Domestic Haunting and Female Trauma in Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca and Sarah Waters's The Little Stranger: A Female Gothic Reading

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Abstract

This paper endeavours to study the two narratives of domestic haunting in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* (2009) as the manifestation of female trauma. It questions how Manderley and Hundreds Hall hold women's suffering, whilst controlling whose memories and whose interpretations become authoritative. This article makes a connection between Female Gothic criticism and trauma theory through comparative close reading across four concerns, namely, remembered space, domestic obligation, narrative silence, and unresolved endings. In Rebecca, the first wife's possessions are retained and the second wife's retrospective speech makes the marriage identity contingent on the oppressive domestic past. In *The Little Stranger*, the location of Caroline's duties, Mrs. Ayres's sorrow, and Betty's unease speaks of women's differently located positions within the estate. The comparison illustrates that social position and narrative mediation separate the appreciation, use and experience of these houses even if they preserve and exclude. The destruction of Manderley and the abandonment of Hundreds Hall create incompleteness in the release. The domestic archive is inherently selective and preserves traces of suffering in particular but does not confer women an authoritative account. This distinction elucidates how the Gothic haunting exposes the unequal relationship of inhabiting a home, possessing it, and being able to exit it.

Keywords: Female Gothic; Trauma Theory; Domestic Haunting; Female Trauma; Domestic Space

الحضور الشبحي في الفضاء المنزلي والصدمة النفسية لدى النساء في روايتي ريبيكا لدافني دو موريه والغريب الصغير لسارة ووترز: قراءة في القوطية النسوية

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المستخلص

يقارن هذا البحث الحضور الشبحي في الفضاء المنزلي والصدمة النفسية لدى النساء في روايتي «ريبيكا» لدافني دو موريه (١٩٣٨) و«الغريب الصغير» لسارة ووترز (٢٠٠٩). ويتساءل عن الكيفية التي يحفظ بها ماندرلي وهندردز هول معاناة النساء، مع التحكم في الذكريات والتفسيرات التي تكتسب سلطة داخل المنزل. ومن خلال قراءة نصية مقارنة، يربط البحث النقد القوطي النسوي بنظرية الصدمة عبر أربعة محاور: المكان المستعاد في الذاكرة، والالتزام المنزلي، والصمت السردي، والنهايات غير المحسومة. ففي «ريبيكا»، يجعل الاحتفاظ بمقتنيات الزوجة الأولى وسرد الزوجة الثانية الاستعادي الهوية الزوجية مرتبطة بماضٍ منزلي ضاغط. أما في «الغريب الصغير»، فتحدد مسؤوليات كارولين وحزن السيدة آيرز وافتقار بيتي إلى الأمان مواقع مختلفة للنساء داخل قصر يفسر فاراداي تدهوره من خلال طموحه المحبط. وتبين المقارنة أن الموقع الاجتماعي والوساطة السردية يميزان هذه التجارب، رغم تشابه وظائف الحفظ والإقصاء التي يؤديها المنزلان. كما ينتج عن احتراق ماندرلي وهجر هندردز هول شكلان مختلفان من التحرر غير المكتمل. ويخلص البحث إلى أن الأرشيف المنزلي انتقائي؛ إذ يحفظ آثار المعاناة دون أن يضمن للنساء سلطة رواية تجاربهن. ويوضح هذا التمييز كيف يكشف الحضور الشبحي القوطي التفاوت بين السكن في المنزل وامتلاكه والقدرة على مغادرته.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القوطية النسوية؛ نظرية الصدمة؛ الحضور الشبحي في الفضاء المنزلي؛ الصدمة النفسية لدى النساء؛ الفضاء المنزلي.

1. Introduction

This paper explores how country houses in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Sarah Waters's *The Little Stranger* (2009) save and reanimate women's pain. The main inquiry is how Manderley and Hundreds Hall operate as domestic repositories of female trauma and how that specific function changes with the novels' different setups of marriage, inheritance, class and narration. Although both Houses retain an unresolved past, they do differently in burdening the present. In Manderley, the living wife is measured against her dead predecessor within a continuing matrimonial order. The daughter, grieving mother, and servant position themselves differently at Hundreds Hall, whose fortunes are on the wane. The situations described above clarify the relationship between domesticity and the vulnerability of women.

It is not accurate to term both of the buildings haunted. An account such as this identifies a common setting which does not explain why this same setting grants prestige to one-character jigs jigs the other. A woman can claim that her safety in a home is only safeguarded if she carries out certain domestic duties or does not cause a family rift. After her death, it may retain her belongings and permit other people to determine the meaning of her life. These contradictions demand a comparison moving between material conditions and narrative representation. Thus, the idea behind the article is tested at the moment when attachment to the house becomes a demand off the back of a woman to be like someone else, preserve an inheritance, accept an interpretation of her suffering, or forego a possible future.

The comparison starts with the Female Gothic conception of home as a site where safety can complement confinement. Female Gothic is defined by Moers (1976) as "the writing that women have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (p. 90). Her formulation identifies a history of women's writing; it does not make any woman in a Gothic narrative the same victim. The current comparison allows the author to deal with authorship while examining the unequal positions of women in the home. Williams (1995) discusses the importance of family structures and gendered identities to the Gothic form. The two estates are relevant here because they organize access, work, recognition, and dependence. The rooms and routines do more than create ambience the determine who may act as mistress, who must remain in charge of the house, and who may be discomfited. So the analysis treats domestic space as an arrangement of relationships rather than assuming a frightening building necessarily has agency of its own.

This method also acknowledges that the Female Gothic is a contested critical category. In Wallace and Smith (2009), we see questions of race, motherhood, nationality, and the body come into the definition, while Horner and Zlosnik (2016) reconsider the energy between woman, Gothic writing and identity. These interventions make a collective account of female victimhood unfashionable. Rebecca, her successor Caroline, Mrs. Ayres and Betty differ in their access to property, recognition as family and narrative authority. In Wallace's (2013) account of women's Gothic historical fiction, the representation of the past connects to women's disconnection from history. The country house archive developed here gives that problem a specific form of comparison: a household may conserve a woman's belongings while denying her authority over the history those belongings are made to represent.

The theory of trauma is integrated with domestic violence to problematise time. Caruth (1996) notes that the traumatic event is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" (p. 4). The stress on incompleteness concentrates on the interval of an event, and its later narration, rather than making every memory a symptom. The study of Whitehead (2004) discusses the literary forms responsible for this disturbance. The link with the Female Gothic relates to the connection between conditions that confine women and the narrative returns that make their effects evident. A bedroom preserved, a dream recurred and an understanding of unusual sounds can bring a loss that was never resolved into the present. Nevertheless, haunting is not ipso facto evidence of trauma, while grief, fear and social decline are not the same. An essay on how female trauma identifies not a retrospective clinical diagnosis of characters but a literary problem of enduring injury, loss and limited expression. The interdisciplinary anthology by Caruth (1995) sets out the more general problem of the communication of suffering when memory itself resists narration. Luckhurst's (2008) a scholarly history of the concept provides a crucial qualification: trauma is not fixed to any one vocabulary. This reading examines narrative effects and inequalities, rather than playing a literary motif against an imaginary diagnostic test.

