
Although taking on various functions and representations, space within the Gothic fiction is at once aberrant, oneiric, monstrous, and always uniquely combined with disturbing otherness and its fearful cognates. This paper discusses how a range of diverse Gothic works – such as Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson,” and Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, among others – that although heterogeneous with regard to period, form, and style, all distinctively frame fear and otherness in terms of spatiality.

Fear and Gothic Spatiality



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Fear and Gothic Spatiality

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The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread.

– Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

The high wall, no longer the wall that surrounds and protects, no longer the wall that stands for power and wealth, but the mysteriously sealed wall, uncrossable in either direction, closed in upon the now mysterious work of punishment, will become ... the monotonous figure, at once material and symbolic, of the power to punish.

– Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

When roaming the darker recesses of literature, one inevitably encounters its chamber of horrors – Gothic fiction. When roaming the darker recesses of Gothic fiction, one inevitably encounters the horror of its chambers: Space itself becomes a cause of fear in its Gothic ascription. The Gothic constitutes a *sui generis* mode of fiction in its adept manipulation of innumerable spatial phobias: lygophobia (fear of dark or gloomy places), claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces) and its corollary monophobia (fear of solitude); agoraphobia (the fear of open spaces), atremia or stasophobia (fear of elevated or vertical stations), cenophobia (fear of empty spaces), and as we will suggest ensuing, oiko- or domatophobia (fear of houses, home surroundings). As this enumeration evinces, the Gothic comprises a psychopathological space; it invariably registers the adverse psychic after-effects on its perturbed victims who, unable to navigate or make sense of their garbled environment, are

rendered helpless in spatial systems beyond their control. The most pertinent spatial vehicles employed by the Gothic to generate fear pertain to an incertitude about boundaries. Absent boundaries in the form of the infinite, unyielding boundaries that incarcerate – spatial extremes and contrasts as evinced by Pascal’s and Foucault’s quotes above – are often paradoxically fused in the twisted space of the Gothic. Gothic fiction obsessively examines precarious boundaries that either protect or menace; it relates the feckless attempts to secure unstable boundaries and the violent transgression of metaphorical boundaries circumscribing taboo by raging excess, pernicious passions, and corrupt power. Boundaries which serve to demarcate dissolve; thus, inner and outer, self and other, external alien forces and the homely and familiar within are uncannily inverted or united. Although taking on various functions and representations, space within the Gothic is at once aberrant, oneiric, monstrous, and always uniquely combined with disturbing otherness and its fearful cognates. This paper discusses how a range of diverse Gothic works – such as Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson,” and Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, among others – that although heterogeneous with regard to period, form, and style, all distinctively frame fear and otherness in terms of spatiality.

Architectural Analogues

The Gothic cartography, traversed by extreme desolate landscapes, partly shares its terrain with the Romantic literary scenery of natural wildness, as seen in, for example, the sublime rugged mountains of the Pyrenees in Radcliffe’s *Udolpho* and the Apennines in Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*; the sweeping Yorkshire moors in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*; murky caverns and thick forests swarming with banditti in Matthew Lewis’s

The Monk; impenetrable jungles deep in the heart of Congo in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; and stormy weather, arctic ice floes, and the snow-clad rocky boulders and glaciers of Chamonix in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. However, as the French critic Jean Roudaut avers, "Pas un roman noir ... sans un château": It is the architectural landscape, in particular, that forms one of the key defining features of the Gothic (716). It is worthwhile to note that "Gothic" referred to architecture long before literature – more specifically, a medieval style, principally ecclesiastical, employed in Europe during the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, and characterized by an emphasis on verticality, its use of pointed arches, ribbed vaults, clustered columns, and flying buttresses as exemplified by, among others, the Salisbury Cathedral in England and the French cathedrals of Notre Dame and Chartres. As the influential convention for entitling novels for buildings suggests – from Walpole's *Otranto*, Radcliffe's *Udolpho*, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher", Hawthorne's *The House of Seven Gables*, Dickens's *Bleak House* to Danielewski's *House of Leaves* – Gothic fiction is governed by the centripetal pull and dominant presence of its edifice. Since its conception, Gothic romance has shared an important analogue with architecture. Even the mythos surrounding its birth has been shaped by the vision of a looming edifice. The genre allegedly takes its name from the subtitle of the ur-text of Gothic fiction, Walpole's *Otranto*, "A Gothic Story." Walpole, officially the founding father of the genre, was professedly inspired by a dream of an ancient castle to write *Otranto*. He even rebuilt his own estate, Strawberry Hill, into an elaborate imitation of a medieval castle. To gauge the impact of the spatial dimension in Gothic narratives, it is profitable to examine how it is annexed by Gothic narrative architectonics in general.

As a result of their consanguinity, Gothic architectural space and fiction mirror mutual essential features; the former permeates all the layers of the latter. The irregular design and mammoth dimensions of the former display aspiring towers endeavoring to pierce heaven, the profusion of ornament, and lack of proportion. This, in turn, reflects the transgressive literary practice of the latter; a genre that is aesthetically extravagant, places a centrality on the supernatural challenging the bounds of rational understanding, and is designed to encourage an inordinate emotional impact on its readers. Excess, disorder, and violation are innate to fictional fearful world of the Gothic: the sovereignty of its ambitious villains often suffering from delusions of grandeur; solitary megalomaniacs who are typically fashioned after the archetypal transgressors Prometheus or Faust, and whose licentious enactments of uncontrollable carnal desires, antisocial passions, and moral impropriety subversively threaten to consume the social order supporting and regulating civilized mores and manners. The architectural space in Gothic fiction meta-reflexively parallels the principles of the narrative technique and formal properties itself: the tortuous winding corridors of the episodic, discontinuous, and repetitious plot; its prevalent stylistic features much given to ornateness and hyperbole; along with labyrinthine complexity of narrative method, which includes the metaphorical claustrophobic enclosures of framing devices, such as found manuscripts or interpolated histories, and the use of multiple narrators negotiating the subjective and objective as well as the private and public world. The early Gothic hybrid form, derived from Walpole's conscious decision to fuse the incongruous categories of medieval romance and new novel of life and manners, encompasses the polarized extremes of literary genres. Within these nocturnal landscapes of terror, spatial extremes are united: soaring turrets and subterranean crypts, pointed arches

and tenebrous dungeons, elevated precipices and sepulcher depths, gloomy attics and damp cellars.

