source of corruption—the evil ancestor—but the spatial issue of depth and penetration and its implications in the story. When he first sees the “odd hole,” Mr. Humphreys notices how “it seemed to go not only through the paper, but through the table on which it lay. Yes, and through the floor below that, down, and still down, even into infinite depths”(196). There are palpable sexual implications behind the materialization of this “odd hole,” as Penny Fielding has noted, when she equates the presence of holes in James’s fiction with the bachelor protagonists’ unresolved sexuality and with their erotic and anal urge to collect; both notions converge in “Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance,” since the awful apparition takes place in the library, the ultimate site of collecting and cataloguing. Leaving sexuality aside, however, and concentrating on how penetration relates to space, one can see how in this story, horror and the possibility of death result from penetrating into the depths of the dark and corrupt knowledge left by Mr. Humphrey’s long-gone yet recurring ancestor, James Wilson, as symbolized by voyages into the maze and into the meaning of the parable found in the library. Furthermore, when the protagonist pieces the mysterious tiles in the temple (originally from the maze) in their intended order, the following phrase emerges: “Penetrans ad Interiori Mortis²⁵” (194) or “penetrating/pressing on into the

25. For a thorough explanation of the biblical reference that this phrase is echoing, see Martin Hughes “A Maze of Secrets in a Story by M.R. James” (*Durham University Journal* (85) 1993:81-93).

inner places of death.” The uncle that Humphreys inherits from takes measures against the dissemination of this corruptive information, by not allowing visitors into the maze. However, Mr. Humphreys must pay the price for delving too deep, and for not taking heed of the warning spelled out by the tiles.

At the end, a healthier balance is restored when the protagonist orders the destruction of the globe and the maze, and even marries Lady Wardrop’s niece. The depth that Humphreys could have experienced through his search for knowledge is substituted by a placid surface offered by domestic life. Within the context of nineteenth-century fiction, there is nothing extraordinary about Mr. Humphreys getting married, but within M.R. James’s work, which is characterized by a multitude of bachelor protagonists (fueling criticism that perceives a strong homoerotic component in his work²⁶) this is quite an unusual occurrence. I argue that the fact that he does marry reinforces the domestic and moralistic component in the story, which is also a driving force in nineteenth-century gardening, as J.C. Loudon purported in *The Villa Gardener* (1850): “what more delightful than to see the master or the mistress of a small garden or pleasure-ground, with all the boys and girls, the maids, and, in short, all the strength of the house, carrying pots and pails of water to different parts of the garden” (2), and an author in a leading gardening journal: “gardening is the most national of all recreations. It teaches forethought, industry, and economy of time. It exerts the mind, invigorates the frame, and constantly reminds us of the great God whose hand is imprinted on every leaf, and who, in his bountiful goodness, rewards us with the fruits of the earth” (*Annals of Horticulture* 1847:325). Without gardening and domesticity, it seems that man is entirely lost: “man is a social animal, and unless he has occupation,

26. Penny Fielding’s “Reading Rooms: M.R. James and the Library of Modernity” (*Modern Fiction Studies* 46.3 2000:749-771) notes how “James’s isolated male heroes, as they try to preserve their singular, masculine pursuits, become overtaken by precisely those complexities of gender and sexuality they originally feared” (751). Fielding mentions numerous examples of this author’s male protagonists who must face the terrifying materialization of their sexual—often homosexual—anxieties, such as the character in “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad”, a don who “is attacked by animated bedclothes from a bed that was to be occupied by an unwanted male companion” (762).

he gets into mischief. It is almost certain that a man without garden goes to the public-house” (*Annals of Horticulture* 1847:325). Mr. Humphreys, who is initially described as being “studious and rather diffident” and as having “few out-of-doors pursuits except golf and gardening” (177), is ultimately saved from a horrific and untimely death and from his corrupt ancestor’s legacy, by adhering to a life of domesticity that is as formal and regulated as his garden is.

Fin de Siècle Gardens in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

As a literary offspring of the fin de siècle, Wilde’s only novel was inevitably shaped by leading intellectual and artistic currents, such as the Aesthetic and Decadent Movements, and I argue, as significantly, by the Arts and Crafts Movement. This section focuses on how the end of the century and Wilde’s adherence to aesthetic premises of the time mold haunted space in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-1891),²⁷ more specifically its garden, which features so strongly in the novel, but which is widely ignored by critics. I argue that besides the archetypal Garden of Eden, two garden layouts helped shape the outdoor setting in Wilde’s novel—the Epicurean garden and the Arts and Crafts garden. After identifying these garden subtexts, I discuss *Dorian Gray*’s grounds not only in terms of their symbolism but also in terms of movement—characters move into and out of the garden, while the garden itself uncannily enters or withdraws from the house that it surrounds, thus mirroring the spread of corruption. I argue that the outdoor setting presented in Wilde’s novel, which differs greatly from the structured gardens presented in the previous sections, announces an important break from the discourse of domestic tranquillity and of gardens as extensions of this haven, and that its haunted quality derives from the onset of modernity and its specters.

27. The initial and shorter version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* appeared in 1890 in *Lippincott’s Magazine* (Vol. 46, no. 271), and later on as a book, published by Ward and Lock in 1891.

The recurrent subtext in all garden settings, and the one with which we must begin our discussion, is that of the Garden of Eden. Like the snake that tempts Eve into acquiring forbidden knowledge, Wotton seduces Dorian into tasting the forbidden fruit of limitless passions and vices. The two garden settings in the story—Basil’s and Dorian’s—are initially described in Edenic and paradisiacal terms, coinciding with the following phrase offered by the O.E.D. as part of the definition for “garden”: “e. colloq.ph. Everything in the garden is lovely, the situation is perfectly satisfactory; all is well.” However, a closer look at another possibility for the same term reveals that within Eden not “all is well”: “f. to lead (someone) up the garden (-path), to lead on, entice; mislead, deceive, colloq.” In the story, Lord Henry Wotton leads or misleads Dorian Gray with his seductive but poisonous speech; significantly, his tutelage begins in a garden. Moreover, after their initial conversation, Dorian and Lord Henry leave the outdoors and enter the studio, where Dorian “put his hand upon Lord Henry’s arm” (23), thus signalling his conversion into this new “religion.” The passage of the two men in the garden is key in understanding the mentoring and corrosive process that the protagonist will undergo, a process that is inevitably framed by the ubiquitous Garden of Eden scenario; more importantly, this initial encounter between the men triggers the garden’s haunted potential in the novel.

In addition to the noticeable Edenic reference, there are two other subtler and more engaging garden subtexts that have a ghostly hand in shaping outdoor space in the novel. The first of these is the Epicurean garden. One of the meanings for “garden” in the *O.E.D.* leads us straight to this engaging classical reference: “3. As a name for the school of Epicurus (who taught in a garden).” In Wilde’s novel, the garden is a site of teaching and learning, not only because this is the place where Lord Wotton teaches and in equal measure corrupts Dorian, but because the type of Epicurean philosophy that he says to be promoting (although inaccurately) was originally transmitted in a garden setting. Epicureanism was widely discussed and often adopted by intellectuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as part of the neoclassical revival. Wilde, like

Walter Pater (1839-1894) had an interest in Epicureanism and Hellenism in general and advocated the importance of art and pleasure, all of which were concerns for the aesthetes and decadents. In Pater's commentary of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, entitled "A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde" (1891), Pater notices the central role of Epicurean philosophy in the work, and notes how Lord Wotton's "new Hedonism" does not coincide with Epicureanism because of its extreme and self-debasing nature: "a true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's hero [...] is to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development" (Ellmann 36). Wotton's imprecise interpretation of this theory does not stop at: "Be always searching for new sensations" (22). Instead, it exceeds to: "Be afraid of nothing" (22), a notion too imprudent for true Epicureanism to uphold. Despite this inaccuracy, I would like to argue that the allusion to the Epicurean garden stands, and more importantly, it joins forces with the Garden of Eden scenario in order to portray a garden space ideal for the transmission of knowledge; in this outdoor classroom, however, teachings are easily twisted into a corrupt philosophy that taints Dorian and that imbues the very garden and its elements, with a menacing and polluting essence.