The term domestic archive refers to the material and narrative traces through which a household manages its past. This encompasses rooms, things, enactments, recalls, and the characters' own accounts of these. When something is archived, it shows that it is being selective that what remains on view may be a reflection of its custodians' power or the power of the suffering who was affected. Gordon (1997) argues that haunting interrogates the hidden social relations in the world, and this helps link the selectivity to the gothic form. The analytical question, then, is not simply whose house remembers but rather whose experience it holds, how that experience is read and who is prevented from giving a counter-reading. This degree doesn't see design as a clear reflection of a non-differentiate female past.

The archival model is useful for close reading due to three connected operations. Preservation refers to the traces that exist, such as Rebecca's room or Faraday's remembered piece of plaster. The concept of activation refers to the encounter that a trace experiences where it acquires pressure in the present. An object becomes a standard against which things are compared, or a damaged surface seems to solicit restoration. The power to explain determines the interpretation. The separation of occupancy will not allow the argument to leap from a previous possession to something about female trauma. It is essential to demonstrate the intervening connection by which a memory is affecting a woman. The model allows for refusal too: wanting to leave a house can be a reasonable response to the demands of that house, rather than a sign that the woman is not valuing its history.

The existing criticism provides basis for this comparison. According to Horner and Zlosnik (1998), du Maurier's Gothic imagination is based on writing and identity. According to research by Llompart Pons in 2013, we can find villainy in *Rebecca* not thanks to a simplistic opposition between male aggressors and female victims, but rather by looking at positions within patriarchy. Heilmann (2012) interrogates how the novel negotiates Victorian and 1940s intertexts while Waters connects the constrained lives of the women in the novel with the feminist Gothic and faces it explicitly with earlier women's fiction, such as Rebecca. This article develops a sustained comparison of the operations of the domestic archive, building on

these studies, particularly the difference between simply preserving a woman's traces and granting authority to her perspective.

Waters's novels are distinguished by equal significance of material and historic. Scholar Boehm (2011) locates material imagination within the problem of representing history, directing our attention toward what objects and buildings make available to understanding. Mitchell (2013) focuses on Waters's writing in historical fiction, feminism, space and sexuality debates. Parker (2013) looks at *The Little Stranger* through the country-house tradition in that collection. In combination, these approaches establish why we should read the estate as a social and literary institution. This comparison asks how this material survival affects women differently, where preserving a house becomes an alibi to restrict a woman's future.

The historical comparison needs a distinction between publishing and setting. Rebecca was published in 1938, while Waters's 2009 novel retells the pressures of postwar Britain through Faraday's account. The later novel does not merely substitute marital subjugation with class decline. Its inheritance plot merges class aspiration, professional authority, household work and marriage into the same sphere of engagement. Wisker's (2022) exploration of domestic haunting likewise highlights the connection between a house's seeming safety with women's control and vulnerability. The comparison outlined below inquiries into how these relationships shift when the house is approached by a new wife, sustained by an inherited household, or desired by a socially ambitious outsider.

A straightforward narrative of progress is inadequate due to the historical distance that separates precisely those texts. Waters writes retrospectively about a period of social reorganization, but Caroline's difficulty determining her future shows that changes in the standing of a class do not automatically displace gendered expectations. On the other hand, the second Mrs. de Winter's own position cannot be understood, in isolation, in terms of privative timidity: the prestige of marriage and the authority of the household give her insecurity a social setting. This comparison shows us how forms of constraining the female are changing rather than presenting a female condition that is the same in both novels. The purpose of these fictional homes was to organize experience. Neither estate is regarded as a full record of British women's lives, nor does the author assume that every disruption of aristocratic continuity is a traumatic loss.

Comparative analysis is bounded and contextualizes by the historical accounts of the Gothic. Botting (1996) and Punter (1996) consider Gothic writing to be part of a growing literary tradition rather than a timeless collection of frightening objects. Miles (2002) genealogy strategically links early Gothic writing to historical discourses of gender and more. This has methodological relevance here: the continuity of a domestic motif need not imply continuity of its social meaning. According to the findings of Hogle (2002) and Spooner's (2006), a selection from Hogle's collection and an account of contemporary Gothic is adaptive, allowing the Gothic to persist over time and across diverse cultural forms. Waters's revival of the earlier period can, therefore, reactivate a familiar house plot but will change whose labour, aspirations and restricted choices that plot brings into view.

Through comparative close readings of remembered space, domestic obligation, narrative silence, and the endings, the discussion proceeds. The consequence of their differences is identified through a question posed to both texts in each section. Passages from the main texts are identified by chapter, longer scenes are discussed by attributed paraphrase. Study association keeps theoretical concepts tied to textual analysis and allows comparative implications to develop throughout the argument.

2. Remembered Space and Unequal Access

While both novels recall the house, the opening sentences generate different relationships between memory and belonging. The speaker of Rebecca begins, “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again” (du Maurier, 1938/2015, chap. 1). The process of returning occurs, while the term “again” implies repetition prior to what is lost. For example, Faraday begins with an earlier encounter:” I first saw Hundreds Hall when I was ten years old” (Waters, 2009, chap. 1). The 'first' creates the first movement in the narrative to which it will return. The difference is noticeable: the second Mrs. de Winter recalls a home she lived in, while Faraday recalls a home whose prestige he was fascinated by before he had any claim to it.

In *Rebecca*, the dream gives the narrator access to a house that waking life cannot give back. When a remembered approach is altered by obstruction and modified surroundings, the return does not restore a secure earlier possession. The story creates a tension of intimacy and distance: Manderley is familiar enough to structure the narrator’s imagination, but too estranged as a living home. The beginning has a purpose beyond describing charming ruins. It puts the reader, within a life-after-death domestic experience before the experience factors of a domestic experience. In Caruth’s (1996) account of belated return, the dream can indicate that the narrator has not fully assimilated what happened there. By itself, it does not establish a particular psychiatric diagnosis or prove that every detail remembered is traumatic.

Bachelard’s (1958/1994) account of domestic spaces as repositories of dreams and memories helps us understand the powerful grip of this attachment. The claim that “our house is our corner of the world” (p. 4) establishes a spatial sense of intimacy. The phrase ‘his home’ which has a possessive pronoun exposes a question that the two novels make hard: whose experience can legitimately stand for the home as a whole? The dream matters as the house keeps organizing an intimate fantasy life after the loss. Despite the ability to remember the room, this does not necessarily mean that occupying the room once was to find security; and, thus, we must qualify this use of Bachelard by the novel’s social relations. Faraday's childhood memory makes the qualification sharper. The recollected interior belongs to a household whose servants were his mother, so its imaginative value is bound up with unequal access. The openings distinguish the power of a house to sustain recollection from its power to sustain an equitable home.