Precarious Boundaries

The two opening passages by Pascal and Foucault, adumbrating the double fear of boundlessness and boundedness, also exemplify the spatial extremes congenial to Gothic fictional landscapes of fear and their disturbing yet fascinating topographies of dread. The inhabitants within these violent realms are assailed mentally and physically by a prison-like series of barriers: guarded gates, prohibitive battlements, massive walls, and locked doors threatening or effectuating incarceration, isolation, or figuratively suggesting solipsism; and conversely, by the awful power of vertiginous sublimity, a metaphysical force that emerges as vast, unbounded, and terrifying. The Gothic cosmos exploits not only the formative principles of the finite and infinite, associated with confinement and exalted sublime respectively, but also repeatedly announces its intense preoccupation with precarious boundaries along with the lack or dynamic transgression of these, requisite and staple devices whose potential is capitalized on by virtually every canonical Gothic writer – such as Radcliffe in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

A return of the noise again disturbed her; it seemed to come from that part of the room which communicated with the private staircase, and she instantly remembered the odd circumstance of the door having been fastened, during the preceding night, by some unknown hand ... Her heart became faint with terror. Half rising herself from the bed, and gently drawing aside the curtain, she looked towards the door of the staircase, but the lamp that burned

on the hearth spread so feeble a light through the apartment, that the remote parts of it were lost in shadow. The noise, however, which she was convinced came from the door, continued. It seemed like that made by the undrawing of rusty bolts, and often ceased, and was then renewed more gently ... While Emily kept her eyes fixed on the spot, she saw the door move, and then slowly open, and perceived something enter the room, but the extreme duskiness prevented her from distinguishing what it was ... [she] continued to observe in silence the motions of the mysterious form she saw. It seemed to glide along the remote obscurity of the apartment ... but then, advancing slowly towards the bed, stood silently at the feet ... Having continued there a moment, the form retreated ... and then again advanced ... and springing toward the bed, Emily discovered – Count Morano! (260-61)

In this unmistakably Gothic scenario – mediated through the apprehensive consciousness of the novel's impressionable young heroine, Emily St. Aubert, who is beleaguered by the tyrannical yet alluring villain Montoni at his sequestered, precipitously situated stronghold, Udolpho – uneasy apprehension is succeeded by intense agitation as the narrative resolution is delayed to an excruciating pitch of tension and withheld to the end. The effects of suspense derive their force from the terrors pertaining to or described in terms of spatiality: the persistent creaking sound from the door signalling the state of unease associated with borders; the failure of the dim light to outline the room's contours and its shadowy recesses augments the indeterminacy of the indiscernible form whose impending vacillating movement in the chamber threatens by dangerously coming too close. These

are vehicles employed to enhance the famous Radcliffean taunting of terror with the mind; one that entails obscurity and the response to something unseen, illicitly stimulating the fears and doubts of the heroine's and the reader's freely roaming imagination.

As Eugene DeLamotte observes in her feminist study of the Gothic, *Perils of the Night*, classic Gothic scenarios often involve a heroine trembling “at a door as footsteps approach. The door is locked and she cannot open it; or it is unlocked and she cannot fasten it; or it is fastened with a lock that is rusty and insecure; or she fastens it only to hear the ominous creak of yet another door” (29). Likewise, Emily is allocated a remote suite equipped with two doors. Emily locks the gallery door that opens upon the castle's maze of corridors. The opposite door that connects to a private staircase descending into the dark and unknown she alarmingly discovers cannot be fastened; a vexing situation similarly shared by Charles Maturin's character Alonzo Monçada in *Melmoth the Wanderer*: “I knew I had no lock to my door, and could not prevent the intrusion of any one into my cell who pleased to visit it” (154). Emily subsequently ascertains that not only is she incapable of locking the door, but finds, horror of horrors, that its lock is on the other side, which suggests the double threat of intrusion and imprisonment. Gothic fiction lingers at the duplicitous thresholds dividing inside from outside: doors, gates, locks, and keys are desperately used to protect the menacing from without, but, as similarly illustrated in the quote by Foucault above, more often these entities are abused, as in *Udolpho*, to enforce claustrophobic confinement and separation from the outside world; or even worse, they take on the exacerbating form of unlockable doors, unsuspected stairways, and secret sliding panels that engender the threat of invasion by some external alien force.

Negative and Finite Sublimity

Fear is not only provoked by the perils of incursion but can also be begotten by an inverse movement: Emily is later forced to flee down the staircase where she penetrates deeper into the unknown underground territory of the brooding fortress. The durable Gothic convention of entering an obscure interior is more recently applied in the lethal building of Danielewski's *House of Leaves* whose protagonist, Will Navidson, descends a staircase spiraling into a bottomless depth. The novel's emphasis on the active role of spaces in phobia renders not only severe cases of claustrophobia but also profits from the cold sweats of agoraphobia: After proceeding down through numerous long narrow corridors and registering a constant stream of corners and walls, Navidson enters a room, "[h]is flashlight finds the floor but no walls and, for the first time, no ceiling" (64). Later we learn its stupendous size: It has a "ceiling at least five hundred feet high with a span that may approach a mile" (85) making it impossible to illuminate thus "the beam of his flashlight scratching at nothing but the invariant blackness" (67). The chills and thrills of the reader escalates as he penetrates deeper into the monstrous expanse of total darkness, an event that recalls the anecdote of Pascal's renowned fear of the void: He constantly envisioned a terrifying precipice to his left side and so would have a chair placed there to alleviate his suffering.¹ In these examples, the terrors of boundlessness and boundedness contradictorily merge, since acute attacks of claustrophobia can also stem from this overwhelming perception of endless spaces: the inkling that one will never arrive at or reach beyond an ultimate boundary dividing one place from another (DeLamotte 95). Hence, Danielewski inverts the traditional means of invoking a sense of claustrophobic confinement: It is not the uncrossable barriers and locked

doors that menace imprisonment but the infinity and boundlessness of his horrific house that ensures the futility of escape.

Danielewski's impossibly metamorphosing, distending, and contracting house aberrantly undermines the natural fixed laws of space and its various anomalous spatial features exceed rational comprehension. In a parallel fashion, the sublime in eighteenth and nineteenth century aesthetic enquiries offered intimations of an awesome force; it is a term for the extremes of human perception and experience – an excess that cannot be processed by a rational framework, be contained in a semantic notion or within the individual's gaze and grasp (Botting 39). In this sense, the *horror vacui* of Danielewski's house becomes the negative and twisted version of sublimity. A similar architectural negative sublimity can equally be discerned in Poe's classic doppelgänger tale, "William Wilson," whose title character's expressionistic reflections on the infinite expanse of his dormitory and surroundings at Dr. Bransby's grammar school is akin to Danielewski's house:

But the house! ... There was really no end to its windings – to its incomprehensible subdivisions ... Then the lateral branches were innumerable – inconceivable – and so returning in upon themselves, that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here, I was never able to ascertain with precision, in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself (99).