The third garden subtext that shapes the outdoors in *Dorian Gray*, and that reflects aesthetic concerns at the end of the century, is the Arts and Crafts garden. This artistic phenomenon, at its strongest from 1880-1910, had a wide influence over architecture, domestic design and other decorative arts such as landscaping; I argue that the setting in Wilde's novel (published during the movement's zenith) was shaped according to this style's notions. Basil's garden, in the opening episode of the novel, clearly illustrates the Aesthetic Movement's ideals, specifically the interface between nature and art, reality and representation:

From the corner of the divan of Persian saddlebags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able

to bear the burden of a beauty so flame-like as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid jade-faced painters of Tokio who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. (5)

The living room is presented as a liminal region between the natural realm of the outside, and the comforts of an elaborate, artistic interior. Here Wotton watches nature as it becomes art, and art as it attempts to render nature. Despite its natural elements, the garden that is portrayed vacillates between nature—blossoms, branches, birds—and art, with nature being inevitably defined and framed by an artistic rendition of it; thus, honey-coloured blossoms are not merely flowers, since they appear to be “flame-like,” and the shadows of birds produce an oriental artistic effect, as they are projected onto curtains. In addition to this merger between art and nature, another element of Basil’s garden is clearly inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement—despite the existence of flower beds and a lawn, this garden is more permissive and relaxed than Mr. Humphreys’ formal garden. For instance, we are told that bees shouldered their way “through the long unmown grass” or circled monotonously around the “straggling woodbine” (5). The Arts and Crafts Movement did not erase formality from the garden canvas; rather, as we can confirm in the plans below (Fig. 13), it invited less manicured but essential elements—the Wild Garden—and sturdy, British plants to coexist alongside formal garden arrangements.²⁸ As opposed to the shrubberies that were part of a formal, predictable setting (as in *Lady Audley’s Secret* or “Earthbound”), and in which nature was assigned a marginalized existence on the borders, in this plan

28. William Robinson was the passionate gardener and writer who would, like the Loudons before him, revolutionize gardening. Unlike the Loudon’s, however, Robinson’s writings reflected the late-Victorian spirit, nostalgic for a remote and pre-industrial past, for simple gardens as opposed to formal, symmetrical or rigorous ones. Alongside Gertrude Jekyll, the greatest woman gardener and writer of the turn of the century, Robinson did not propose the garden to run wild; rather, they opposed the “practice of tearing up the garden twice a year” through bedding, and instead proposed the use of hardier, native plants that could remain in the garden year-round. Even though both Robinson and Jekyll included formal gardens in their landscapes, they placed “wild gardens” alongside them.

BELOW: *Garden plan, Rodmarton Manor, Gloucestershire, Ernest Barnsley and William Scrubey, 1909–29.*

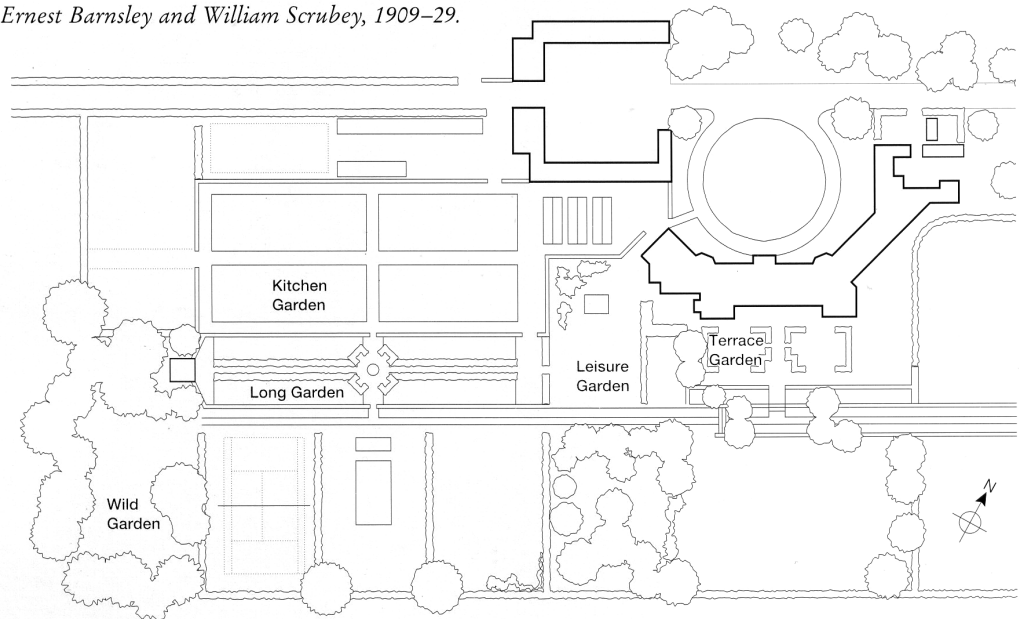


Fig. 13. Garden plan at Rodmarton Manor, Gloucestershire, in Wendy Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998)144.

nature, in the form of the “Wild Garden,” is placed alongside more manicured areas, suggesting its validity and equal standing.

In addition to including untamed elements alongside formalistic layouts, Basil’s garden remits to the Arts and Crafts garden in another way—as an enclosed garden, it is an intimate space, remitting to an idealized medieval past. For the main proponent of the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris (1834-1896), and for his followers, medievalism²⁹ was a superior art and cultural form; like other revivalist tendencies, the objective was to return to a better past, in this case envisioned as medieval, a fact that would also shape Morris’s gardens: “It was the England of the Middle Ages that shaped his radical approach to art. It also formed his attitude to horticulture” (*The*

29. The Arts and Crafts Movement, led by Morris, based their admiration for medieval art and culture because of the latter’s respect for craftsmanship, truthful use of materials (echoing Pugin and Ruskin), and its overall style of decoration; the movement was also involved politically, promoting socialism. Like other tendencies that arose from the Battle of the Styles, Arts and Crafts was a reaction against an industrial Britain and was a continuation of Gothic revivalism.



Fig. 14. Medieval Engraving of the *Hortus Conclusus*.

Gardens of William Morris 9). The specific garden form which inspired Morris was the medieval *hortus conclusus*: “Morris’s model garden looked back to the medieval *hortus conclusus*, a symmetrical structure of local materials, enclosed by hedges and trees, with straight paths and beds softened by an abundance of cottage-garden flowers” (*The Gardens of William Morris* 13), a model freight with references to Eden.