The sequence followed by Rebecca in supplying this information is important for this effect. Before the social offer of marriage, the reader experiences both return and loss. So, later accounts of Manderley cannot just be read innocently as achieving a romantic dream as the

opening has already put that achievement under pressure. Whitehead's (2004) focus on narrative form helps clarify why this ordering matters. The reader's movements as they pass through the work produce a temporal disturbance, not just what the narrator relays about memory. Faraday's opening works uniquely. Starting with the child's meeting makes a seemingly continuous history of attachment available to explain the adult's behaviour. One narrator constructs a narrative that centres on something that cannot be recovered while the other establishes how a certain ideal got its hold.

Faraday's memory constructs a different relation between observer and building. The childhood trip the protagonist made makes the estate a measure of social distance; it is beautiful and impressive because it belongs to a world to which his family has subordinate access. His attachment is directed to the home as an object of desire. The recollection of that act of breaking off a piece of ornamental plaster gives form to this aspiration (Waters 2009, chap. 1). The first look at an object is often a look of possession. The action foresees the difficulty of separating his concern for the Ayres household from his desire for the place in question. This also complicates any impression of him as a neutral observer of an independently haunted house.

The littleness of Faraday's purloined particle should also not be lost on one. The piece does not allow the man to acquire the status of the whole estate, yet it does allow him to imagine that he can take its beauty away for himself and possess it. An early act of contradiction in a property's attachment when the owner tries to keep something of the house, it is damaging. The incident in question complicates his position as advocate of continuity, though after his later horror at deterioration. His wish is not merely to leave the estate untouched for its present inhabitants; he has a private claim that its public greatness does not meet. The second wife comparison is quite enlightening. Her difficulty occurs in the entering of a role, already occupied by memory, while his difficulty occurs in obtaining a relation to a prestigious object, one that admiration alone does not secure.

Combined together, these openings create unequal retrospective authority. The unnamed woman recounts the aftermath of living within the marital order of Manderley: the male doctor introduces me to Hundreds Hall through the history of the fascination. Both accounts do not offer unrestricted access to the women connected to the house. Rebecca can't recount her experiences; we reconstruct them through others. Caroline's, Mrs. Ayres's and Betty's experiences reach us through Faraday. Therefore, the houses enter into the novels as remembered spaces already under selection. In terms of how the two domiciliary archives become legible, it is critical to note the difference between a woman's memory of her own displacement and a man's memory of his wish for social entry.

The objects carry out this contrast beyond the openings. Mrs. Danvers keeps Rebecca's room, clothes, and possessions at Manderley. The first wife's non-presence is socially active as the arrangement continues: the second wife encounters an already established template of taste, competence, and authority (du Maurier, 1938/2015). At Hundreds Hall, the failing surfaces and damaged fittings indicate the continuance of a house's struggle to be a house (Waters, 2009). The preservation and the deterioration thus exert opposing pressures. Manderley appears to expect the new occupant to conform to an intact domestic ideal, whereas Hundreds Hall seems to demand that its last remaining occupants keep an ever more unmanageable

inheritance in use. In either case, the material milieu acquires a force by virtue of the expectations that are attached to it.

At Manderley, the morning room creates this pressure as part of normal activity. Rebecca's writing supplies and ready-made household arrangements face the second wife with signs of competent management (du Maurier, 1938/2015). While the room might appear ready for use, its new occupant is probably not entitled to use it. Desk provides a place that directs the household but also makes one conscious of somebody else who understands the role better. The archive thus operates through routine practices and exceptional moments of fear. When writing, receiving instruction, or being put in a known place, those things become meaningful as they expose a gap between legal or marital position and lived authority. The existence of the gap demonstrates how the new wife can hold a title but does not subjectively possess the house.

In Rebecca's bedroom, domestic intimacy is enhanced into display which is controlled by Mrs. Danvers. The stewardess's protection of intimacy enables her to direct the second wife's encounter with a woman who cannot respond to and correct the presentation (du Maurier, 1938/2015). This implies that Rebecca's memory is more powerful than we realised. How that memory is curated: how the objects are arranged, and the authority of the guide determines what the visitor can see and feel. The distribution of privacy is unequal. While the space of the dead woman is on display, the response of the living woman is vulnerable. Hundreds Hall presents a unique material problem. As its condition deteriorates, the private costs associated with the upkeep of a grand household become increasingly difficult to mask, replacing the show of preserved perfection with exposure due to insufficient means.

This description of unease provides a complementary account. Freud's essay on the Return of the Repressed (1919) examines the unnerving return of those things that ought to have remained familiar or concealed. Anderson explains the sinister implications of estrangement within apparently domestic space as developed by Vidler (1992). When applied to the team in the current context, respectively, which a mess in the bedroom can be disturbing to observers even when no mere wreck, while a wrecked house can inspire a torrent of affectionate loyalty from a spectator. The Gothic effect is the result of unsettling the familiarity of the user, not the state of the building. Manderley makes for the new custodian the intimate object, while Hundreds Hall makes the persistence of familiar surroundings intolerable for the household to live in.

The difference also challenges the assertion that all marks left behind by the house are analogous to the same wound. Rebecca's possessions are a reminder that Maxim would rather keep under control; they also become means through which Mrs. Danvers intimidates the second Mrs. De Winter. No one liberating meaning defines a surviving object. Similarly, the decay of Hundreds Hall may suggest the exhausting of inherited privilege without making the privilege itself an innocent victim. Caroline may see what Faraday values as cultural loss as an obligation she desires to escape. The archive contains clashing affinities and the critic ought to distinguish them, and not understand every response to the estate as evidence of a common trauma.

The Manderley broken ornament serves as an effective contrast to Faraday's childhood theft. When the china Cupid is cracked by the second wife, she is not so confident to report the

damage (du Maurier, 1938/2015). The two episodes assign the centrality of a small damaged object to a large house in an unequal relation. However, their motives vary. Faraday, stunned to find himself in the presence of an admirable piece of the world, decides to take action. Faraday's action shows that the narrator is afraid that her hiding will show that she is unfit to manage a world. Comparison is more effective to make legibility of damage which is social relationship rather than psychological injury. One tries to claim beauty while the other tries to prevent an accident from validating her inadequacy. In every situation, the object reveals the restricted authority of a person whose attachment surpasses a secure sense of ownership.