Both Danielewski's house and the school featured in Poe's short story place an emphasis on the paradoxical synthesis between boundlessness and firm

boundaries. The apparent limitless size of the mansion in “William Wilson” contrasts with the “brick wall [which] encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain.” In an affinitive vein, Wilson perceives the schoolroom as “the largest ... in the world,” but here a sense of finiteness and confinement is also displayed: “It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with ... a ceiling of oak” (98-9). To recapitulate the framework of the school’s architectural design: It is composed by two opposing formative principles. On the one hand, the unbounded grotesque or arabesque pattern – a perpetually random, repeating, tortuous, mutating, dynamic, and self-generating form – properties seen by the classroom’s interior disarray – “[i]nterspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks” – and the “extensive enclosure [that is] irregular in form;” which is also akin to the previous chaotic and limitless design of the house. On the other hand, the confining gate, walls, the “square enclosure ... comprising [Dr. Bransby’s] sanctum,” boxes in the classroom and schoolyard share the attribute structures integral to classical aesthetics: the geometrical, linear, angular, static, and enclosed form insisting on symmetry, balance, and unity of purpose. From this two critical principles can be distilled: the infinite and transgression in contrast to delimitation and boundaries.

As remarked upon earlier, spatiality in “William Wilson” contradictorily merges these two principles that become virtually indistinguishable. This is additionally exemplified by a series of boundaries that are contradictorily sublime in nature – in particular a Burkean sublime.² However, in “William Wilson” the field of the sublime is slightly re-conceptualized inasmuch as it paradoxically connotes prohibition, incarceration, and barriers. The gate inspires “deep awe,” the boxes in the schoolroom are “greatly matters of

awe,” and angles are “terror-inspiring;”³ and they are associated with danger: The gate is “riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes,” the wall is “topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass,” and entering the perilous sanctum results in the punishment of the “*peine forte et dure*.” Furthermore, according to Fred Botting, terror is “akin to the sense of wonderment and awe accompanying religious experience. Sublimity offered intimations of a great, if not divine, power” (39), which is also characterized by the “sacred division,” the “sanctum,” and the sound of the gate grating on its hinges which evokes in the students a “plenitude of mystery.”

In the eyes of Wilson, Dr. Bransby, the authoritarian pastor and headmaster, also incarnates the paradoxical features of sublimity, prohibition, and delimitation: “With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him ... demurely benign ... rigid and so vast, – could this be he who ... administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian Laws of the academy?” (98-9). These characteristics are similarly attributed to Wilson’s namesake and double who repeatedly forbids and thwarts his host’s immoral schemes with his whispering admonitions. “[W]hilst we contemplate so vast an object ... of almighty power, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him” (Burke 63). In the same fashion Burke describes the dwarfing effect of sublime entities, Wilson regards his double with “deep awe” – his “elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence ... added to a feeling of even terror ... [which] impress[es] [Wilson] with an idea of [his] own utter weakness and helplessness” (115). However, the danger that some of these sublime entities pose remain innocuous: Wilson regards Dr. Bransby from a “*remote* pew;” similarly, the sanctum is “[i]n a *remote* and terror-inspiring angle” (98-9, emphasis added). According to Burke, the perceptually overwhelming

properties of dangerous objects test our perceptual faculties, and when encountered from a position of safety – so as to cause pre-conscious pain and a moderated state of terror – it subsequently produces “delight,” since the individual subject is confronted with – but survives – the thought of his or her own extinction.⁴ This also explains Wilson’s conspicuous and curious delight in reminiscing his days at the disciplinary prison-like boarding school ruled by draconian laws: He is thrilled “with undefinable delight” at the school’s surroundings, and it gives him “pleasure ... to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns” (97). This delight in the encounter with sublime phenomena pertains to the sense of being liberated from the previous perceptual confinement and experiencing a feeling of transcendence, since the vastness glimpsed in the sublime becomes a mirror to the immensity of the mind.⁵ For this reason, it may seem contradictory that Poe affiliates sublimity with boundaries. Is Poe deconstructing the notion of the sublime with this juxtaposition? By emphasizing this incongruous conjunction, Poe, in fact, accentuates the neglected aspect of delimitation already inherent in the notion of the sublime – accenting a feature which I choose to call finite sublimity. This discrepancy between limits and the limitless implicit in the sublime can be elucidated by recourse to its etymological root which is adduced since it coheres with the unstable boundaries and obscure limits of the Gothic. The prefix *sub-* meaning “at the foot of” developed into “under,” “below,” “close to,” or “up to” suggesting liminal spatial locations; but it also signifies the propinquity of a threshold that is of a dynamic and temporal nature insofar as “sub-” may additionally indicate “towards,” “about,” “shortly before,” “immediately upon or after.” *Limen* denoted the lintel or upper frame of a door, entrance, and exit (Lewis and Short). Together with *sub-* the meaning of threshold is expanded to

designate the proximity to an entrance or portal. As Jan Rosiek clarifies, the sublime is situated near an entrance to the limitless and is engaged with the transgression or exploration of limits and the unrepresentable beyond these limits; hence, its association with death, elevation, and transcendence (8-9). Finite sublimity comprises both immuration and exaltation – finitude and chasmal infinity are yoked together;⁶ and it is exactly this uncertainty Poe dramatizes and is embodied in the cardinal symbol of Wilson’s relationship to his double: the door.

The doors represent the solipsistic danger of being shut in and cut off, and conversely the fear of intrusion by some external force. This parallels the terrors of both separation from and unification with the other, which are both paradoxically manifested in Wilson’s solipsism, including its psychological variants: his extreme narcissism and megalomania. Wilson himself unwittingly acknowledges his solipsism: “[T]he teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it” (100). His solipsistic tendencies are additionally reflected by the circumscribed enclosures of the architectural setting: The action of the tale consistently occurs indoors; the prison-like school with its ponderous walls isolates Wilson from the outside world – an external world which throughout the story remains vague and indistinct – and the various realizations of the locked room; the gate’s creaking hinges and the sanctum door’s massivity suggest that they do not open easily; the school’s labyrinthine structure impedes any immediate exit; and in the final scene we are presented with a room that is literally locked. Wilson’s solipsism is most likely intended to function as a defense mechanism striving to shut out any alien entities, but by this very act he ironically subsumes the threatening other in his all-encompassing inclusion of reality. As DeLamotte succinctly observes, “the essential quality of the haunted mind is

an inability to see anything but itself. What T.S. Eliot called ‘the awful privacy of the insane mind’ results from the sick ego’s tendency to expand its circumference to encompass the world ... Here is the nightside of the Romantic vision of the expanding self that finds transcendent unity with everything” (97). His narcissism turns both inward and outward in terms of his circumscribed solipsism and expanding self respectively. These two movements also find their parallel in the sublime, which as previously mentioned, consists of both immuration and exaltation – qualities that also cohere with horror and terror respectively. In the Radcliffean distinction between terror and horror, the former widens the boundaries of ego consciousness, whereas horror marks a reverse direction of recoil and self-fragmentation. Horror is consistently occasioned by “a direct encounter with physical mortality ... Death is presented as the absolute limit, a finitude which denies any possibility of imaginative transcendence into an awesome and infinite space. It is the moment of the negative sublime, a moment of freezing, contraction and horror ... Horror marks the response to an excess that cannot be transcended” (Botting 75).⁷