The garden in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, like the *hortus conclusus* that inspired the Arts and Crafts gardens of the time, is an enclosed garden; we are told that when Wotton first talks to Dorian in the garden, “a grasshopper began to chirrup by the wall” (9). Like its medieval ancestor, this is an intimate garden full of flowers, inviting reflection, whose main concern is providing a retreat-like space. Like its medieval ancestor, this garden’s enclosure is both literally and symbolically defensive;

interestingly, in the novel, despite the wall, after the buzzing of the bee, we hear “the dim roar of London,” which “was like the bourdon note of a distant organ”(5). As the noise of the city infiltrates this Eden-like retreat, we realize that the medieval oasis that the Arts and Crafts supporters wanted to recreate, like Basil’s garden in the novel, is not an entirely impermeable space, and that the buzzing of insects must coexist with the threat of an encroaching city.

Having discussed how these biblical, classical and medieval gardens shape outdoor space in Wilde’s novel, I would now like to focus on how the movement between the garden and the home in *Dorian Gray* illustrates the transit of corruption. Furthermore, we will see how, despite the presence of well-established boundaries, the garden has the capacity to enter and tarnish the allegedly pristine house and Dorian himself. In order to chart the movement of the characters and of the garden itself, it is necessary to provide a chronological evolution of events that follows the transformation of the garden from an idyllic place to one of degeneration. The garden’s presence is so prevalent in this work, that even when characters and events rest within the house, the garden is still in attendance because of its invasive capacity. Peter Raby comments on how the environment in the novel reflects Oscar Wilde’s intentions: “his aim had been to keep the ‘atmosphere of moral corruption’ surrounding Dorian Gray vague and indeterminate and wonderful” (68). I argue that the emphasis placed on the garden and its elements is part of this vague and wonderful ambience intended by Wilde to reflect Dorian’s corruption. The initial paragraph in the novel, describing Wotton’s conversation with Hallward in the artist’s studio substantiates the garden’s intrusive ability through scent: “The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn”(1). This image is particularly significant not only because it marks the importance of the garden from the beginning of the novel, but also because we can determine that this garden is sensual, thus suggesting the appealing qualities of haunted space. The odour originates from roses, flowers that intimate various meanings,

but which normally evoke images of romance, passion and sensuality/sexuality. The garden produces both “delicate” and “heavy” scents, thus insinuating the promise of both harmless and potentially dangerous things to come. At this initial stage of the tale, the “light summer wind,” comes into the door of the studio, in a seemingly inoffensive way. Still, it *fills* or spreads throughout the room with its tempting array of scents.

The garden’s ability to invade the home through smell is interestingly picked up on by a critic in the *Daily Chronicle*, after Wilde’s work had first appeared in *Lippincott’s*: “It is a tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French Decadents—a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” (Thomas 7). While criticizing Wilde’s work, the critic cannot help but use the same imagery of smell that is employed by Wilde, thus falling prey to the infecting capacity of the work that he is condemning. In addition to pointing out the sinister potential of smell through words like “poison” and “putrefaction,” this critic detects the capacity of a literary work to infect a long string of other texts. Thus, the Decadents’ work (signalled by the yellow book in the novel) infects Wilde’s, which in turn pollutes the critic’s piece.

After the flowers’ scents penetrate Basil’s studio, the narrator turns to Basil and Henry’s discussion about the artist’s latest portrait, and about his beautiful new sitter. When Basil becomes possessive about Dorian, the two men walk out into the garden, where Wotton confronts him about his jealousy, and the painter replies with an engaging answer: “It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself” (5). Like Narcissus, Basil sees himself not only as the painter but also as the painted, and he is not willing to share Dorian or himself with Wotton. In this passage, this setting is introduced as a place of discussion and significant revelations, as in the Epicurean garden; here, the soul of the characters in the story is stripped bare on repeated occasions throughout the story.³⁰

30. Gary Schmidgall’s foreword in *The Picture of Dorian Gray and Other Stories* (New York: Signet Classics, 1995), discusses the significance of philosophical debate in *Dorian Gray*: “famously associated with

When Dorian appears uninvited, Basil has no choice but to go inside the studio and introduce him to Wotton: “as they entered they saw Dorian Gray. He was seated at the piano, with his back to them, turning over the pages of a volume of Schumann’s ‘Forest Scenes’”(14). It is noteworthy that in this initial meeting Dorian has his back to the men and to the garden, and instead faces a work by Schumann that is inspired by nature—“Forest Scenes.” Dorian has not been initiated to the garden and its delights, and is instead facing away from it and towards a safer aesthetic (thus artificial) rendering of nature.

Once Dorian is sitting for Basil, however, Lord Henry does not waste his time and begins “instructing” Gray by telling him about his views on life, the importance of Beauty and Art, and most importantly, the necessity of every human being to follow their longings and to give in to their passions. In the studio, Lord Henry plants the seed of temptation into Dorian’s soul by claiming that “[t]he only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it” (18). But it is in the garden, where this seed actually germinates. I argue that in Wilde’s novel, perverse instruction begins within the garden’s boundaries (as in Eden), because external borders (originally meant for defense) actually contain corruption and accelerate its invasion into the household. Like the Arts and Crafts garden, and its medieval ancestor, the *hortus conclusus*, the enclosed gardens in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* contain and foster haunting. Thus, after Wotton initiates his tutelage in the studio, Dorian is visibly affected and must exit into the garden, but this only hastens the process: “ ‘I must go out and sit in the garden. The air is stifling here’ ”(19). Lord Henry, who is not about to give up, follows him:³¹ “Lord Henry went out

pedagogy is the Socratic or Platonic dialogue [...] The lively, probing conversations between Lord Henry and Dorian, and later those in which Dorian dominates Basil, owe much to this ancient Greek narrative device” (xvi). Even though Schmidgall does not specifically mention Epicureanism, he does acknowledge the important Hellenistic component in the story.

31. In *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Linda Dryden comments on Lord Henry’s capacity to move throughout the spaces of the novel and infect Dorian with his poisonous teachings: “the salons and drawing-rooms of Dorian Gray admit the dilettante Wotton, who rooms the early part of the novel with a snake-like individuality, breathing poison

to the garden and found Dorian Gray burying his face in the great cool lilac-blossoms, feverishly drinking in their perfume as it had been wine”(20). There is an obvious contrast between the stifling environment of the studio and the house in general, and the freshness that exists in the garden. Dorian is expelled from the inside of the house not so much because it is a closed space but because of the effect of Wotton’s words. Dorian flees into the garden under the illusion that it will provide him with an escape from Lord Henry’s ideas and the feeling of unease that results from them. What Dorian is actually doing, instead of “drinking” the “perfume” of the flowers, is “drinking” or swallowing Wotton’s words. The “perfume” emanating from these words is so pungent that it has expelled Dorian from the room where they were pronounced. By trying to escape from these ideas, Dorian is in fact running into them by going into the garden, because Wotton follows him there to continue what he had begun inside. Once again, smell signals corruption’s disregard for outside-inside divisions, as well as its capacity to travel easily and invade spaces, and ultimately, bodies, like Dorian’s.

While Hallward is finishing the portrait and Dorian and Lord Henry are resting, the presence of the garden is felt once more: “In the slanting beams that streamed through the open doorway the dust danced and was golden. The heavy scent of the roses seemed to brood over everything” (24). The phrase “seemed to brood over everything” puts forward a mysterious or dark presence that is excessive or insistent. The scent of the roses, as in the beginning is “heavy,” but the difference is that it is now portrayed as being more sinister, or at least, more forceful. Coincidentally, a gardening critic notes the symbolic significance of various types of flowers in Victorian gardens: “the scent of violets or primroses heralded spring, the rich fragrance of roses characterised summer evenings and the pungent smell of chrysanthemums penetrated damp autumn twilight” (Wilkinson 145). We will see how, as the story progresses, the cool lilac

into Dorian’s ear and filling the drawing room conversations with his own pernicious philosophy” (119). Like Dryden, I consider the transit of corruption through space, but this time in the form of the garden and its sensual elements.

blossoms that Dorian smells initially, signalling innocence and springtime, later give way to heavier and overpowering smells, pointing to the garden's darker energies and to Dorian's journey towards the autumn of his life.