The words of Faraday when he says "What horrified me were the signs of decay" (Waters, 2009, chap. 1) makes clear this distinction. His response is underscored: the damage disturbs a comforting image of the house. The account of Caroline's labour, Mrs. Ayres's bereavement or Betty's insecurity is not yet. His choice of word elevates decay into an emotional crisis while centring the viewer who values the estate. In contrast, the initial dream of *Rebecca* locates the previous tenant's attachment in a narrative already tinged by loss. The two accounts of what happened on that day show that the significance of architecture, whether damaged or preserved, depends on who is speaking and the relationship they want to maintain with the house.

Scale further accentuates these differences. Grandeur assures Faraday of distinction but Betty perceives the big house through separation, and the practical conditions of service (Waters, 2009, chap. 1). Space is important to a guest but can be an intimidating workspace for an employee. At Manderley, the trouble lies not so much in a lack of domestic organization as in the newcomer's inability to understand and direct an organization that is already working. The properties therefore disprove a common assumption that spaciousness suggests freedom. The scope for movement exists in rooms and corridors; however, it is only when these possibilities are recognized and accepted that they will come into play. In these novels, a spatial restriction does not mean a locked door or an inability to move. It relates a person to a domestic system.

It follows from the comparison that remembered space is an unequal resource. Manderley's past becomes a standard against which a new wife is judged; Hundreds Hall's past becomes an ideal whose maintenance burdens women differently. Although these strategies are interrelated, they are not identical. One condition belonging to replacing an apparently irreplaceable predecessor; the other condition belonging to sustaining a social world whose future is uncertain. The strength of the houses lies from this tension between continuity and change and not merely their age and scale and any suggestion of a ghost. The next question is how those contradictory demands are distributed through marriage, kinship, and service.

3- Marriage, Inheritance, and Domestic Obligation

The second Mrs. de Winter gets into a new social position by marriage but her entry into Manderley does not allow effective authority over it. The rooms, the servants, and the established routine constantly remind you that while one may bear the title of mistress, one must be it. By comparison to Rebecca, her own inadequacy is judged by institutional measures, not just personal ones. The household supplies those measures (du Maurier, 1938/2015). The insights of Horner and Zlosnik (1998) into unstable identity in du Maurier's

Gothic writing makes it clear. The narrator feels insecure because the social role seems different in the name than in the practice when occupied.

The episode of a costume ball transforms that unstable role into a show. On the instructions of Mrs. Danvers, the second wife wears a costume, portrayed in the family portrait, not knowing the same was worn by Rebecca before her (du Maurier, 1938/2015). Aiming to please Maxim and appear to belong to the family tradition involuntarily produces a repetition. It is a more accurate description than saying that Rebecca merely haunts the new wife. The model is provided by the archive, the relevant knowledge is controlled by the housekeeper, and the younger woman supplies the body through which the past is staged again. She cannot feel embarrassed; blame this unequal information. Different people have different perceptions. What the girl perceives as an original act of inclusion, others view through a lens from which she is excluded.

The authority of the portrait is significant as it renders conformity a secure path to enjoy the benefits of recognition. The narrator of Rebecca does not reject the Manderley convention but rather lives within it. The failure thereby lays bare that double demand of her position: she must become a convincing mistress, yet not resemble the predecessor who defines success therein. Imitation nor difference does not guarantee security. Caroline faces a different version of that impossible task, comparative. Not leaving home despite having a future choice of their own, the family house makes demands that contradict on-going loyalty while leaving can seem a failure of loyalty. Hence, both the novels make it hard for a woman to satisfy domestic obligation on her terms. They assign recognition to conditions whose understanding is largely determined by others.

Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of restrictive images of femininity in nineteenth-century literature offers a useful antecedent for this representational dilemma. Neither of the wives is identified with a fixed angelic or monstrous type by comparison. It rather asks who has benefitted from the fact that one woman is judged as the ideal. Rebecca's seemingly flawless nature instils fear in the predecessor, whereas the subsequent rendition of her transgression can cause that predecessor's submission appears appealing. Through norms of feminine loyalty, Faraday realizes Caroline's reticence in the same light. In both novels, judgement about a woman's character can conceal disagreement about the obligations others want to impose on her.

Caroline's position inverts the correlation between entry and belonging. She is already a member of the Ayres family and does not need admission to Hundreds Hall; her difficulty is the expectation that she will continue to maintain it. The financial burden and practical responsibility make inheritance a claim on her time and future (Waters, 2009). The second Mrs de Winter seeks a place within an established household while Caroline increasingly wonders whether the household should define her life. A comparison of the two shows that Female Gothic confinement need not be alike. It may function through being excluded from a desired role or the incapacity to relinquish an already-owned role.

Differences in how domestic labour is made apparent the routines already established at Manderley present it as an accomplished social world into which the second wife should fit. The previous mistress works through servants and expectations to sustain that appearance and organize the work. The role of Caroline in Hundreds Hall is connected much more obviously

with the problem of how to keep the estate functioning than that of Roger (Waters, 2009). The argument being made is not that one house needs labour and not the other. Instead, their different states of being affect the appearance of work, whether as one's effortless refinement or the effort needed to avoid further decline. For the women in question, both setups are limiting: the showing of competence at Manderley and the endless footing of bills of care at Hundreds Hall subordinates personal ease to public identity of the household. Parker (2013) draws attention to how the country-house tradition renders this labour consequential to the genre itself: the prestige of the estate must be assessed alongside the work to reproduce it. This reading shifts the comparison from the houses' appearance to the unequal conditions of their sustaining.

It is important to consider the materiality of these constraints. The new Mrs. de Winter is thrown into uncertainty by domestic conventions that seem natural because they predate her arrival. The necessity of Caroline's labour is shown to be dependent on family continuity. It is not necessary for either woman to be physically imprisoned within the house, preventing her choices. Williams (1995) provides an account of the Gothic family that helps explain how dependence is organized through kinship and domestic authority rather than permanent physical coercion. In both texts, the household's apparent permanence encourages its residents to think that adaptation by women is more possible than transformation of the institution itself. The distinction lies in what the adaptation demands: obedience to a predecessor at Manderley, sustained expenditure of care and effort in Hundreds Hall.

The marital plot and the inheritance plot are brought into direct relation by Caroline's relationship with Faraday. The potential union grants him a closer proximity to the family he has long respected, although it will not take him to the same places as bride. Her desire to leave the estate conflicts with his attachment to it. The intersections of class aspiration and gendered authority is where this conflict is located, says Kirby (2025). For the current comparison, it is vital that marriage may produce the demand that Caroline remain connected with the house. As the second Mrs. de Winter faces the repercussions of entering an unknown estate as a wife, Caroline faces the fact that becoming a wife will prevent her from departing a familiar one.

