

The Alien Within: Postcolonial Gothic and the Politics of Home

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Postcolonial gothic fiction arises in response to certain social, historical, or political conditions. Postcolonial fiction adapts a British narrative form that is highly attuned to the distinction and collapse between home and not home and the familiar and the foreign. The appearance of the gothic in postcolonial fiction seems a response to the failure of national politics that are riven by sectarian, gender, class, and caste divisions. Postcolonial gothic is one way in which literature can respond to increasing problematic questions of the postcolonial “domestic terrain:” questions concerning legitimate origins; rightful inhabitants; usurpation and occupation; and nostalgia for an impossible nationalist politics are all understood in the postcolonial gothic as national questions that are asked of the everyday, domestic realm. This dissertation argues that the postcolonial employment of the gothic does four distinct things in works by al-Tayeb Salih, J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Arundhati Roy, and Salman Rushdie. First, it forms a dystopic representation that emerges when the idealist project of the national allegorical romance fails. Second, the postcolonial gothic is interested in the representation of the *unheimlich* nature of home as both dwelling and nation. If colonialism created a “home away from home” and metaphorized this spatial division in psychoanalysis through the relationship of the *heimlich* to the *unheimlich*, then part of the postcolonial gothic’s agenda is unveiling that behind the construction of hominess abroad lies something fundamentally unhomey. Third,

postcolonial gothic employs a gothic historical sensibility, or a sense of “pastness” in the present. Fourth, if the gothic is the narrative mode by which Britain frightened itself about cultural degeneration, the loss of racial or cultural purity, the racial other, sexual subversion and the threat that colonial-era usurpation and violence might one day “return,” then postcolonial gothic deploys the gothic as a mode of frightening itself with images of transgressive women who threaten to expose the dark underbelly of their own historical and political contexts.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

What happens when the gothic, a distinctly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British mode, is deployed in contemporary postcolonial fiction? What does the gothic allow postcolonial fiction to say and do that it might not have access to otherwise? Why would postcolonial writers consciously deploy a narrative mode that is not only British but also a mode predicated on the primitive, foreign, and exotic? Given the popularity of magical realism and other experimental narrative modes, why would postcolonial writers feel the need to turn toward the gothic, a poorly written, hyperbolic, and conventionalized mode? The British gothic is a narrative mode that is “antagonistic to realism,”¹ shadows Romantic idealism and individualism, and provides a dark counternarrative to the narrative of progress of modernity. In the gothic, the sins of the fathers always visit themselves upon their children and curses uncannily redound throughout the generations. As such, the gothic makes visible the “uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence” and displays the “underside of enlightenment and humanist values.”² The gothic may be fascinated with things that are old, but in its form, it is a distinctly *new* mode of writing. Ian Watt remarks on the irony of the term “Gothic Novel:” “It is hardly too much to say that etymologically the term ‘Gothic Novel’ is an oxymoron for ‘Old New.’”³ The gothic is a form of “generic miscegenation”⁴ because it “poaches” elements from realism, the romance, and the sentimental novel.

Intuitively, it makes sense for postcolonial writers to tap into Britain's "dark" or "illegitimate" narrative mode with which to understand the relationship between the colonial era and the present moment of complicated postcoloniality as one that is haunted by the specter of the colonial past.⁵ In deploying the gothic, postcolonial fiction attempts to solve the lingering historical and political problems of colonialism in terms of a European narrative mode. If the British gothic enables a symptomatic reading of empire, gender, and sexuality, amongst other things, then what might the gothic reveal about the postcolonial? Broadly speaking, postcolonial gothic inquires into the uncanny relationships between colonial narratives of conquest and unspeakable violence, public history and intimate narratives, and the persistence of nostalgia for nation or homeland in the face of the failure of such projects.

There has been much written on postcolonial magical realism, but the subject of the postcolonial gothic has not received much more attention than an article-length study. The existing scholarship on the postcolonial gothic emphasizes that the postcolonial employment of the gothic mode is first and foremost a narrative form of "writing back" to empire, and a "palimpsestic echo"⁶ that articulates the unspeakable, lost, or silenced historical narratives of colonial conquest. In the existing criticism on the postcolonial gothic, the works that are commonly recognized as constituting the narrative form include Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, and Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*.⁷ Bernd-Peter Lange argues that: "Gothic brings to the fore what is unadmitted in a culture by painting it across, or palimpsestically underneath, time and space,"⁸ which, in the hands of postcolonial writers articulates "the untold stories of the colonial experience"⁹ and "turns the tables on the unifocal