When Basil finishes the portrait, everyone admires it as perhaps his best work, and this clearly impacts Dorian: "He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly conscious that Hallward was speaking to him [...] The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation" (25). The heavy scent of the roses that penetrate the studio at this time is an important presence in the act of creation of the portrait; one could go as far as saying that this aroma is an ingredient that has caused the picture to acquire its supernatural properties. Temptation bred in the garden has entered the studio in the form of the roses' fragrance and has given the finishing touches to Basil Hallward's masterpiece.

Enticement is quickly followed by corruption. Dorian Gray, the once innocent, radiant lad of twenty begins an exciting but dark journey characterized by a complete disregard for morality and restrictions of any kind. The novel records the alteration in Dorian's personality through the concept of poison. The light or heavy scent of roses is replaced by references to "poison" which clearly symbolize Dorian's speedy descent. For example, some days after the meeting in the garden, Dorian confesses his feelings to Lord Wotton:

For days after I met you, something seemed to throb in my veins. As I lounged in the Park, or strolled down Piccadilly, I used to look at every one who passed me, and wonder, with a mad curiosity, what sort of lives they led. Some of them fascinated me. Others filled me with terror. There was an exquisite poison in the air. I had a passion for sensations. (47,48)

This process of corruption, however, is not as straightforward as it seems. Dorian's desire to renounce morality is put to the test when he meets Sybil Vane. Interestingly, she is described as a flower or as a creature belonging to a natural setting: "hardly seventeen years of age, with a little flower-like face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like the petals of a rose" (50). Furthermore, when Dorian first sees her, she is acting

the garden-scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. From the start, the Sybil that Dorian falls in love with is a creature of illusion, a performer who is meaningfully placed in a setting that portrays make-believe gardens. When Dorian tells Wotton about her, he discusses her “gardenesque” ethereal existence: “I left her in the forest of Arden, I shall find her in an orchard in Verona” (76). Her beauty and purity are more striking because of the contrast between her radiant presence and the grotesque and tawdry theatre where she is acting. Ironically, Dorian finds this source of light after deciding that he must embark on a search for pleasure: “I felt that this grey, monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners, and its splendid sins [...] must have something in store for me” (48). After wondering through a “labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grassless squares” (48), he finds a creature in an artificial garden which tempts him into remaining “good.”

But Sybil is merely a digression in Dorian’s downward journey, and when she is unable to sustain her performative persona in the presence of Dorian and Wotton, the former leaves her, ultimately provoking her suicide. Once again Lord Henry, acting as the serpent, enters this innocent yet illusory garden with his foul presence, influencing Dorian’s behaviour by telling him that she was not worth his attentions. However, still ignorant about Sybil’s death and feeling remorse for what he has done, Dorian decides to change his ways and look for her; once again, he associates the path that he has chosen with the initial Edenic encounter with the serpentine Wotton: “He would resist temptation. He would not see Lord Henry any more—would not, at any rate, listen to those subtle poisonous theories that in Basil Hallward’s garden had first stirred within him the passion for impossible things” (92). However, and most predictably, his resolution quickly dissolves when Dorian finds out about the death of Sybil, a creature that, ultimately, could not continue living in an imagined garden, immersed in the grimy labyrinths of London.

When Lord Henry goes to Dorian’s house and tells him about Sybil’s death, the garden enters the house once more, this time Dorian’s, not Basil’s: “There was

a silence. The evening darkened in the room. Noiselessly, and with silver feet, the shadows crept in from the garden. The colours faded wearily out of things” (103). The garden’s presence inside the house seems to have the power to drain or bleach the color and life away from things, just like Dorian’s terrible grasp over poor Sybil and the victims that are still to come. The garden’s power to seduce Dorian Gray and secure his degeneration is illustrated by this ominous film that covers the objects in his studio; this is the same shroud that will begin to envelop and alter his portrait.

Even though Basil paints Dorian’s portrait, he is not responsible for its supernatural or disturbing qualities, and one cannot dispute that Basil is a good influence, contrasting fully with Lord Henry’s power over Dorian. After Sybil’s death, Hallward goes to his friend’s home to give him his condolences. Dorian of course, is not grieving at all about her death, which makes Hallward exclaim: “You talk as if you had no heart, no pity in you. It is all Harry’s influence. I see that” (108). At this point, Dorian stands up and looks out into the “green, flickering, sun-lashed garden” (108) and claims: “ ‘I owe a great deal to Harry, Basil,’ he said, at last—‘more than I owe to you. You only taught me to be vain” (108). Gray looks out into the garden (the site of initial temptation) with nostalgia, and in this sense, that particular garden—the one in the past—is the paradise lost, or a place from which he has been expelled and cannot return.

Dorian’s indifference towards others and their lives is a key element in his journey towards darkness, but it is another event—the reading of a book sent by Lord Henry—that definitely seals his fate. The issue of the book is an intriguing one, and it becomes an enigma because of the many gaps that the text leaves unfilled. Still, what the text does tell us is that in it, “the life of the senses was described in terms of mystical philosophy” and that “[i]t was a poisonous book³²” (125). Not only was

32. Sally Ledger’s “Wilde, Women and the Yellow Book: The Sexual Politics of Aestheticism and Decadence” (*English Literature in Transition* 50:1 2007:5-26), discusses how the press around Wilde’s infamous trial advertised that, as he was escorted to jail, the author carried a large yellow book, and how this was inaccurately reported to be a volume of *The Yellow Book*, a periodical edited by Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley. Because of this association, the avant-garde publishing project was doomed. It seems that the

it poisonous but there was a “heavy odour of incense [that] seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain” (126). Dorian Gray is so enthralled by the book that he was “unconscious of the falling day and creeping shadows” (126). The heavy scent of the roses that was so prevalent in earlier passages has been substituted by the heavy odour of incense and by a hypnotic cadence produced by the sentences in the book. The fact that the protagonist does not notice the outside (neither the garden nor the arrival of the night) suggests that he has undeniably been expelled from the garden or that he has traded the possibility of remaining in it, for the forbidden knowledge that the book offers. At this point, instead of being poisoned by the apple, “Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book³³” (146).

After his expulsion from decent society, Dorian becomes gluttonous in his search for knowledge and pleasure just like Mr. Humphreys in James’s story: “The more he knew, the more he desired to know” (128). At this point, Dorian becomes powerful in the same way that Lord Henry had been—he manipulates and controls other men to the point of corrupting them. Rumors circulate in London about his immoral ways and about the acquaintances that he has ruined, and when poor Basil seeks Dorian in order to warn him about these comments, Dorian stabs him, but only after revealing his horrific and degenerate self, illustrated by the portrait. From this point on, there are no more references to the garden and to it entering the house or to characters moving towards it. Instead, the

real yellow book that Wilde was carrying, however, was in fact a French novel: “the yellow dust jacket generally denoted either risqué French fiction or popular novels sold at railway bookstalls.” This would coincide with the yellow book that plays such a significant role in Wilde’s novel, and which is often identified as Huysman’s *À Rebours*.