Caroline confronts this conflict head on in a heated exchange with Faraday, when she asks him, "Or is it the house you want? (Waters, 2009, ch. 13) The question places his love alongside a possible alternative and requires the reader to distinguish between the two. She exclaimed later, "I hate this house! (Waters, 2009, chap. 13), does not go along with the assumption that an inherited home must command affection. When taken together, the question and the exclamation mark allow us to see that she challenges his motives and makes an estimation of the estate that his admiration cannot accommodate. In contrast to Mrs. de Winter's earlier wish to succeed within Manderley, Caroline's refusal contests the desirability of staying within the literal domestic arrangement at all.

Caroline's hesitation also challenges the boundaries of a paternal explanation of protection. Faraday can think of staying connected to Hundreds Hall as a normal future because the estate has an intrinsic value to him which does not depend on doing Caroline's work or sharing her desire to leave. Potentially, there is disagreement about what security requires, hidden behind the apparent offer. It cannot be determined whether her future will be secured

with a partner of her choice by marriage or the house will remain with her when marriage takes place. It needs to be evaluated through her ability to choose the conditions under which she would live. The second Mrs. de Winter's dependence develops through a related discrepancy: entry into a privileged marriage enlarges her social position but does not immediately secure her confidence or decision-making authority. A kind description of an arrangement cannot solve the unequal experience of inhabiting it.

This difference means that we cannot simply dichotomize *Rebecca* as a novel about gender and *The Little Stranger* as a novel about class. In both cases, the estate's desirability is linked to the social meaning of marriage. The magnificence of Manderley renders the narrator's elevated status plausible, yet it also ensures her indignity. The prestige of Hunders Hall aids in explaining Faraday's belief in a future Caroline increasingly finds unacceptable. The houses do not impose these futures on characters mechanically, who interpret, defend and enforce them. The reasoning behind comparison is the way domestic ideals make women's accommodation appear necessary to other people's security or ambition.

Another link is made by Mrs. Danvers and Mrs. Ayres between preservation and loss. Mrs. Danvers is in charge of the late Rebecca's clothes and daily activities, making sure the first Mrs. de Winter is always present in their lives. Mrs. Ayres' fixation on her deceased daughter Suki helped her explain the disturbances in their environment (Waters, 2009). Both women attribute a relationship to the home with some absent figure, but the objects and consequences of their attachments differ. It is possible for Mrs Danver to direct preserved memory against living successor; Mrs Ayres experiences the house through maternal grief. Their parallel does not show that grief is the same as coercion. The alternative taken up here shows how a domestic past may be maintained through practices governing others or deepening their own vulnerability.

LaCapra's (2001) distinction between acting out and working through helps to describe the problem in question, but relies on repetition as the full explanation. Having repeated encounters with a lost person means having some past which has not been assigned a stable position in present life. Nevertheless, the comparison must also keep the social conditions of that recurrence. Mrs. Danvers's power as housekeeper lets her condition remembrance as a demand made of the second wife; Mrs. Ayres's reading of the disturbances is open to Faraday's rival readings. As a result, memory is both an emotional tie and a practice that affects the position of a speaker. There is insufficient language to adequately capture the uneven distributions of power at work.

Mrs. Danvers's attachment and Mrs. Ayres's attachment are also separated in time. The housekeeper's saving of Rebecca places the second wife under recurrent comparisons with a sexually idealized predecessor. Mrs. Ayres's sorrow directs focus upon a past loss for the family, one that the house's current arrangements cannot fix. In both instances, the present is assessed through absence, yet, the consequences have varying effects on others. While Mrs Danvers can exert an active memory management over her standard, the disturbances mentioned by Mrs Ayres become a matter for others to accept or contest. As a result, reading the women together prevents mourning from becoming a self-sufficient explanation of domestic power. An individual's relationship with the dead may reveal his or her

susceptibility. Without inhibitions, one may use the dead to shape his or her judgment of the living. They can use this as a means of control or withdrawal from the living.

Betty clearly delineates the boundaries of a unified understanding of women's experience. She is a young servant living in Hundreds Hall through employment rather than inheritance or marriage. Her complaint that "it in't like a proper house at all," challenges the assumption that grandeur guarantees domestic security (Waters, 2009, chap. 1). The dialect is important her story does not take on the dialect of the house's prestige. She discomforted by the conditions in which she has to work and live. Insight into Placing Her beside Mrs. Danvers Although both of them are domestic servants, the established housekeeper is able to monitor the memory of the household while Betty initially has little control on the interpretation of her fear. Therefore, a female Gothic analysis requires differences within servitude and between servants and masters. Just because she is inside the house does not mean that she has what it takes to create the domestic order.

Betty's account of her preferred employment gives practical ground to the distinction. In chapter one she describes factory work as a disallowed alternative by her father, who expects domestic service will teach her the proper ways to behave (Waters, 2009, chap. 1). Consequently, her presence at Hundreds Hall exudes authority beyond the Ayres household. The estate is part of a larger trend of young women's labour, mobility, and respectability. Her fear cannot be understood simply as a response to the uncanny interior, because leaving that interior will also require leaving the social order to follow an alternative. Caroline's inherited obligation is different from this although both of them are similar in their assumption that a woman's future must serve a domestic arrangement chosen or approved by someone else.

Mrs. Danvers' greater authority within service does not negate the estate's hierarchy; it illustrates how that hierarchy can delegate power. Her knowledge of objects, routines, and personal history gives her power over an inexperienced mistress. Betty has no equivalent command of a prestigious household memory. Accordingly, the contrast requires more than a division of women above and below stairs. The actions of each servant are influenced by their age, knowledge, intimacy with the family and control of routines. By distinguishing between agency and autonomy, the feminist position is sharpened thus recognizing agency under conditions that are unequal, and not either present or absent. Mrs. Danvers can constrain another woman without becoming the mistress of Manderley in the same way that before Betty has the means of leaving her situation, she is able to appreciate its inadequacy.

According to Llompart Pons (2013) "the vilainy in this novel is not related to gender" (p. 69). The qualification shifts the focus towards access to power, instead of pre-emptively linking moral positions to a character's sex. The oppressive use of memory by Mrs. Danvers cannot be accounted for in a scheme in which every woman equals resistance and every man equals domination. There is no need to idealize the inherited structure of Hundreds Hall for sympathy towards Caroline or Mrs Ayres. The estates allocate risk but do not eliminate women's differences in status and authority. The domestic archive is therefore a conflict arena. It registers grief and exclusion, but the protectors of the archive may in turn use the past to prolong the very relationship that is constraining others.

"The option to leave becomes a more useful comparative tool than the vague assertion that 'all women are imprisoned' in relation to these figures." The second wife of the estate seeks

inclusion; Caroline, a chance to escape from Hundreds Hall; Mrs Ayres remains affectively attached to a lost child; while Betty's attachment to the estate is structured by service. Waters's work gets an affirmative feminist gothic reading by Wisker (2016), drawing attention on the constraining stories around women. The comparison further enhances that attention by asking whose desired future requires the home to carry on, and whose requires separation from it. Differences like these go right to the heart of who gets to account for suffering that domestic continuity creates.