In Thomas Weiskel’s thought-provoking study of the Romantic sublime, his working model, derived from the Kantian sublime, comprises three phases. In the first phase of the sublime moment, the relationship between mind and perceived object is determinate. In the second, “the habitual relation of mind and object suddenly breaks down ... and there is a disconcerting disproportion between inner and outer.” In the third phase, “the mind recovers the balance of outer and inner through the constitution of a new relation between itself and the object such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind’s relation to a transcendent order.” However, one can surmise that in Wilson’s case, this

third recovery phase is averted; this is what Weiskel formulates as the “blockage of the sublime”: “an abridgment of the sublime moment so that we are confined to the second phase and await futilely the restorative reaction which never comes” (23-4). Wilson’s awe and fear is not transformed into a successful epiphany of spiritual self-awareness nor imaginative empowerment, thus negating the possibility of a Romantic version of a divine sublime. The state of aporia, disproportion between mind and object, self and other, host and double is not resolved through a synthesizing moment of transcendence. What is described is rather a vertiginous sublunary sublime in which terror alternates with horror, the former incorporating otherness by probing the mind and revealing its hidden and irrational powers, and the contracting quality of the latter attempting to exclude otherness through mechanisms of repression.

Secret Localities

Early Gothic novelists tended to displace their stories to a distant imaginative past imbued with the remote exoticism of sixteenth-century Southern France, Italy, Spain, Germany, or even the Middle East as in William Beckford’s *Vathek*. The foreign locale and feudal flavor testify to a past, saturated by barbarity, primitivism, and superstition, delineating a “spatial and temporal separation” between the values of the past and the rational, cultivated present of the eighteenth century British readership (Botting 3). However, heeding to Botting’s caveat, this does not mean that “Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times, despite heavy historical trappings” (3). On the contrary, these narratives are necessarily informed by contemporary values, concerns, and conflicts.

The Gothic structure itself constitutes both an embodiment and repository of the past. In a renovated version of this convention, Spencer Brydon, upon entering his old family residence in Henry James's "The Jolly Corner," is transported to the house's own temporal dimension untouched by the pulse of its modern surroundings in New York City. This house harbors an uncanny stranger: the man he might have been had he not lived abroad. Empty, this building signifies abstract potentiality – it is a chronotope and a metaphor for a life unlived. As a receptacle of the past, the dismal Gothic construction usually contains a horrible secret, ancestral curse, or mysterious crime that forebodes and insistently ensures its spectral return. The repressed ghostly past and bloody pained secret haunt 124 Bluestone Road in Toni Morrison's postmodern re-working of the slave narrative, *Beloved*. The sin of a mother's traumatic transgression, infanticide, returns in the figure of the impossible phantom girl, Beloved. She embodies the contrary significations of both the oppressed and oppressor by, on the one hand, incarnating, in one body, the innumerable forgotten people who died on the slave trade route of the Middle Passage; and on the other hand, by personifying the violent crimes committed by the institution of slavery.

Sinful secrets within secret localities constitute the major locus of most Gothic plots, and it is frequently within these that the climaxes of the different plots are played out as demonstrated by e.g., Poe's narrator in "William Wilson," who prowls the labyrinthine passageways of his dormitory to find his nemesis and double in his remote bedroom chamber and finally confronts him in a locked room of warped dimensions. Furthermore, Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" features the prototypical detective subgenre of the "locked-room" crime. In a similar vein, the friar William of Baskerville journeys to a fourteenth century Italian monastery in Umberto

Eco's *The Name of the Rose* in order to solve a murder crime connected to a mystery hidden within its great labyrinthine library. In the clandestine catacombs of the convent of St. Clare in Lewis's *The Monk*, one can witness the Domina's sadistic punishment of Agnes, Antonia's incestuous rape by the title character, the Capuchin superior, Ambrosio, and Matilda's diabolical conjurations – that is, if one manages to find its only access: the secret trapdoor. Behind the façade of, or more concretely below, a moral institution devoted to chastity, virtue, and restraint, volatile desires and passions when pressed into stern submission, conversely pervert the sacrosanct, grow into monstrous proportions, and are made terrific. Within the sphere of the Gothic, authoritative social institutions are omnipresent. As DeLamotte points out, these institutions – the Church, the Inquisition, tribunals, and the family – are often embodied architecturally (17). The cloistered convent, the torture cells of the Bastille, the household dominated by an oppressive father or husband, prisons and insane asylums, whose modern form emerged in the heyday of Gothic romance, personify monuments of enforced confinement. Closed doors and locked closets afford not only security and its obverse, exclusion and imprisonment, but, moreover, signify secrecy. In this case, imminent danger is not coupled with the unknown outside beyond the door, but with the concealed inside behind the door which entices inquisitive hapless maidens to trespass and seek out its exposure. In an updated version of Charles Perrault's cautionary Bluebeard tale, the eponymous story in her collection, *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter's heroine marries the aristocratic libertine Marquis who hands his young bride the keys to every apartment in his chateau, all of which she is free to explore, save one, a furtive enclosed recess that he forbids his wife to enter. Naturally, the lure proves too strong, and she discovers a charnel secret endangering her own life. The secrets

within the (deliberately) forgotten chambers of the Gothic mansion also make themselves heard in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. During bewitching hours, the title character listens to the demonic laughs emanating from the locked Thornfield attic.