33. Ronald Thomas’s “Poison Books and Moving Pictures: Vulgarity in the Picture of Dorian Gray” in Susan David Bernstein and Elsie B. Michie, eds., *Victorian Vulgarity: Taste in Verbal and Visual Culture* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009) provides an interesting interpretation of Wilde’s novella as a harbinger of modernity, through its connection to the emergence of film. Thomas argues that Wilde’s work employs fragmented narrative techniques akin to the emerging genre of cinematography, and that the book itself “is a dreamlike ‘show’ of images that ‘teach’ the viewer to ‘concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment’” (131).

emphasis is placed on two different sites: the locked room³⁴ where the protagonist keeps the hideous portrait, and the hellish area by the docks, where the opium dens abound. Dorian's excursion into the opium dens is clearly a representation of a descent into hell. Not only has he left the garden of Eden—he has evidently entered hell.

Once in this infernal wasteland, Dorian decides to destroy his bothersome portrait,³⁵ with the knife he had employed for murder: “As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work [...] It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and, without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace” (223). Instead of merely repenting, Dorian ultimately wishes to dispose of the evidence that ties him to the crimes that he has committed. Despite his desire to conceal the horrific transformation of the portrait, consequently the state of his soul, Dorian ends up killing himself. What happens after this is especially noteworthy—the inside is allowed to come into the locked room once again, when some attendants enter his home: “Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof, dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily: their bolts were old”(224). At the end, what enters the home through the windows is not the same garden that we were acquainted with, with its sensuous odours or alluring powers. This time, instead of pungent scents, we sense how freshness from the outside enters the stifling atmosphere of a room that, like its owner had been tarnished by the burdensome concealment of secrets, sins and murders. The cycle of temptation, seduction and corruption has come full circle, and at the end, wholesome nature enters and restores a diseased interior.

34. Linda Dryden's *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) discusses the symbolism of the attic room in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as its relation to its predecessor, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

35. It is imperative to note that the issue about Dorian's conscience does not seem to point to Wilde's wish for his novel to advertise against immorality. In his preface to the Ward and Lock edition of 1891, Wilde expresses: “there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.” Under this light, Dorian's death resulting from stabbing his portrait/conscience should not be interpreted as a punishment for his immorality, but rather, as the expected outcome of a lifestyle so extreme as to be unsustainable.



Fig. 15. Lawn and topiary safely enclosed by garden wall, and the band of woodland beyond, in Wendy Hitchmough, *Arts and Crafts Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998)127.

The chronological account of the garden's corrosive transit through the indoor spaces in Wilde's novella suggests that, despite the effort presented by a highly impervious household, Victorian homes and gardens in fiction and in life could still be infiltrated. Both the Edenic and Epicurean references that shape the grounds in this novel point to the garden's suitability as a site where pernicious knowledge originating outside is transmitted. Struggling forces present in the garden turn it into the ideal liminal area, open to temptation and the supernatural; here, wilderness is transformed into art, but as the following definition of an Arts and Crafts garden proves, the threat of reversion is at all times latent: "a formal layout within clearly visible boundaries, but beyond them wilderness, that is, unspoiled nature in the form of wood or meadow" (Muthesius 96 in 2007 edition).

Fashioning a garden as the medieval *hortus conclusus* reflects the desperate attempt of fin de siècle thinkers to cling to a past perceived as more stable and in direct contrast to current uncertainties; its enclosed and defensive nature promises to repel external attacks, even when these come from an uncertain present or a threatening future. As with the Battle of the Styles in the architectural arena, this revivalist tendency pretended to adhere to a “familiar” model from a remote past. Interestingly, as the nineteenth century progressed, garden revivalism seemed to look further back into time for a historical reference, suggesting that, worries over extreme change were counteracted by embracing an extremely distant model. Nevertheless, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reveals how this garden’s walls are ultimately unable to ward off the onset of modernity, which, like the poisonous scents in the garden, inevitably entered the Victorian household.

I would also like to argue that haunting in the gardens of Wilde’s novel does not occur merely because of the revivalist impulse of the medieval garden form, and all of its implications. Morris’s gardens hold the key for yet another reason that explains the Gothic capacity of the garden in Wilde’s novel. Since William Morris fashioned Arts and Crafts gardens as outdoor rooms, or as an extension of the home towards the grounds, I argue that this ultimately had a dissolving effect on the border between the household and its surroundings. This decision proved revolutionary for landscaping and for architecture in general: “Morris’s garden, although drawn from the past, was avant-garde” (*The Gardens of William Morris*). A sense of unease emerged, because a previously held spatial logic, where the outside was clearly separated from the inside, was no longer viable; this anxiety is gothicized in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its infiltrating and corruptive garden. This last point coincides with what Punter and Byron note, when they discuss fin de siècle Gothic texts, Decadence, and the dissolution of all sorts of boundaries: “forms and boundaries dissolve as comforting certainties mutate into questions. The Gothic horror of the Decadence is the horror of dissolution, of the nation, of society and, ultimately, as we move into the Modernist world, of the human

subject itself” (43). I would argue that Wilde’s novel explores the dissolution of spatial and architectural boundaries, mainly through the boundary between the grounds and the home. Despite Morris’s attempts to hold on to a domestic and garden layout that embodied a withdrawn world of the past, the gardens in *Dorian Gray* enter and taint the home and Dorian himself, depicting the onset of a new era, where boundaries from the past are no longer viable. Morris’s gardens, like the grounds around Basil’s and Dorian’s home, although anchored in the past, could not help but reflect anxieties about the future, and about the erosion of domestic and social boundaries.

The grounds in the texts discussed in this section prove to be fertile ground for Gothic occurrences. *Lady Audley’s Secret* and “Earthbound” advertise against straying too far from the home, into the outskirts of the grounds. In the case of “Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance,” danger lies in exploring a garden that is an extension of the home’s formal and rigid layout. On the one hand, the story seems to be promoting an adherence to sheltered domesticity, symbolized by the rigid garden and its obedient keeper, Mr. Humphreys; on the other hand, the ghostly still manages to emerge, signalling the incapacity of the Victorian formal lifestyle to stamp out more spontaneous and powerful forces. Lastly, in Basil’s and Dorian’s gardens, we see how, like in James’s story, the grounds are inspired by much older garden models, thus signalling a revivalist tendency that allows the Gothic to infiltrate the scene through a desperate attempt to revive an imagined, yet idyllic past. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ancient gardens but also a contemporary landscape form—the Arts and Crafts Garden—provide a suitable backdrop for the supernatural entrance of the darker forces of the garden into the home, suggesting the home’s permeability and the inevitable dissolution of boundaries from the past. Moreover, the Arts and Crafts’ concept of creating outdoor rooms that would extend the home’s presence out into nature contributed to the dissolution of the division between the grounds and the internal world of the home. The disintegration of this border heralded imminent social changes that crystallized in the very architecture of the home and its grounds, forcefully announcing

the onset of Modernism and modernist architecture. Significantly, the disappearance of this boundary had been prophetically announced half a century before, by the Crystal Palace, a structure that would become a harbinger of the times and homes to come.



Conclusion

Architecture connects us with the dead, through buildings we are able to imagine the bustle of the medieval street, and picture a solemn procession approaching the cathedral. The time of architecture is a detained time; in the greatest of buildings time stands firmly still.

Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*

My study has demonstrated that, as Pallasmaa suggests, by examining a particular architecture, it is possible to converse with or get to know the dead. The reading of the haunted house in fiction and its realistic reflection, the middle-class household, connects us with the spirit of those who shaped and built such a space in life. Because this was a thesis where literary analysis worked alongside architectural examination, I would like to reflect on this work's *structure*, a key concept in both disciplines. If visualized as a concentric structure, my first chapter functioned as the outermost of the "rings," providing crucial theoretical notions for the analysis of haunted space. The second chapter, introducing the most important public building of the nineteenth century, composed the next inner ring; the main objective of this section was to historically and spatially frame and introduce some of the notions that would be carried forward into the next chapter. Following the structure inwards, the third chapter, on the Victorian middle-class home, outlined elements deriving from the home's design and spatial dynamics, which configured an ideal site for haunting in fiction. Thus, by the time that we turned to the following three chapters, the outer "rings," addressing theory, public space and private space, had introduced valuable concepts that could be employed to look at passages in fiction, which in turn, highlighted specific parts of the

home. The fourth chapter emphasized the outermost regions of the home, the hallways and staircases or the marginal areas within the home. In the fifth chapter, I zoomed in on the innermost areas of the home, the house's hermetic and secretive rooms. With the last chapter, the movement is reversed, since we take a look at an external part of the home, the grounds. The analysis of this area relates in several ways to my second chapter, on the public space of the Crystal Palace. Thus, we have come full circle, with the sixth chapter remitting to the outmost regions of the home, and pointing in more than one way to the iconic public space of the time. This last point proves how, in order to understand the private and domestic, we must inevitably refer to its opposite, yet complimentary public self (and vice-versa). This also corroborates the need to apply an interdisciplinary approach when analyzing a material and symbolic entity as rich and complex as a home. Now, I shall refer to the main conclusions drawn from each of the chapters, and later, succinctly discuss what the later literary works that I analyze hint at—the dissolution of the formalistic Victorian home, and the emergence of a new type of dwelling brought about by modernism.

From the first chapter of my thesis, we can conclude that it is only possible to comprehend haunting through its junction with space, and that haunting is entirely dependent on space for its subsistence. Furthermore, works by architectural phenomenologists, which focus on the way in which individuals and their senses react towards built environment, contributed enormously to my analysis of passages in fiction, proving the significance of the characters' empathy towards the haunted house. Moreover, the notion of "sensuous architecture" allowed me to prove that like other seductive spaces, the haunted house appeals by physically affecting those who inhabit or visit it, through its own physicality or body. This chapter demonstrated how feelings of mutual intimacy, between the home and its occupants, generate desire, explaining why characters feel drawn to explore (and not flee) haunted space.

While in my second chapter I analyzed the iconic public building of Victorian times, built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, in the following one, I focused on

the epitome of private space at the times, the middle-class household. My discussion of the Crystal Palace demonstrated that it was a building haunted by weighty preoccupations—beneath this crystal façade, lurked substantial concerns about the sustainability of Britain as empire and industrial giant. With regard to its private counterpart, the Victorian middle-class household, I showed how its unreceptive nature, supported by issues of privacy, secrecy and concealment, functioned as the perfect stage for haunting. Furthermore, I demonstrated how the home's architecture both responded to and intensified the social preoccupations that had shaped it. Considering the Crystal Palace's transparency, on the one hand, and its domestic counterpart's impervious structure on the other, lets us reach further conclusions. First, the Crystal Palace and its domestic counterpart do share certain characteristics, despite the public nature of the first and the private essence of the second. For instance, in both structures, it is possible to read how social and class prejudice translates into space, and how spatial segregation partially solves the issue of proximity between these very distinct classes. Second, another common denominator between the two buildings is the need to master the external environment. Unlike homes in other countries that favored outside features such as balconies, both the Crystal Palace's impermeable case and the home's bay window provided a partial connection to the outside; elements and the inclement weather were kept at bay by these glass casings, and the issue of internal comfort was underlined. This emphasis on shelter and control signals the public and private structures' need to limit the contact that they had with their surroundings, and to withdraw into themselves. The third aspect that the Crystal Palace and the home share is their symbolic capacity and their ability to generate powerful illusions. Through its transparency, this public icon fostered the illusion of an honest empire and industrial giant, welcoming international participation and embracing all of its classes under the same roof. On the other hand, the middle-class home, through its unreceptive and withdrawn constitution, conveyed the image of a safe haven for the family, away from the worries and concerns of the outside world. Whereas the Crystal

Palace attempted to hide certain things beneath a veil of transparency, the middle-class home endeavoured to conceal its darker elements through an impenetrable exterior and a compartmentalized interior. In other words, we can conclude that the Victorian public and private structures *par excellence*, fought hard to be perceived as idealized versions of society, even though they employed different spatial strategies to portray this illusion. In this sense, both structures functioned as what Foucault called *heterotopias* (discussed in my second chapter), sites where a utopia or idealized version of society is realized.

This spatial scrutiny of public and private icons of the time paves the way for the conclusions regarding the spatial focus of this study—the haunted house in Gothic fiction. I argue that, whereas both the Crystal Palace and the Victorian household functioned as a type of heterotopia that I have mentioned, the haunted house functioned as another kind of heterotopia, also offered by Foucault: “Either the heterotopias have the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory [...] Or, on the contrary, creating a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged and muddled”(184). I argue that both the Crystal Palace and the Victorian home function as the second type of space, as meticulous and well-arranged, idealized versions of Victorian culture. The haunted home, however, acts as the first type of heterotopia, as that which “denounces all real space,” and as one that exposes a reality that these public and private spaces wished to hide under a mirage. Ironically, then, despite its darkness and fundamentally supernatural nature, the haunted house that appears in the literature that I analyze *reveals*, whereas the “truthful” renditions of life, in the shape of the Crystal Palace and Victorian household, actually *hide* elements that could threaten the perfect image of the society that they attempted to convey.

Chapters four to six concentrated precisely on the way in which the haunted house of fiction disclosed some of the social and cultural concerns that the Victorian middle

class had attempted to hide through its shielded exterior. My fourth chapter examined literature that featured the marginal areas of the home. By superimposing plans of thoroughfares or transit routes of the home on top of the marginal areas depicted in fiction, this chapter demonstrated common denominators between the realistic and haunted domestic sites. For instance, I showed how the Victorian home's need to have separate staircases for its inhabitants, especially when taken to extremes, resulted in an eroticisation of space that is illustrated by passages in fiction, as in Dickens's setting. Thus, the home's insistence on assigning separate thoroughfares to its inhabitants and guests, instead of appeasing the feelings of proximity and intimacy that could arise in these enclosed areas, actually heightened them, and made them more apparent. Another main point that derives from this comparison of realistic and fictional marginal space, is that the classical Gothic motif of confinement, and of labyrinthine space, is adapted very successfully by Victorian fiction because it functions within the home's already incarcerating and disorientating topography. The concluding observation about these works, where the home's hallways and staircases are featured as sites of intense haunting, is that the home's complex and highly regulated thoroughfares translated effortlessly into Gothic fiction, because of their potential to generate intense feelings of disorientation and entrapment. Nevertheless, despite their capacity to produce these unnerving sensations, Victorian domestic thoroughfares were equally capable of generating feelings of heightened attraction, because of the intimacy and proximity that they offered, and because of the home's segregating practices, which actually aroused feelings of attraction, instead of dispelling them.