point of view from which these alterities [of colonialism] were originally conceived and also their role in the imposition of a hegemonic Eurocentric view.”¹⁰ On my reading, the postcolonial gothic greatly exceeds that of a palimpsestic echo and, in fact, *expands the gothic mode* much in the way that Robert Heiland’s ground-breaking reading of *Jane Eyre*’s appropriation of the gothic expanded the gothic mode to include what appeared to be a straightforwardly realist bildungsroman.¹¹ My reading of al-Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (hereafter *Season*), J.M. Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* (hereafter *Country*), Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (hereafter *Small Things*), and Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* (hereafter *Shalimar*) enacts a gothic mode of reading *and* calls for an expansion of the category of the gothic.¹² With the exception of *Small Things*, which is self-consciously gothic, the other texts were selected on the basis that they spoke to significant issues in the historical development of postcoloniality (the supposed conflict between Western modernity and traditional Islam; the Arab defeat of 1967; the racial logic of apartheid South Africa and the Boer romanticization of the land; the breakdown of Marxist and Communist logic in the historically Marxist state of Kerala; the breakdown of Kashmiri tolerance and the onset of sectarian conflict) and because they were *not* recognized as containing gothic elements.

What constitutes the postcolonial gothic? What does the postcolonial gothic look like? British gothic has always been interested in architecture, homes, and other spaces and dwellings such as haunted houses, torture chambers, jail cells, courthouses, abbeys, monasteries, and decrepit castles. The gothic revival in Britain coincided with the architectural renovation of Horace Walpole’s home Strawberry Hill and William Beckford’s estate Fonthill Abbey to resemble medieval, gothic structures.¹³ British gothic fiction is also intensely interested in geographic spaces. Early gothic fiction such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*

(hereafter *Otranto*), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mystery of Udolpho*, *The Romance of the Forest*, and *The Italian* displaced their gothic settings onto exotic locations far away from the British homeland. Later gothic works such as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* chose the distinctly provincial location of the English moors. Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* focalizes its investigation of "a change in the structure of social and economic power"¹⁴ and the question of inheritance, legitimacy, and origins on the heirs of Jarndyce and its ancestral houses.

Postcolonial gothic is interested in home as a concept (notions of kinship, belonging, and the idea of home) and dwelling (houses, other habitations, and localities) but doubles the signification of home to function as both a cipher for the private sphere and an allegory for a nation as "home country" (Arab Sudan or Boer South Africa) or territory (Alsace, Kashmir, or Kerala). In the postcolonial gothic, homes and dwellings are the geographic sites in which larger political, historical, and national allegories are cast. The most compelling feature of the postcolonial gothic is its affinity for the spatial. Rosemary Marangoly George reminds us that: "Homes and nations are defined in the stances of confrontation with what is considered 'not-home,' with the foreign, with distance. Thus, for instance, it is in the heyday of British imperialism that England gets defined as "Home" in opposition to "The Empire" which belongs to the English but is not England."¹⁵ In the postcolonial gothic, homes, territories, and nations are represented as *heimlich* sites that screen the unhomely, foreign, and threatening nature from sight.

Postcolonial gothic fiction does not immediately make itself apparent as gothic in the same way that *Otranto* or *The Monk* does. More often than not, gothic textual elements in postcolonial fiction seem to appear upon the realization of the failure of the national or political

project in question. For example, the inability to blend Western notions of modernity with Arab-Islamic traditions in *Season*; the failure of *Kashmiriyat*, Kashmiriness distinguished by religious tolerance and anti-parochialism, in *Shalimar*; the breakdown of the Boer ideology to occupy the South African hinterland in *Country*; and the failure of Marxism to solve fully the questions of caste and gender in *Small Things* are all incidents that trigger the onset of gothic thematics such as vampiric desire, the haunted house, the specter, and the monstrous. If we look closer, however, it becomes evident that the relationship between the gothic and political failure in postcolonial gothic fiction is not so simple. The failure of those national and political projects and the onset of the gothic are mutually dependent and overlapping occurrences. The logic of gothic repetition, doubling, and the *unheimlich* return of the repressed necessitates the failure of the political and national projects, ultimately revealing that those projects are haunted at the outset by what they must exclude, deny, or what they cannot know in order to function.