4- Silence, Narrative Authority, and the Limits of Testimony

The novels preserve women traces through the houses, but neither novel gives all the women concerned an equal opportunity. The second wife, whose reflective voice merges memory, self-doubt, and dependence on Maxim, tells Rebecca this. The narrative of *The Little Stranger* is communicated by Faraday, the professional identity of whom idealizes the credibility of his account. Architectural description should not be considered external evidence uninfluenced by the narrator's intentions. The voices that give access to the houses are inseparably linked to what the reader knows about them. The archive is, formally and materially, selective: a surviving room or object acquires significance through a narrative that may reveal one experience while keeping another hidden.

The second Mrs. de Winter's lack of identity is one sign of this tension. The story is told but the individual is publicly identified through her husband's name, also the name of the predecessor whose memory troubles her. The uncertainty of the woman who is being narrated and the narrating woman's continuously sustained account makes it difficult to suggest that she is voiceless. She is able to relate the pressures of Manderley but narration does not instantly liberate her from the values through which she understands them (du Maurier, 1938/2015). The idea that her voice is an indication of experience means a justification of their marriage relationship still goes on. According to the speaker, "the female gothic problem is thus not merely the absence of speech but the conditions through which speech gets its apparent intelligibility."

The tension finds a verbal form in a later claim of the narrator to Mrs. Danvers, "I am Mrs de Winter now" (du Maurier, 1938/2015, chap. 21). The declaration in the present tense asserts authority; the final adverb marks a succession whose legitimacy is still contested. As a result, while her increased confidence is genuine, it is still dependent on something. She speaks through the married title who also names the woman she has replaced. The scene does not just convert silence into freedom. The second wife learns to command within an inherited hierarchy, while leaving the terms of that hierarchy substantially unchanged.

The narrator's later ability to tell is further separated from her first ability to act. The narrative provides a consistent form to interactions that the younger woman, at the time they occurred, could not interpret or understand with confidence. As there is a time lapse, the recognition is possible. However, events can be arranged around a later presentation of Maxim and the marriage. Consequently, the reader must pay attention, eventually, to the insight recollection offers and the commitments it preserves. Faraday's perspective demands a similar differentiation between memory and comprehension. The thoroughness with which he describes Hundreds Hall doesn't show that he recognizes every implication of his attachment. A full narrative can coexist with limited self-knowledge. Within both texts, the amount of

remembered detail is distinct from the narrator's willingness or ability to re-consider the interests that organize it.

Rebecca is in the opposite position. Although her name appears in the title and her traces are scattered throughout the house, it is not her voice that we hear but rather a voice mediated by what others have remembered, judged, and divulged. Mrs Danvers keeps that ideal image, while Maxim presents a narrative that reflects his own behaviour and interests. The second spouse relates both to her matrimony. The versions compete with each other but do not combine to form a clear record of Rebecca's experience. In the view of Llompart Pons (2013), the novel disrupts a simple gender assignment of victim and villain. A reading sensitive to trauma must therefore grapple with the violence that accompanies Rebecca's death, while at the same time not treating every malign judgement of her character as reliable evidence.

The two women's names create an additional inconsistency in terms. Rebecca is a readily visible name and the name of the narrator is not available. The visibility of a woman does not confer authority directly. Although she is named, it is not that woman who is engaged in the act of narration. Moreover, anonymity of the woman confines her to choosing the order in which we encounter her. This reversal warns us not to equate female erasure with omission. Through repetition, nonetheless, a woman may be denied control over her representation. Similarly, a narrator may speak at length while signalling her identity through a marital position. The domestic archive has these two problems at once: it preserves a dominant image of the dead wife and gives the living wife a voice whose organizing desire remains closely bound to her husband.

Maxim's admission regarding Rebecca's death is significant mainly because the narrator only receives it through her desire for reassurance about his feelings. Data that ought to unveil the threat of marital authority can allow her to relax regarding being compared with the first wife. The emotional movement is disturbing: the second wife's growing sense of security need not coincide with justice for the dead woman du Maurier (1938/2015) This is a limit on the archive as testimony. The traces that are preserved may compel a muted event to emerge into discussion, but the surmising that follows may safeguard the relation that enabled it. Exposure of an event is not an endorsement.

The disclosure juxtaposes two short statements: "I killed Rebecca" and "I hated her" (du Maurier, 1938/2015, chap. 20). The first points to an act of violence; the second can be taken by the narrator as a response to her fear that Maxim is physically still in love with his first wife. Because of their closeness, the redirection of blame from death to reassurance in the surviving marriage is disturbing. Maxim further controls the account through which the deceased woman is then judged. The plot can't proceed without his testimony but that doesn't make his review of Rebecca unbiased because of its narrative significance. The difference between admitting to an act and controlling the interpretation of that action is crucial to the unequal voice granted by the domestic archive.

This statement reflects an ethically ambiguous position of the reader in the disclosure. As the story has made the second wife's anxiety intimate and sustained, her relief from rivalry can feel like resolution even when the information generating that relief reveals violence. As a result, it interrogates emotional identification. To trace the narrator's changing feelings is not

by any means to endorse the account that makes them possible. A comparative reading must maintain that distance rather than substituting the narrator's attachment for an equally unqualified condemnation of every statement made. Her response showcases how a domestic order can draw in a vulnerable person in its own justification, for the promise of finally belonging makes the reassessment of a powerful man less urgent than the removal of a female rival.

Faraday's story creates a similar gap between access and authority. A doctor is allowed into domestic spaces and intimate conversations, and a man associated with Hundreds Hall has an interest in the fate of the household. Accordingly, his explanations of distress cannot be entirely divorced from the position he occupies within the story. Braid (2013) connects his doubtful class position, the unreliability of the narration, and the novel's ambiguous haunting. This way, we can critically assess his rationalizing language rather than simply replacing it with a definitive supernatural explanation. The uncertainty is significant since the same speaker who records women's experiences also helps decide how the readers are invited to assess them.

Faraday's job creates a different form of persuasive intimacy. His presence may become valuable, expert, and responsive to distress calls within the household. Although those functions are not necessarily false, their credibility explains why his interpretation is plausible. The challenge arises when the professional judgment intertwines with the private wish of the household to remain in a form he values. A women's refraining from sex can be viewed as something that necessitates an explanation rather than a decision that necessitates respect. Braid's (2013) focus on the unreliability of narratives is useful precisely because unreliability does not equal fictionality. Selections, emphasis, and assumptions linking observations to their explanations may be the problem instead. It is important to read Faraday's argument carefully for its connections as well as for its claims of fact.