Psyches and Bodies

The ruined and decrepit state of the fortress and monastic setting conveys the overthrow of decadent despotic aristocrats and the collapse of a world ordered by the twin tyrannies of the monarchy and Church signalling the end of feudal structures and a fixed religious framework. In *The Monk*, the convent of St. Clare is destroyed by the frenzy of the riotous mob; Maturin's Monçada brings down the palace of the Inquisition in fire, and Eco's medieval abbey is demolished by an accidental conflagration, and in real life, Beckford's elaborate Fonthill Abbey collapsed under its own weight. Laced by the fingerprints of a family's ancestry, decayed edifices also reflect the degeneration of family lineage. As Poe's title suggests, "The Fall of the House of Usher" retells the fall of both the literal house and the Usher family genealogy. This is likewise encountered in William Faulkner's seminal novel *Absalom, Absalom!* which relates the saga of the Sutpen family, whose progenitor, Thomas Sutpen, builds Sutpen's hundred, a predicate for his dynasty and mansion. The sins of the father and his enmity towards miscegenation return, when Clytie, his daughter with a slave woman, sets fire to Sutpen's hundred, leaving only a mentally-impaired man of mixed blood left of Sutpen's family. The annihilation of the Gothic edifice, however, can also generate new beginnings and the rehabilitation of relationships: When the uncanny house in *House of Leaves* dissolves, the bond between Navidson and his wife are renewed.

Sinister buildings share an intimate connection with their distraught residents in more than one sense. Looming Gothic structures are recurrently imputed with the isomorphic qualities of the human anatomy. Dr. Jekyll's domicile in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is endowed with physiognomic signs personifying a regressive nature. The tale's Darwinian influences apply not only to the description of the primitive and misanthropic Hyde, the "lower side" of Jekyll which "growl[s] for license," but to the "low growl" of the city of London as well (65, 14) – a growling also featured by the house in *House of Leaves*. Analogously, the embedded poem, "The Haunted Palace," in Poe's "House of Usher" depicts an anthropomorphic palace which outlines a human head with hair, eyes, teeth, and mouth respectively: "Banners yellow, glorious, golden, / On its roof did float and flow," "two luminous windows", "all with pearl and ruby glowing / Was the fair palace door" through which "A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty / Was but to sing" comes flowing (238). Corporeal imagery mapped onto dystopian spaces is also reflected through the gendered prism of a stained glass window, in which, for instance, the threat of intrusion corresponds to the heroine's fantasies and fears of bodily violation, which, in turn, relates to the Gothic obsession with unfixed boundaries and the transgression of taboo barriers. As previously and delicately insinuated in the *Udolpho* excerpt above, Emily is significantly kept captive in her *bedroom* chamber, where Count Morano, a romantic pursuer, intrudes. Danielewski offers his own satirical interpretive suggestion for Navidson's attraction and fear of the house's dark corridors and infinite hollows, when he ventriloquizes the feminist critic Camille Paglia: "Notice only men go into it ... They must penetrate, invade, even be consumed by it ... They lack the hollow, the

uterine cavity ... The whole thing is about womb envy or vagina envy, whatever you prefer” (357-58).

Furthermore, the physical milieux in their manifold forms are not only ascribed with the physical aspects of human nature but also often portend an externalization of an individual’s afflicted mind. In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the literal journey to colonial outposts in savage jungles translates into the inward exploration of the dark illicit regions of an allegedly civilized psyche. Poe’s “William Wilson” also effectively utilizes its concrete spatial dimensions to depict the shadowy recesses of a psychotic mind. Indeed, he exceeds the standard Gothic room-as-mind trope, namely in creating his own specific brand of twisted and displaced architectural space and by bridging it with notions of the self and its boundaries. The mansion’s aforementioned infinite expanse yet prison-like enclosure defies the faculties of reason. However, it becomes comprehensible when read as a metaphor for the conceptual framework of the illimitable mind or consciousness which is vast and endless yet physically circumscribed by the corporeal and finite body. The intricate pattern of the house, moreover, delineates an analogous image of the physical human brain with its convoluted nervous system of intertwined windings and subdivisions. The anatomy of the brain is equally conveyed by the house’s two stories, and the school ground which is divided into a front, where the gate is located, and a playground in rear. One is inclined to correlate these subdivisions with the forebrain, hindbrain, and their associated functions.⁸ These segmentations of the school (and brain) also resonate with the polarized agencies of the id and superego, which have been attractive indexes for describing the first and second Wilson’s behavior in the tale’s criticism.⁹ The attributes of the playground – freedom, amusement, pleasure, and desires – appertain to the processes dominating the rampant id, the reservoir of

libido, whose drives are absolutely determined according to the pleasure principle. In contrast, the front, characterized by borders and restricted space – the “parterre,” “box,” and “sacred division” – suggest the interdicting superego’s function of establishing limits. The architectural features reveal the sovereignty of the corrective, socializing superego, since the playground is not conducive to dynamic organic life nor growth, and the delight and liberty it is expected to afford is suppressed: It is “level, and covered with fine hard gravel” with “no trees, nor benches, nor anything similar within it” (98-9). Hence, the illative instinctual impulses are concealed, subjugated, and quelled. The absent trees, alluding to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, also reinforce the reading pertaining to Freud’s structural theory; as Freud avers: “Naturally, the id knows no values, no good and evil” (*Lecture XXXI*). These spatial dimensions offer proleptic details that apparently come to characterize the protagonist and the second Wilson: an ego dominated by the transgressive id or proscriptive superego respectively.

In addition to its function as a magnifying mirror for the psychic disturbances of its occupants, the sentient Gothic edifice often becomes a character in its own right. No longer merely a resource for or extension of the coercive power of its villainous owner, the haunted dwelling takes on a life of its own as epitomized in Poe’s “House of Usher,” Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, and Stephen King’s *The Shining*. The latter centers on the old, deserted, and isolated Overlook Hotel made even more notorious by Stanley Kubrick’s 1980 film adaptation. Affected by the haunted hotel, the father of the family enacts his psychotic impulses and is eventually possessed by it. Featuring a protagonist imprisoned, haunted, and mesmerized by her room’s horrid animate wallpaper, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” dramatizes a feminist and psychological recreation of the Gothic room as a

site for exploring women's ambivalent relationship to domestic ideology: House, husband, marriage, and motherhood play the role of inconspicuous jailors resulting in the female narrator's "mind forg'd manacles." The Gothic plot almost invariably involves, as DeLamotte claims, "women who just can't seem to get out of the house" (10). In Gilman's tale, the all pervasive Gothic convention of a heroine literally trapped in a fortress or mansion is replaced by mental self-imprisonment; yet her story also calls attention to the social reality of real housebound wives and mothers. The threat and potency of the evil animate building also evokes the imagery of the undead represented by other Gothic monsters that disturb the constitution and classification of human nature, such as the vampire, zombie, and revenant. As living yet inanimate, the ontological ambiguity of the house with a conscious will of its own has powerful Gothic potential.