1.1 WHY THE GOTHIC?

A fuller understanding of the conventions of British gothic fiction and their formal and political implications will benefit our exploration into how postcolonial fiction employs the gothic and where it departs from the British model. The term “gothic” was initially used to define a medieval period of post-Roman barbarism and was understood to contrast with the term “classical.” If the classical period was orderly, simple, pure, modern, civilized, elegant, composed of the cosmopolitan gentry of Europe, then the gothic was chaotic, ornate, convoluted,

excessive, uncivilized, barbaric, crude, archaic, and aristocratic.¹⁶ In its revolt against social norms, the gothic provided a distinct mode of representation that allowed the British to process the violence of the French Revolution and the possibility that it may cross the channel and threaten the English political status quo. Writes Ronald Paulson: “The Gothic . . . serve[d] as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to come to terms with what was happening across the Channel in the 1790s.”¹⁷ More generally, gothic plots tend to have similar preoccupations and trappings, which include crumbling ruins, convents, abbeys, and monastic institutions; madhouses; charnel houses; houses haunted by the sins of the father; subterranean passages and trap doors; a pervasive mood of melancholy, guilt, and mystery; unspeakable violence and murder; ghosts and other apparitions; doubles; mysterious or unknown family relations and inheritances; the possibility of incest and rape; sexual excess, homosexual desire and gender subversion; unintelligible manuscripts; uncanny familial resemblances that repeat generations later; and tyrannical relationships such as that between a master and servant or father and daughter.¹⁸

Most gothic forms are discontinuous, ambiguous, and open ended. Narratives such as *Otranto* may employ narrative framing devices that claim to be “found” manuscripts from old, which blurs the line between author, narrator, and text. James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* feature more than one narrator, histories narrated by others, or multiple narratives nestled within each other.

Perhaps what is most compelling about the British gothic is that it is a distinctly *historical* mode of narrative inquiry. Gothic fiction is “by definition about history and

geography”¹⁹ and “is itself a theory of history”²⁰ because it engages with “old” modes of narrative (the romance), displaces its distinctly historical concerns in a geographic locality elsewhere, dwells in the historical past, and identifies the presence of the past in the present.²¹ Markman Ellis argues that “the aura of dark irrationality and pleasurable terror enveloping gothic fiction offers a critique of the enlightenment construction of history as a linear account” of the progress of Western civilization.²² The gothic scene is historically dense in its “connections between the deep past and contemporary life and politics.”²³ This “sense of past-ness”²⁴ and its uncanny return in the present form what I call a *gothic historical sensibility*. Most gothic fiction is shaped by a historic sensibility, so it is not surprising that a gothic historical sensibility should be one of the defining factors of the postcolonial gothic. In both, the family is the foundational structure by which that historical sensibility manifests itself. For both, the family and familial relationships are the places in which political, historical, and social conflicts are staged and resolved.

Otranto, considered the first British gothic novel, establishes many of the tropes, concerns, and thematics with which subsequent gothics engage and repeat. Additionally, *Otranto* establishes a particular mode of historical inquiry that finds itself replicated in postcolonial gothic texts. Robert Miles reminds us that Walpole “fixed two things at the center of the Gothic: a plot line turning on legitimacy and a ludic spirit based on the ironic self-consciousness that comes with skepticism towards origins.”²⁵ From this, he constructed a tale that “details the ill effects upon an imaginary Italian kingdom of a usurpation of power by an imposter, and the restoration of that kingdom to its rightful heir.”²⁶ Manfred’s grandfather usurped the line of Otranto and, generations later, the rightful heir, “returns” to his ancestral home and eventually repossesses his inheritance. This rightful heir, the peasant Theodore, is identified not through any

democratic impulse, but through blood lineage, which is the sole qualifier of aristocratic legitimacy. A mysterious prophecy about Manfred's eventual loss of Otranto haunts the novel. Meanwhile, the gigantic form of Alfonso, the original heir of Otranto, intervenes and eventually appears in the end to disclose the secret of Manfred's grandfather's usurpation and to declare Theodore the rightful heir. Even though Theodore is unaware of his paternal origins, he bears an uncanny resemblance to his grandfather, which literalizes the novel's moral that "the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generations."²⁷ Although he never knew his grandfather, his "sins" (or the sins done unto him) uncannily "return" in Theodore.

Walpole's deployment of the gothic has a distinct political and historical purpose that manifests itself on the level of form and plot. *Otranto* initially presented itself not as an original work by Walpole, but as a literary find from the early sixteenth century that was translated from its original Italian into English and reprinted. The supposed "translator" of the text is not Walpole, but a fictitious character named William Marshall. It is Marshall who writes the following remarks in the introduction to the first edition of the novel:

The following work was found in the library of an ancient *Catholic* family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529.