The fifth chapter demonstrated how the shape and "behavior" of the rooms of fiction respond to certain Victorian idiosyncrasies and to their translation on to the home's makeup. The first set of rooms that I explored were chambers that physically and figuratively guarded secrets. I argued that all of these rooms were haunted by concerns over secrecy and confidentiality, worries that also haunted the real, Victorian household. The next rooms that I examined were unique because they were located

within hotels, and as such, they put forward new parameters for haunting. The analysis of these spaces signalled two events, brought about by the end of the Victorian era: first, the consolidation of a new type of impersonal space (illustrated in these tales by the growing hotel industry), and second, the infiltration of this new type of space into the family home, announcing modernist architecture and times in general. The last rooms that I analyzed in this chapter were “infiltrated rooms,” clearly transmitting fears that derived logically from a defensive, impenetrable household—infiltration and corruption. We can conclude that the fixation of these Gothic tales on certain features that allow entry into a space and a home—windows and doors, for instance—reveals a domestic preoccupation in real-life homes that associated any connection to the outside with vulnerability and potential corruption.

In my last chapter, I argued that, like the internal areas of the home, the grounds that surround the dwelling were fair play for haunting. I examined what it was about the garden that made it such an apt setting for supernatural occurrences in fiction. In the first analysis, I showed how spectrality resided within the dangerous outer regions of the grounds—the walks and shrubberies that consented to more permissive and lax behaviour. I showed how, because of their remoteness from the home’s moralizing influence, these areas provided the perfect backdrop for darker deeds. I also investigated how, in another instance, horror derived not from these dangerous liminal regions of the grounds, but from the formal garden style. This particular analysis let us conclude that the keen interest in applying the formal style to landscape was an external projection of the Victorian home’s concern for maintaining a rigid and formalistic structure (so powerful that it even spilled over into the grounds). Lastly, I examined how *fin de siècle* preoccupations were embodied by the gardens portrayed in Oscar Wilde’s novella, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. I argued that the Arts and Crafts garden, which contributed to the portrayal of garden space in this novella, signalled a desperate attempt of late-Victorian aesthetes, to cling to an idyllic past, while sensing the imminence of modernity. However, this same garden also embodied the spirit of

the end of the century, by announcing the dissolution of borders, mainly the division between the home's interior and the outside.

What the analyses in all of my chapters point to is that genuine domestic angst is successfully and horrifically conveyed in the Gothic fiction of the time; like the building plans that depict the internal topography of the home, these tales chart the social and historical concerns that shape both the Victorian household and the haunted house in fiction. Even one of the most prominent architects of the time, Robert Kerr, admits that numerous Victorian homes were capable of generating an oppressive environment, or one of “contractedness:”

There are many otherwise good houses in which the sense of contractedness is positively oppressive; you experience a constant fear of overturning something, a sense of being in somebody's way; you speak in a subdued voice, lest you should be heard outside, or upstairs, or in the kitchen; you breathe as if the place were musty; you sit contractedly in your chair, and begin even to lie contractedly in bed; and to step out into the open garden, or even upon the footpath of a street, seems an act of leaping into free space! (Kerr 74)

Kerr's description, of a real-life home, superbly illustrates what I have argued throughout this thesis—the Victorian household did not need to pass through the filter of Gothic fiction in order to be haunted. It also mentions this home's capacity to affect its occupants in a physical way, making them feel fear, speak in a certain way, and even lie in bed in a certain way. As an architectural wonder, the home in life was already blessed (and cursed) by features and by spatial mechanisms that guaranteed its haunted potential. Although I argue that the real home was already troubled, it is by turning to its flipped and magnified version, the haunted house, that we can confirm how effortlessly these design elements and spatial dynamics were exploited by Gothic fiction.

If both the middle-class household in life, and its Gothic reversion in fiction were haunted, did haunting stop when domesticity and its highly regulated dwelling gave way to a new type of home? I would now like to suggest that modernity would bring with it new types of haunting, but ones that could no longer be supported nor generated by the same architecture that the Victorian household had offered. Modern

architecture, illustrated by the disintegration of physical barriers in fin de siècle literary works, and announced in a prophetic and eerie way by the aforementioned Crystal Palace, would come to be known for a disregard for borders and compartmentalization, a defining trait, completely at odds with the Victorian house and its set-up.

Some of the early-twentieth-century figures responsible for the reconfiguration of domestic space are Le Corbusier¹ (1887-1965), Mies van der Rohe² (1886-1969) and Frank Lloyd Wright³ (1867-1959). Frank Lloyd Wright's proposal, "A Home in a Prairie Town," a prototype for the Prairie School movement that he would lead, and commissioned by the *Ladies' Home Journal*, illustrated how the internal layout for the house, while exhibiting some of the traits of the Victorian home, now manifested the revolutionary and liberating need for an open-plan lifestyle, specifically in the social area. Notice how in the illustration, the design adheres to the same tenets of privacy as the Victorian home, especially in the bedroom floor plan, where chambers are still impervious to each other, and are placed in a story away from the social arena, the

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1. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (1887-1965) went by a name inspired by one of his ancestors, Le Corbusier. This Swiss-French architect, urbanist, designer, painter and prolific writer, was one of the fathers of Modern Architecture or the International Style. One of his designs, *Ville Savoye* (1929-1931) embodied five points that Le Corbusier promoted in domestic design, which he had also discussed in his modern architecture treatise, *Vers une architecture* (1923): concrete stilts that lift the bulk of the structure from the ground; freeing of the façade, characterized by non-supporting walls that can be shaped in innovative ways; open floor plan; large expanse of windows; a roof garden, allowing one to promenade on the roof to compensate for the lack of a garden on the ground.
 2. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was a German-American architect who revolutionized Modern Architecture and the Minimalist aesthetic. His public buildings, as well as his domestic residences, employ modern materials, such as industrial steel and large plates of glass. The interiors of his buildings are characterized by a free-flowing open space and by very few but poignant decorations, such as sculptures, thus breaking free entirely from Victorian overcrowded interiors, and promoting instead a "less is more" aesthetic.
 3. Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was one of the most relevant American architects, interior designer, writer and educator. As one of the greatest promoters of Organic Architecture, he believed that a building should be inspired and well-integrated to its site. Furthermore, organic architects saw the building as a unified organism, believing that all of its elements, from its structure and layout to the smallest detail, including chairs and doorhandles, should be designed by the architect, with an organic and unified view. Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie School movement was an extension (and adaptation to North America) of the Arts and Crafts movement led in England by Morris, and as such, proposed the use of open plans, local materials and handcrafts, and horizontal lines.

dayrooms. However, on the ground floor is where we notice this progressive idea about the open plan, which strays from this rigid observance of privacy in traditional Victorian homes. What used to be separate spaces—the library, the living-room/gallery, and the dining-room—are now areas that flow into each other, only partially separated, at times by curtains, but no longer by solid divisions. The individuals' flow through these spaces is just as fluid, pointing to a dramatic break from the interrupted transit from one Victorian room to the next, and to the relinquishment of the ceremonial conventions that went with it.



Fig. 1. "A Home in a Prairie Town," by Frank Lloyd Wright, in *Ladies' Home Journal* (Feb. 1901).

Another instance, in which Victorian preoccupations for privacy were drastically challenged, came with the new concept of enclosure and the new way of employing glass. We might recall how, in my discussion of windows in M.R. James's stories, I mentioned that Victorian architects advised against what they considered to be an "excessive" use of windows, principally because they insisted that these openings should behave like a continuation of the solid wall and enclosure of the room. Moreover, my discussion on the multitude of window coverings, and their symbolic manifestation of concealment and protection from the outside world, further prove how uncomfortable Victorians could be about transparency and about their domesticity being literally exposed to the world. Mies van der Rohe, the father of the "glass box," a form that had and still has great relevance in modern and contemporary architecture, broke free entirely from this Victorian caution about too many windows and too much exposure. His buildings, such as the Barcelona Pavilion for the World Fair (1929), revolutionized architecture not by proposing the use of more windows, but by deconstructing the traditional wall, made of solid, opaque materials, and by substituting these materials with glass. This architect's proposal for a world fair building, like the Crystal Palace that preceded it by 70 years, put forward the avant-garde idea that glass, despite its transparency and fragility, was a valid enclosing material, not only for public buildings, but for private dwellings as well.