Unhomely Homes

In Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the flickering candlelit labyrinthine tunnels of the secluded medieval castle in a foggy, rural, and foreign landscape is consciously appropriated and transposed to the complex maze of alleyways in a lurid Soho underworld cityscape where – among feeble lit streetlamps, dark clouds of smog, and industrial pollution – Jekyll's dilapidated laboratory is situated. Fear and horror formerly lurking in a distant setting removed in time and space in the eighteenth century Gothic novel give way to the uncanny terrors of the menacing modern metropolis in the immediate present of the nineteenth century. Evil is much closer to the domestic scenes of home. It is here and now. The inhabitants within this realm of unhomely homes are subject to fears diagnosed as endemic to the contemporary metropolitan context: modern estrangement and domesticated terror illative

of the uncanny which, moreover, provides a poetics of space for the urban Gothic experience. The English word “uncanny” does not transparently translate its German correlative *unheimlich*. *Heim*, meaning home, is overtly absent in the English version, but “uncanny” nevertheless preserves its (un)homely suggestions.¹⁰ Correspondingly “canny” is visibly absent in the German rendition, but *unheimlich* retains an emphasis on sagacity and knowing derived from the signification of the canny. Together the uncanny and *unheimlich* outline the unfamiliarity of familiarity and homelessness of home.

In an autobiographical account, Freud describes how he accidentally wanders into a red-light district in a foreign town. Resembling the Gothic victim in flight, he scurries away along the branching narrow streets but inadvertently and repeatedly returns back to the very same venue. This incident of spatial disorientation, futile escape, and forward movement converted into endless repetition, he describes as occasioning the feeling of uncanniness. Significantly, Freud’s spatial anxieties are associated with the unintended returns to the locale of interdicted sexual practice. Perhaps it is not surprising that his famous thanatos, linked to the repetition compulsion, merges with the etiologies of sexuality in his concept of the uncanny. Freud states: “This unheimlich place [the female genital organs] is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning.” As Freud summarizes, the uncanny marks the return of something “familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (944-47). Hence, our once intimate, familiar relationship with the *heimlich* womb – i.e., inanimate state anterior to life – returns as a reversion of the repressed, thus becoming frightening and uncanny. Comparable with, yet divergent from, Freud’s uncanny home of the womb-tomb, our dwelling prior

to existence, Martin Heidegger, in *Zur Seinsfrage* (*The Question of Being*), also ascribes non-existence to the uncanny:

[Nihilism] is called the ‘most uncanny’ because, as the unconditional will to will, it wills homelessness as such. This is why it is of no avail to show it the door, because it has long since been roaming around invisibly inside the house. The task is to catch sight of and see through this guest (cited from Bernstein 1117).

According to Heidegger, uncanniness designates the experience of not-being-at-home (*das Nicht-zuhause-Sein*) – i.e., the fundamental unsettledness and homelessness of man in the world – the inexorable finitude of one’s authentic existence. Freud, citing Schelling, defines uncanniness as “everything ... that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (934), which also coheres with Heidegger’s homelessness. The hidden and invisible presence of unhomeliness that roams around in the house of this world only manifests itself when our preoccupation with practical affairs of a familiar world is suspended. Only when the banal and homely everyday is disrupted, an opening is created from which the strange and alien irrupts, and one can “catch sight of” the uncanny. Exiled within the walls of one’s own domestic space, the familiar is defamiliarized: ordinary objects, actions, and events are rendered alien. Freud, in contrast, operates with the uneasy complicity between *unheimlich* and *heimlich* making any neat opposition between them untenable.

According to Anthony Vidler, the trajectory from the homely to the unhomely house can be compared to Freud’s linguistic approach – in which he traces the genealogy of the linguistic usage of *unheimlich* – in attempting to

define the uncanny. There is a “general drift of the uncanny movement from homely to unhomely, a movement in most ghost stories where an apparently homely house turns gradually into a site of horror” (*The Architectural Uncanny* 32). The word *unheimlich* ostensibly denotes the disquieting unfamiliar, inexplicable, and unhomely and is seemingly opposite of *heimlich*. However, *unheimlich* constitutes not a simple negation of *heimlich*, of what is known and familiar, as the former is a scion of the latter: “[T]he word ‘*heimlich*’ is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.” Hence, *unheimlich* is only contrary to the first signification of *heimlich* as *heimlich* develops in the direction of ambivalence until it coincides with its antithesis (933). Conversely, the manifest meaning of the uncanny also reverses on itself as it “is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind.”

In relation to the German emphasis on *heim*, this semantic subversion of *unheimlich* and *heimlich* naturally complements with the ambiguity of the home. As previously mentioned, the locked room, or in this case, the four walls of the home, affords not only security – the homely, familiar, and agreeable inside – signifying the first sense of *heimlich*; but it also hides inaccessible secrets within – “what is concealed and kept out of sight” – conveying the second sense of *heimlich* which coincides with *unheimlich*. Outside the home, the concealed secrecy equals the unknown. However, once inside the home, the concealed secrecy implies the confidential known. In relation to the English stress on *canny*, the uncanny marks the return of the familiar as unfamiliar by virtue of repression; i.e., the known that returns as unknown. Yet, this proposition is seemingly irreconcilable with Schelling’s definition of the uncanny as

designating everything that ought to have been a secret but has come to the fore, which ostensibly purports the unknown uncovered as known. But since secrecy equivocally implies both the known and unknown, it is everything that should have been unknown, but is nevertheless known, that returns and makes known its appearance in unknown form. The uncanny constates and performs the indeterminate chiasmic dialectic of inverted mirroring making the distinction between known and unknown, homely and unhomely impossible.

Modern Gothic domiciles of alienation as in “House of Usher,” “William Wilson,” “The Yellow Wallpaper,” *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, “The Jolly Corner”, *The Shining*, and *House of Leaves* are imbued with the quality of the uncanny in both its Heideggerian and Freudian senses. In these uncanny abodes the familiar economy of the home is upset, and the conventional ways in which the homely space has been described is distorted. Usually the foundation of an ontologically secure existence, the domestic dwelling is no longer perceived as a comfortable refuge or sanctuary; instead, for the alienated modern subject, it takes on its Gothic ascriptions as unhomely, defamiliarized, and yet threateningly too familiar – which is especially the case in the doppelgänger tales. The non-existence of an un-lived life inhabits the house on the Jolly Corner. The former homely nursery room in “The Yellow Wallpaper” becomes an inauspicious prison and asylum. The comforts of the home in *House of Leaves* “had become something else, and while not exactly sinister or even threatening, the change still destroyed any sense of security or well-being” (28); a text that, in addition, meta-reflexively employs and explicitly references both Heidegger’s and Freud’s uncanny (24, 359). Jekyll’s abode displays a marked difference between the homely vestibule in the front, pretending snug domesticity, and the shady furtive entrance at the rear of the house. The uncanny proximity of the homely and secretive constituents of

Jekyll's house personifies the duplicity and divided self of its owner. *Unheimlich* is interlaced with *heimlich* precisely insofar as *heimlich* indicates the secret of a double life within the homely.