How much sooner it was written does not appear. The principle incidents are such as were believed in the *darkest ages of Christianity*; but the language and conduct have nothing that *savours of barbarism*. The style is *the purest Italian*.²⁸

Even before the narrative proper begins, *Otranto* makes several claims and distinctions that both participate in an exclusivist English nationalist discourse and self-consciously critique that participation. The Italy of *Otranto* is everything that eighteenth-century Britain is not: Mediterranean, Catholic, and a relic of the dark ages and a barbarous culture.

Walpole “hides” the origins of a contemporary gothic story behind the fiction of a translated manuscript just as the narrative of *Otranto* geographically “hides” or displaces the truth of Theodore’s origins in the land of the infidels during the “darkest ages of Christianity”: Muslim Algeria and historic Palestine during the period of the Crusades. Theodore “was carried, at five years of age, to Algiers, with my mother, who had been taken by corsairs from the coast of Sicily.”²⁹ Theodore’s own childhood takes place somewhere far away from his actual home; incidentally, it is no surprise that the secret of his lineage (his father and the mysterious “wood [sword] of Joppa [Jaffa]”)³⁰ should be literally buried in the “holy land” during the Crusades, perhaps *the* ultimate symbol for an exotic and contested terrain. The novel engages in a double act of displacement by dislocating Walpole’s authorship onto a fictitious manuscript and then locating the mystery of political legitimacy and succession in a geographic location *other than home* (Italy). Within that Italian narrative, another act of displacement occurs as the question of origins is traced back to Palestine during the Crusades. The fake manuscript helps *Otranto* deliver its message concerning legitimacy and authority and in so doing, marks the beginning of the gothic mode alongside a curious estrangement from it. From its very inception, the gothic is bound up in the representation of the self through and by the “other,” all the while denying and disinheriting that relationship.

Like others of its genre, *Otranto* is concerned with history, but it is not concerned with an accurate representation of a historical period. The novel is interested in a more general sense of “past-ness” and in so doing, demonstrates the gothic historical sensibility. In *Otranto*, the past is not so much signified by fidelity to a historical period, as by supernatural events and feudalism. Supernatural events in *Otranto* become “a symbol of our past rising against us, whether it be the psychological past—the realm of those primitive desires repressed by the demands of a closely

organized society—or the historical past, the realm of a social order characterized by absolute power and servitude.”³¹ Despite its deployment of anachronism, the sentiment of *Otranto* is distinctly contemporary and produces essentially “a mishmash of enlightenment motivation with medieval detail.”³² The gothic historical sensibility is manifest in the *unheimlich* return of the repressed, which Walpole articulates as the return of the “sins of the father.”³³

In *Otranto*, the relations between two families, Manfred’s and Alfonso’s, form the basis from which all of the rest of the narrative events occur. In *Otranto*, the mediating factor between these two families is romantic love and marriage, which consolidates multiple claims to legitimacy. Manfred wishes to divorce Hippolita so that he may make a new marriage to Isabella and thus solidify his claim. Later, Manfred teams up with Frederic, who has his own designs on the line of Otranto, and the two plot a double marriage (forced marriages that lack passion or love) that solidifies the links between their two houses and, in so doing, excludes the possibility of the true heir from staking his claim. In contrast to these marriages of political convenience, Walpole offers us genuinely felt passion in the romance between Theodore and Mathilda, which is foiled by Manfred, who delivers a fatal wound to his daughter because he falsely believes her to be the traitorous Isabella. Ironically, if the marriage between Theodore and Mathilda was allowed to happen, then Manfred would have legitimized his illegitimate claim to Otranto by proxy, through his daughter’s marriage to the true heir.

The centrality of the family structure and the importance placed on marriage as a vehicle to resolve the political problem of legitimacy in *Otranto* seems to beg the question of the national allegory, if not a national allegorical *romance*. Doris Sommer calls the “national romance” a form more allegorical than the novel, in which the love story functions as the allegorical trope for the reconciliation of parts of a nation or region internally divided by class,

caste, race, or ethnicity.³⁴ For Sommer, the national romances of Latin America are allegorical “nation-building projects [that] invest . . . private passions with public purpose.”³⁵ Romantic love that culminates in marriage, according to Sommer, “provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at mid-century.”³⁶ Nineteenth-century Latin American romances camouflaged *actual* racial and class assimilation as the inevitable and undeniable erotic seduction and marriage of previously forbidden lovers. Sommer reiterates that: “Romantic passion . . . gave a rhetoric for hegemonic projects in Gramsci’s sense of conquering the antagonist through mutual interest, or ‘love,’ rather than coercion.”³⁷ In *Otranto*, Manfred’s and Frederic’s double marriage plot manifests that the national romance is a project of political usurpation that is conducted through the exchange of women. For both nineteenth-century Latin American romances *and* postcolonial gothic fiction, the national romance is invoked at best, with hope for authentic national reconciliation, and at worst, with the sad nostalgia for reconciliation that is politically impossible. In the images of a frantic Isabella and a horrified (and later, murdered) Mathilda, the novel makes evident that the national romance for its naïveté and deception, which masks its own coerciveness to women. *Otranto* thus provides postcolonial gothic fiction with a mode of narrative inquiry in its exploration of allegorical romantic love and its hidden machinations of gender with respect to patrilineal inheritance within both the family and state.