The contrasting scenarios of Mrs. Ayres and Betty make this mediation explicit. Mrs. Ayres ties the disturbances to the memory of Suki, whereas Faraday sees her perceptions through a competing explanatory framework. When Betty describes her fear, his response was, "In this lovely house? This substitutes the estate's value to him for its effects on her (Waters 2009, chap. 1). The short question reveals an inconsistency about what the same home means. The question is not about whether every interpretation offered by a woman should be taken literally. The question is whether her experience still matters if its explanation is denied. The comparison with *Rebecca* suggests that female testimony can be limited both by intimate marital loyalty and by the authority of an apparently disinterested professional.

The exchange with Betty demonstrates the ability of a listener to acknowledge speech while disqualifying it. Faraday's admiration sets a standard, so her fear appears surprising. Her judgment begins from living in the house as a place of work; his judgment starts from the worth of the house as a prized estate. The conflict cannot be resolved by picking the more attractive description of the property. The speakers occupy different relations to it; it must be recognised. The trouble for the second wife at Manderley is similarly structured: the prestige of her situation can make her anguish appear disproportionate to the advantages she has gained. Whether it is the domestic labor of women or the spoiling of children, an idealized

view of domestic privilege threatens to obscure the experience of the person expected to benefit from this privilege.

Silence thus has more than one purpose. It might register a variety of feelings including uncertainty, social respect, sadness, hiding, or a lack of accessible interlocutor. According to Felman and Laub (1992), testimony is difficult and occurs in relational conditions. They help distinguish between a failure to hear and the absence of something to say. In these narratives, a character's silence alone does not prove their identical injury. The meaning of the second wife's uncertainty before domestic power is different from Rebecca's inability to give answers to the stories told after her death, just as Betty's limited status differs from Mrs. Ayres's bereaved reading of the house. When these differences stay visible comparing is more accurate.

Testimony must also be distinguished from certainty regarding a cause. The assumption that Betty is frightened or that Mrs. Ayres is suffering requires the critic to establish a supernatural agent behind the disturbances. Nor does questioning their rationale make them irrelevant. Felman and Laub (1992) highlight how speaking and listening are related, which supports attention to this intermediate position. The novels make the response of a listener matter even when an event remains unclear. This is especially crucial for the comparison: *Rebecca* attaches the second wife's altered interpretation to revelations about an identifiable marital history, whereas *The Little Stranger* sustains indeterminacy about a haunting agency. The different levels of explanatory closure do not absolve one from considering whose experience is taken seriously by each narrator.

Cavallaro's (2002) analysis of horror, terror and fear gives us reason to distinguish terrifying experience from an actual settled explanation of its cause. A sense of expectancy or unease may organize a narrative even when the reader cannot identify a supernatural agent. The analysis of generational female trauma in Mexican Gothic by McClelland (2024) proves an interesting point of contrast. It employs sensory abundance and grotesque representation to make perceptible women's suffering. That commentary discusses a separate estate and should not be considered evidence for either estate examined here. It prevents silence from being the solitary literary marker of trauma, which is its comparative value. The two novels, *Rebecca* and *The Little Stranger*, have a plethora to offer. The damage inflicted is visually clear. So are the different objects and intensely registered scenes in the plot. These too make available for perception a sense of discomfort. The narrators here control the meaning. So do the interpreters.

The connection between physical evidence and speech varies across the two social strata. Rebecca's belongings at Manderley make it difficult to remove her, but they also prevent her from speaking on her own. Incidents at Hundreds Hall, whether visual, audible, or tactile, produce tensions about what is happening and who can explain it. In the first book, a named absent woman saturates the archive; in the second, uncertainty about agency becomes archivally operative. Neither arrangement guarantees the truth. Instead, each requires readers to check the authority claimed by the interpreter against the preservation of the home. The Gothic house reveals latent conflict, while denying a completely safe position from which to judge it.

This kind of ambiguity can direct readers towards social relations rather than away from them. Searching for ghosts only in the spirits confines the difficulties faced by women to incidental clues in a puzzle. A more productive question is what comes into view as explanations are contested: a doctor's authority, a servant's dependence, a daughter's wish to leave, or the wish of a wife to preserve a marriage. These relations matter even if supernatural agency does not matter. Gordon's (1997) approach to haunting can help illuminate this critical use of uncertainty without turning every disruption into an already determined political message. The archive becomes interpretable via the pressures created by interpretation. One of these pressures is the demand for producing an explanation compatible with the household's preferred account of itself.

This distinction sets a limiting condition on the metaphor of the house as witness. A building does not give testimony without a narrative form. The characters and readers organize the disturbances and objects into explanatory accounts that make them evidence. The significance of the local archive is, therefore, critical rather than forensic. It highlights injuries and conflicts that persist as dispute but remains opposed. In *Rebecca*, the contest for the estate occurs between two rival women. Essentially, in *The Little Stranger*, it involves the relationship between women's discomforts and a narrator whose desire to preserve the estate complicates his accounts. The ending tests whether either form of contest is capable of being resolved by dissolving the household.

5- Destruction, Abandonment, and Incomplete Release

The houses each achieve different material outcomes in the endings of the novels. While Manderley was burned down, Hundreds Hall is left as a drained and desolate building. The difference is important because one cannot equate the physical destruction of one estate with the privation of the household that occupies the other. In both the novels, the institution of home loses its earlier shape; but, the psychological and narrative effects access. The question that the comparison poses are whether the erasure of domestic routines liberates characters from their past or simply alters the medium of attachment.

In *Rebecca*, the blaze obliterates that setting against which the second wife was constantly measured up to her predecessor. However, the later-told opening dream prevents the ending from being interpreted as little more than a narrative of liberation. The admission that "Manderley was ours no longer" recognizes a loss of possession that the act of narration cannot simply complete (du Maurier, 1938/2015, chap. 1). Even more revealing is the narrator's resolution: "We would not talk of Manderley, I would not tell my dream" (du Maurier, 1938/2015, chap. 1). The novel gives readers the remembered experience that she withholds within the marriage. Memory is therefore both an enduring attachment and a restricted form of communication. The destruction of the house removes the building without necessarily resolving the emotional order associated with it.

The distinction between the couple's silence and the narrator's disclosure is particularly important here. The reader receives a story that the marital relationship does not openly accommodate. Narration therefore provides a space for returning to Manderley, but the withholding of the dream shows that such return has not become a shared practice of understanding within the marriage. This does not make the narrator's account meaningless or prove that she has gained nothing from telling it. It locates the limit of that achievement. The

ability to reconstruct a domestic history and the ability to renegotiate the relationship formed within it are separate matters. Manderley survives not only because it is remembered, but because the terms on which it may be discussed remain restricted.