The concealed duplicity and double life within the homely also causes interpretive problems for Wilson: His double is "a riddle I could not resolve" (104) and Dr. Bransby is a "gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution!" (98). Wilson and his double are paradoxically two yet one, same yet remain in a constant conflict that prohibits reunification. Similarly, the two aspects of Dr. Bransby, as benign pastor and draconian ruler, remain in an uncanny contiguity yet are irreconcilable. Because Wilson fails to coincide with himself, he can only perceive Dr. Bransby as paradoxically split, or perhaps, the latter himself institutes the cause of Wilson's divided selfhood and thus the appearance of his double. In his early childhood, he was "left to the guidance of [his] own will": Lacking an authority figure in his parents, he demonstrates no castration anxiety (97).¹¹ Since he fails to internalize the rules of the father, a superego has not been formed. Dr. Bransby, being a surrogate for the authoritative father imago, is a double himself. Being both principal and pastor, he is apparently a suitable substitute authority figure. However, he has, in fact, a pernicious effect on Wilson. Each aspect of his fissured personality concurs with his respective attire: His "snuffy habiliments" coincide with a severe draconian behavior, and his lavish clerical clothes match a virtuous "demurely benign" conduct. It is especially the latter trait that is suspect: his hypocritical "glossy robes" (98). Wilson assimilates the father-model provided by Dr. Bransby: His feigned virtue is adopted by Wilson but *literally* actualized. Wilson asserts how, in his later years, "all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle" (96): Virtue is a mantle or a "glossy robe" – an apparel one can don and divest on command, something one puts on the

exterior and does not come from inside. Hence, for Wilson, “virtue” or conscience can never be internalized, and it must take the form of an external superegoic double. As a result of Dr. Bransby’s pernicious influence, Wilson acquires a double that becomes the unusual embodiment of an externalized admonitory conscience.

The uncanny relationship between Wilson and his double as well as Dr. Bransby’s Janus face is mirrored in the story’s spatial dimensions. As previously exemplified, the basic premise of both the uncanny and finite sublimity involves the impossibility of establishing clear distinctions. They constitute a linguistic ambivalence that collapses two opposing semantic fields, which generates intellectual uncertainty. The doors in “William Wilson” have a dynamic psychological quality for they not only suggest a sublime threshold, the unknown beyond the limit, but also epitomize the uncanny experience *par excellence*.¹² For every time Wilson encounters his doppelgänger, one of them enters or exits, the light is gradually extinguished, while the door in each scene is increasingly and violently opened – and invariably perceived as a threat. The gradual opening of the uncanny door dissolves the demarcation distinguishing inner from outer, familiar and strange, the known and unknown on the inside or outside beyond the door. At the boarding school, Wilson encroaches upon his double’s sleeping apartment; at Eton, Wilson moves outside to meet his alter ego in the vestibule; at Oxford, his second self intrudes the chamber; and significantly at their final encounter, Wilson drags his double into an “antechamber adjoining” and the door is locked from within. Their confrontations can be schematically delineated: Their first meeting, in which Wilson transgresses his double’s space, inversely mirrors their third meeting, in which his double transgresses Wilson’s space. Their second meeting, in which Wilson moves

outside, inversely mirrors their fourth meeting, in which the second Wilson moves inside (see also the diagram in the appendix). Wilson and his double's collisions signal destabilized demarcations, since these are attended by alternating transgressions and the penumbrous spaces of the vestibule and antechamber that signify a passage between the outer door and the interior of a building. Their movements and locality at each confrontation signify not a simple mirroring of each other but a recurring chiasmic or inverted mirroring. Host and alter ego do not simply figure the polar antithesis of each other; rather, they relate to each other dialectically in the manner of the uncanny. It is the uncertainty of thresholds and the inability to clearly locate and thus define the source of fear that renders Wilson's deep-seated anxiety. This indeterminacy is also illustrated by his aberrant spatial orientation: The various architectural spaces defy rational comprehension, and in the final scene the appearance of the room is changed and inverted. This incertitude attached to spatial dimensions and its boundaries, along with the sublime predicate of obscure limits, becomes an objective correlative for the radically indeterminate liminal spaces of the psychotic mind: Wilson's futility in marking the limits of his self and discriminating whether the self and other coalesce or are dissociated. Wilson perceives limits (as well as his double and Dr. Bransby) as sublime exactly because they exceed his comprehension. The undecidability produced by the gradual opening of the uncanny door is undone in the final scene as it is ultimately locked. The indeterminacy of Weiskel's second phase of the sublime is resolved – and the sublime moment ends in horror's concomitant excess that cannot be exceeded. Wilson is met with the absolute limit: death.

Fear and Gothic Spatiality

With the dispersal of Gothic elements among genres, it leaves its recognizable spatial traces. The desolate intergalactic worlds, unknown outer space, and wrecked spaceships of science fiction resonate with the attributes of traditional Gothic landscapes, shifting the scene of terrors from the past into the future (Botting 156). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the medieval castle, along with the nineteenth century metropolitan maze, is supplanted by the dystopian matrixes of emerging technologies, cybernetics, robotics, genetics, and incomprehensible multinational corporations of the post-industrial artificial landscape of electronic society – which is epitomized in the cyberpunk bible, William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. Traditional inhabitants of the Gothic – persecuted heroines, aristocrats, monks, banditti, and revenants – are replaced by urban, domestic, and professional figures – mad scientists, fathers, husbands, criminals, detectives, and doubles – who, in turn, are substituted with clones, robots, androids, and aliens. The next post-Gothic residents are possibly the vestigial bodies of the internet-users and posthumans of today, who, caught online, are trying to navigate through the labyrinthine network of hypertexts with never-ending chains of links in the *mise en abyme* of the World Wide Web.