Early modern architecture's disregard for Victorian tenets of privacy and concealment resulted in open plans such as those designed by Le Corbusier, van der Rohe and Wright, and in innovative ways to enclose modern buildings and dwellings. These new structures no longer seemed concerned about private life being "on exhibit," as the objects in the equally transparent world fairs had been. The disintegration and evolution of these tenets would result in even greater transformations in contemporary domestic plans. For instance, in Marck Scogin's and Merrill Elam's loft in Atlanta, there are no longer rooms. One of the owners, Scogin, explains: "I told my mother there are no rooms, just situations" (Riley 19). We might recall how M.R. James's

“Number 13” and Blackwood’s “A Case of Eavesdropping” present the dissolution of rooms as utterly horrific, proving the Victorian preoccupation about a segregation of space that was deemed essential, but also pointing to the imminent evolution of domestic space, into a space that would become freer and less constricted as time went on.

In these same stories that take place in hotel rooms, I also mentioned the value of a party wall, especially in a new type of impersonal space that placed strangers in close proximity to each other, and under the same roof. Nowhere is the need for a solid party wall more apparent than in the British terraced homes, or in the even narrower Dutch row houses, as in our next example. The following contemporary “homes,” splendidly illustrate how the traditional concept of a solid party wall, separating neighbours and guaranteeing each other’s privacy, is completely deconstructed and literally and figuratively distorted. In Bjarne Mastenbroek’s and MVRDV’s Double

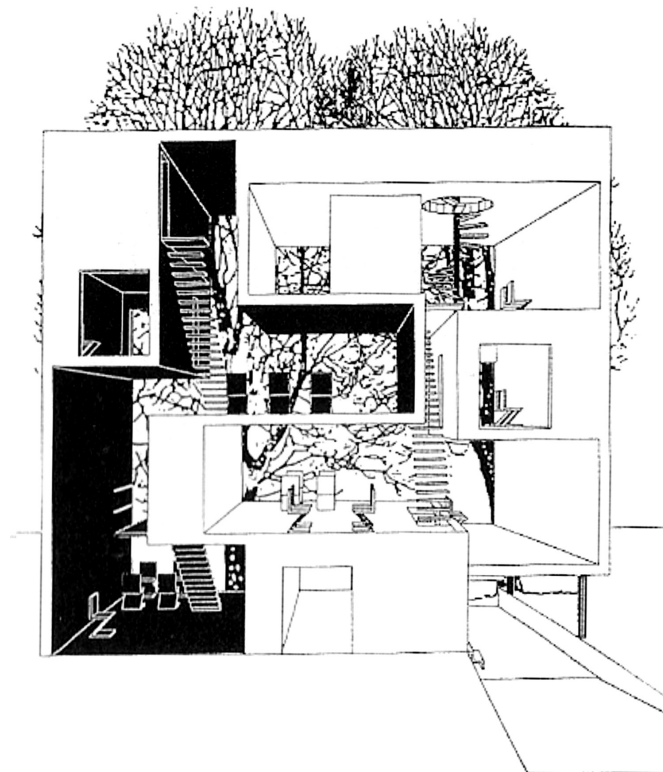


Fig. 2. Bjarne Mastenbroek and MVRDV’s Double House, Utrecht, Netherlands, in Terence Riley, *The Un-Private House* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1999) 16.

House in Utrecht, the Netherlands, “the architects warped the party wall into a zigzag between the two units. This structure affects in the residents a palpable awareness of their neighbours and the interlocked spaces of the building they share, which clearly counters the logic of the traditional party wall and the privacy it affords”(Riley 16).

Another drastic transformation brought about by modernist architecture is the way that the domestic plan has changed, in order to respond to new sorts of inhabitants, which are no longer defined or unified by the traditional concept of family. In the Hergott Shephard Residence, for example, the owners are two gay men. Since they do not cook on a regular basis, and prefer instead to host fund-raising events, their home no longer reflects the kitchen/pantry/dining-room separation and logic that early modernist homes, such as Wright’s homes still maintained. Instead, their small kitchen is placed next to a garage that also functions as an organizational area for the catering services that they hire for their social events (Riley 26,27).

In *The Millenium House*, Peggy Deamer argues that our essential domestic needs have not changed, thus attempting to shorten the distance between the Victorian home and the less traditional contemporary one: “we still get up, search for that cup of coffee, go to work, look forward to the solace of friends and family at the end of the day, enjoy good food, and appreciate a comfortable bed” (9). However, Deamer does admit that these needs, “need not imply traditional architecture” (9) or a plan that resembles the Victorian heavily segregated and compartmentalized home. I argue that despite Deamer’s perhaps wistful notion about contemporary life still addressing traditional domestic needs, the nature of these requirements, as well as the space that is tailored around them has undoubtedly undergone drastic transformations. The examples that I present above confirm this. Certainly the last case that I wish to discuss should convince us that new types of dwellings vary so greatly from the Victorian home, that even their basic identity as a “home” is brought into question.

While this dwelling points to a surprising dissolution between the public and the private, that might be considered ground-breaking, it also echoes distant house types,



Fig. 3. Curtain Wall House with curtains closed, Tokyo 1995, in Terence Riley, *The Un-Private House* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1999) 72.



Fig. 4. Curtain Wall House with curtains open, Tokyo 1995, in Terence Riley, *The Un-Private House* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., 1999) 73.

such as the medieval hall and its fusion of the public and the private, thus proving the cyclical nature of cultural notions that shape domestic sites.⁴ Shigeru Ban's Curtain Wall House takes Mies van der Rohe's glass box a step further, by proposing enclosures defined not by transparency, but by vacuity and mutability. Instead of a transparent, glass wall, we are presented with no wall at all. When the structure is "open," we sense a virtual enclosure, suggested by the lines of the roof above, and the floor below. The only sort of tangible barrier consists of monumental curtains that can be closed for greater "privacy," or opened to reveal the home's more "public" areas, and with it, an uncanny, doll-house-like interior. This drastic aperture and its ability to mutate, following its inhabitants' wishes, questions the essence of private and public in unprecedented ways. The enormous drapes, enveloping the whole dwelling, cancel out the need for windows, and ridicule the Victorian home's obsession for

4. One basic element in which this dwelling differs entirely from the medieval hall, is this modern dwelling's utter disregard for defensive and solid outer structures.

over shrouding its limited amount of windows. Not even the Crystal Palace, with its innovative transparent casing, could have announced the arrival of structures like these, which embody whimsical new ways of both addressing, and ignoring, the main division between the outside and the inside, the private and the public, concealment and surveillance.

I would like to end my thesis with a perhaps nostalgic defense of the Victorian home, and suggest that, even though spatial segregation and delimitation were taken to problematic extremes by the Victorians (resulting in the claustrophobic and dark interiors of Gothic fiction), this management of space undoubtedly provided them with a scheme that guided and reassured them, and with a home that fostered but also effectively contained their anxieties. After all, theirs was a *home*, differing greatly from the types of dwellings that would come later, whose utter indifference towards traditional schemes of the private and public, makes us question whether, they too, warrant such a label.





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