Hundreds Hall presents a different afterlife. Faraday remains attached to the place after the deaths of Mrs. Ayres and Caroline and the disintegration of the household. The surviving structure cannot fulfil the social promise with which he invested it (Waters, 2009). His continued interest exposes the difference between proximity to the estate and possession of the life he associated with it. Where *Rebecca* transfers a destroyed home into a woman's retrospective imagination, *The Little Stranger* leaves a male narrator confronting the material remainder of a desired home. The parallel is continued attachment; the difference is whether the remembered house was once inhabited as a marital place or pursued as an object of aspiration.

The different fates of the buildings also challenge preservation as an unquestioned good. Manderley's destruction ends the continuing use of its rooms and possessions, but it cannot restore Rebecca's life or retrospectively make the second wife's experiences secure. Hundreds Hall's survival protects the material shell without preserving a viable household. A cultural attachment to the country house can obscure this distinction by treating the building's endurance as the chief measure of success. The novels redirect attention towards the lives required to sustain it. From the standpoint of female autonomy, the relevant question is not simply whether an estate remains standing, but whether its continued existence allows its inhabitants meaningful choices. Architectural conservation and domestic well-being cannot be assumed to coincide.

Wisker's (2003) reading of *Rebecca* as a challenge to romantic idealizations of privilege and place strengthens this distinction. The loss of an admired estate cannot be assessed only through the values that made it admirable to its owners. The present comparison raises the question of whether attachment to the house has masked the unequal relationships on which its apparent stability depended. The issue is particularly apparent at Hundreds Hall due to Faraday's ongoing admiration. A building might be culturally attractive after its users experience the costs of preserving the world in its image.

The conclusion must clearly show Caroline's yearning to leave. If she is seen merely as the passive extension of the decaying mansion, the analysis will be hampered because of this limitation. She knows she could choose a different future and stay at Hundreds Hall, although her death means that future has not been realized. Kirby (2025) argues that frustration with her autonomy is an effect of ongoing gendered power in postwar social change. Her attempted separation raised the question that to preserve the household is not necessarily to preserve its women. The ongoing commitment of the second Mrs. de Winter to marriage and Caroline's desire for flight thus bestow domestic survival with very different meanings.

Betty goes to work outside of domestic service later in life which further qualifies any assertion that Hundreds Hall destroys all women associated with it. The trajectory that she took reveals how class and occupational positioning alter the possibility of separation, though departure doesn't mean the complete obliteration of memory (Waters, 2009). This qualification is crucial for the trauma argument: the past being persistent does not entail that the same result will occur for all its witnesses. An inhabitant's changing relationship with the

archive can allow the archive to continue to exist. The juxtaposition with Caroline prevents the conclusion from rendering the house an all-powerful force or suggesting that women's suffering is an inevitable and uniform fate.

The outcome of Betty is therefore more than just an exception added to qualify. It alters the standard of what an ending can achieve. The chance of an alternative occupation and life off the estate makes material separation possible, in a way that neither a recurring dream nor Faraday's ongoing involvement can achieve. Her departure should not be idealized as the erasure of everything she has witnessed, but it prevents the argument from defining women exclusively through injury. Reading beside Caroline's unfulfilled future, it also provides leaving a social dimension. An alternative, resource, and circumstance are not evenly available for departure. The Gothic house, by creating identifiable relations, limits what can be done; sometimes those relations can be altered without the necessity of solving all the building's mysteries.

Herman's (1992) insistence on the social and political conditions of trauma helps clarify why these material alternatives matter. Her statement that "Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (p. 133) makes renewed agency a relational question. The above principle, in this comparison, asks whether a change of locale is accompanied by relationships which permit choice and recognize the woman's understanding of her experience. The author's work is being used here to link vulnerability with relations of power and not to dictate a clinical sequence for fictional characters. The juxtaposition between Betty's new job and Caroline's exasperated exit illustrates that taking agency means more than an internal decision to shed the past. Separation can mean something different as opportunities change. The second Mrs. de Winter's leaving the estate in ruins does not per se alter the marital relationship which makes its history significant. The endings thus differentiate between a change of place and a change in a woman's power to do or say something.

When reading the two ends one can distinguish material survival, social continuity and psychic attachment. A destroyed house may remain narratively active; a surviving house can lose the household that gave it social meaning; an individual can leave without becoming entirely free of recollection. LaCapra's (2001) distinction between repetition and working through comes in handy because the appearance of an ending does not guarantee the assimilation of a past. The novels present distinct approaches to loss, rather than a collective experience of healing. Consequently, their juxtaposition constrains the comforting equation which links the removal of the domestic setting with the resolution of the injury's attendant on it.

As a result, the unresolved ending requires a different kind of critical response than the statement that trauma goes on forever. The return of memory can mark a persistent problem, leaving open distinctions between repetition, reflection and changed circumstances. LaCapra's (2001) framework is most useful when it supports those distinctions rather than becoming a label for permanent confinement. The second wife's narration, Faraday's attachment, Caroline's attempted refusal, and Betty's exit do not occupy the same point in a single sequence of recovery. Each one exhibits a distinct connection between a past event and a possible future. By maintaining these differences, the comparison gains explanatory power.

Loss has an effect but it does not follow that either the sufferer's fate or the value of remembering can be inferred from the house's survival or destruction.

The domestic archive finally presents as a structure of unequal survival. Rebecca's name and possessions remain; the second wife's narrative endures without shedding every implication of her marriage. The women of Hundreds Hall leave varied traces in a narrative that has Faraday's continuing attachment at its core. The political and formal significance of haunting is explained by these asymmetries, even when the supernatural is uncertain. The difference between what a woman can endure and what it can make her do/what will it make her become. It is not whether the houses will remember everything but whether those lives can be represented without being subjected again to possession, inheritance or domestic continuity.

6- Conclusion

The comparison reveals that Manderley and Hundreds Hall maintain domestic arrangements for women's suffering. In *Rebecca*, the second wife has to compare herself to the first and the traces of the first wife are retained so as to make belonging dependent on the comparison. The second wife's narration takes place under the exposure and accommodation of the patriarchal authority. In *The Little Stranger*, the estate's burdens are not evenly shared, as people from different classes inherit responsibilities or encounter bereavement, though less so through service, while Faraday has aspirations. These differences ensure that female trauma does not become the rationale for character's pain.

Linking the female Gothic to trauma theory clarifies how domestic power can have a temporal afterlife through memory, repetition and dispute over accounts. Characterizing the house as a selective archive rather than an impartial witness, it may store traces of suffering while withholding authority from the concerned women. Manderley's destruction and the abandonment of Hundreds Hall shows how the end of household does not equal the end of its injuries, while Betty's exit qualifies any universal entrapment claim. The article differentiates between the preservation of women's traces and the tracing of their perspectives in a comparative framework, demonstrating that Gothic haunting exposes unequal possibilities of belonging, speaking, and leaving.

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