What is it that provides the flexible Gothic land-, city-, and cyberscapes their historical continuity? Naturally certain conspicuous characteristics reappear – e.g., the qualities of darkness, obscurity, spatial deviancy, excess, and most importantly, the incertitude pertaining to limits – but “Gothic” in the formula “Gothic spatiality” cannot refer to any one given formal property or spatial quality inherent in the landscape itself, since Gothic settings undergo significant transformations and take on a gamut of diversified manifestations. Is it then possible to identify a shared and distinct symbolic

significance in the varied Gothic spaces? What these spaces represent or gestalt comprise a heterogeneous conglomeration: Gothic spatial metaphors is a language that can pertain to megalomania, solipsism, estrangement, and their psychological counterparts, as well as spaces that complex with entrapment, invasion, and sublimity – charged with conceptions of self in its mental and physical dimensions that, moreover, may be traced along the coordinates of gender. What is the germane denominator of Gothic spatiality in its multifarious iterations? Fear, albeit one that is invariably plural, contextual, and determined by anxieties over culturally and historically specific, yet changing, alterities that challenge cultural limits, assumed stabilities, existing codes and practices. In other words, there can be no Gothic setting without an element of fear, but its shape and object can differ. Gothic geographies preeminently figure the emblematic fearful *heim* in which we ourselves are figuratively its residents and onto which we invest a variety of our own projections. As Zampanò in *House of Leaves* states in the manner of true Radcliffian terror: It “gives our varied imaginations a chance to fill the adjacent darkness with questions and demons” (98). The literal recesses, cellars, and dark corners within Gothic domiciles translate into the tabooed and plagued regions of our minds – the haunted area of our soul where our deepest desires and least avowable impulses roam. Considering the underpinnings of our valency with Gothic phobic spaces, it will continuously exhibit the propensity to inspire terror and make our flesh creep. Space, in its Gothic ascription, is never in an invariant darkness but full of fearful alterities alien yet terribly intimate.

Notes

¹ See also Anthony Vidler, “*Horror Vacui*: Constructing the Void from Pascal to Freud,” *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000) 17-24.

² Since copious definitions are offered on the sublime, my use of the term demands specification. I – and I believe Poe as well – appropriate the Burkean notion of the sublime as a psychological and aesthetic category as distinguished from a rhetorical or philosophical category.

³ Edmund Burke’s treatise *Enquiry* (1757) systematizes the connection between sublimity and terror. Terror, he states in the *Enquiry*, “is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime” (53-54). Thus, terror is a potential source occasioning the feeling of the sublime.

⁴ “[I]f the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person, as these emotions clear ... encumbrance, they are capable of producing delight ... a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of the passions” (Burke 123). This is akin to what Kant, in *Critique of Judgment* (1799), formulates as “the dynamical sublime,” which generally takes place when the force of nature is so modified as not to be hazardous. Both Burke and Kant operate on an assumption of a bifurcation of the sublime experience. While Burke’s *Enquiry* rests on the empirical principle of self-preservation, the Kantian sublime is conditioned by the idea of man as a rational being. On the one hand, the sublime entities dwarf human concerns and capabilities, and we experience “the minuteness of our nature.” On the other hand, according to Kant, in spite of the violence

exerted on our perceptual apparatus – of the inadequacy of imagination to encompass and estimate the magnitude of the sublime excess – we are still reminded of the limits of the sensible, physical world; i.e., the incommensurability between imagination and reason: the “superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive powers over the greatest power of sensibility” (526-7). Regardless of the great size of the sensible, it will always remain inferior to the unlimited pure ideas of reason – an infinity found in the rational being.

⁵ According to John Baillie, in the appreciation of awful sublimity, the mind is raised “to fits of *Greatness* and disposes it to soar above her *Mother Earth* ... the Mind ever feels from the *Consciousness* of its own *Vastness* ... [the Sublime] disposes the Mind to this *Enlargement* of itself, and gives her a lofty *Conception* of her own *Powers*” (cited from Botting 40). In addition, for Radcliffe – in developing Burke’s aesthetic theory by distinguishing terror from horror – terror activates the mind and imagination, enabling the elevation and expansion of the conscious self under sublime pressures.

⁶ This, for example, also accords with the Kantian incongruity between imagination and reason.

⁷ To further substantiate the otherwise neglected relation between the sublime, horror, and uncanny repression, *sub-limis* – meaning under and below the limit or surface – connotes the dark side of sublimity: the resurfacing or return of the repressed. Furthermore, the abstract moral philosophy integral to Kant’s sublime seems to prefigure Freud’s concept of sublimation – described in “Civilization and its Discontents” (1930) – in the sense that sublimation is a moral act in which the libidinal energy from sexual impulses

(and thus individual gratification) is repressed and redirected to that of cultural development to serve a societal, moral, or aesthetic use.

⁸ This anatomical division of the brain reflects its evolutionary history. The frontal lobes, the evolved part of the brain, distinguishes humans from their primal ancestors and animals; it contains many of the cognitive functions associated with the quality of being human and is the seat of the brain's reasoning powers. Conversely, the visceral posterior coordinates muscle movement and operates automatically without intruding into consciousness.

⁹ Since Freud's revolutionary works were written after the time of Poe, employing psychoanalytic theory is apparently anachronistic. However, Freud's sources and inspiration often derived from the currents of ideas in literature. Hence, Poe can largely be seen as a literary precursor and proponent for psychoanalysis. In fact, the doppelgänger motif itself personifies a hypostatic forerunner of the key elements in psychoanalysis, and could even be said to presage the poststructuralist decentering of subjectivity as self-coherent and endowed with intent and purpose.

¹⁰ Comparatively, "hyggelig" [cosy, snug], with its connotations of the homely, is visibly present in "uhyggelig," the Danish approximate to *unheimlich*. Yet in contrast to the covert element of the homely in "uncanny," "uhyggelig" does not retain its cosy element on a semantic level.

¹¹ In the Freudian psychological process of identity formation, the male child selects the maternal body as an object for libidinal investment but resigns from his attempts to possess the maternal love-object out of fear of castration by the father. Instead he assimilates the identity model the father provides. He symbolically internalizes the regulations of the father and culture which results

in the formation of the superego, which takes place during the dissolution of the Oedipus complex.

¹² Although Freud opens his famous essay on the uncanny by distinguishing the uncanny against the “elaborate treatises on aesthetics which ... prefer to concern themselves with the ... sublime” (930), and admittedly, the uncanny and sublime are never used interchangeably, the uncanny is embedded within or at least located on the margins of the discourse of the sublime, since the uncanny can be seen as a divergent development of the sublime. Both Freud’s uncanny and Burke’s sublimity are subsumed under the psychological theory of terror, and they decussate when focusing on the phenomena of terrible uncertainty or obscurity fostering the sensation of an indecipherable dread – albeit the object and nature of this terror, its outcome, as well as how this terror is perceived, experienced, and processed differ. In addition, Burke proves deficient for a full understanding the terror operating in “William Wilson.” Burke’s thesis rests on a mechanical account of bodily processes: “pain and fear consist in an unnatural tension of the nerves” (132); “[f]or fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain.” (54). In this sense, Poe modifies the Burkean sublime by anticipating a Freudian terror that has nothing to do with fears of physical injury but rather an injury much more intimate insofar as it violates the very core of identity.

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Appendix

Diagram: Movement and Locality