Otranto is obviously invested in political discourse, but displaces that discourse onto places and times elsewhere. Likewise, the novel engages in nationalist discourse through its deployment of the trope of blood, inheritance, and origins. Toni Wein reads *Otranto* as endorsing a conservative English nationalism, claiming: “These twin foci [the ancient Italian with the contemporary British] recur in the plot of Theodore’s disguised birth, in the Biblical curse that

simultaneously sings the praise of blood. The notion of blood as a river that connects and nourishes a people runs through the discourse of nationalism.”³⁸ *Otranto* seems to endorse a nationalist ideology based on blood rights, in which blood differentiates the social class of the aristocracy,³⁹ yet it also simultaneously compromises the claims of blood rights. It is often suggested that the nationalist politics in Walpole’s novel are an extension of his own social and political position and, of course, his father’s political tenure as first Prime Minister of Great Britain. Sue Chaplin notes:

As if symbolically to repel the forces of the ancient regime, moreover, Walpole had nailed to the wall above his bed a copy of the Magna Carta and the execution warrant of Charles I; his own ideological insecurities, then, were bound up with wider cultural narratives of authority and origin that articulated anxieties as to the nature and origin of English government. Walpole's position in relation to these contemporary narratives of legal and political power provides a significant point of access into a text that engages deeply with the fraught question of the legitimacy of authority and its relation to individual self-identity.⁴⁰

If we apply this sentiment towards the novel’s representation of Theodore, we see what appears to be an endorsement of patrilineal inheritance. A poor peasant who is ignorant of his noble origins, Theodore is never anything but a chivalrous knight in peasant’s clothing. When he discovers that he is Father Jerome’s son, his blood is instantly worth much more: “‘If I am this venerable man’s son, though no prince, as thou art, know, the blood that flows in my veins’— ‘Yes,’ said the friar, interrupting him, ‘his blood is noble; nor is he that abject thing, my lord, you speak him. He is my lawful son; and Sicily can boast of few houses more ancient than that of Falconara.’”⁴¹ In the novel’s conclusion, the huge, ghostly form of Alfonso divulges that not only

is Theodore Jerome's son, but he is also Alfonso's grandson, making him a prince. The discourse of blood in this context functions to conceal and reveal social class and political legitimacy. Yet legitimacy is only achieved because that huge, ghostly form dominates and alters the unfolding of events in the novel with exceptional (and sometimes supernatural) forms of violence. For example, Conrad, innocent of his father's scheming, is killed when a gigantic helmet crashes out of nowhere and crushes him. Mistaking his daughter for Isabella, Manfred stabs and murders the virtuous Mathilda. The novel seems to endorse the logic of patrilineal inheritance, but does so ambivalently. In juxtaposing a powerful logic for the overturning of past wrongs with the tragedy and violence done to otherwise innocent people when the sins of the father are supposedly righted, the novel reinforces the idea that notions of legitimacy, inheritance, and property ownership are themselves highly vexed.

Gothic discourse on blood has distinctly nationalist implications that, in postcolonial gothic, centers on the threat of miscegenation and the failure of the national project. Theodore's noble blood, though unseen, manifests itself in his bravery, willingness to serve, strength of character, and ability to make genuine emotional attachments. In *Dracula* and *Season*, blood signifies a most pernicious form of sexual and racial contamination. In *Country* and *The Conservationist*, the discourse of blood functions as it does in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light in August*, as a watchword against miscegenation and a fear for the loss of white control over the land. In *Small Things* and *Shalimar*, women are the sole means by which caste or regional culture is preserved. Sexual relations with men outside of these structures introduces foreign blood that threatens the viability of caste superiority and the ideals of *Kashmiriyat*.

In the vocabulary of legitimacy that *Otranto* deploys, the gothic is an “illegitimate offspring” of “legitimate” narrative modes.⁴² The gothic’s illegitimacy, its hyperbolic excess and formal conventionality, and its fascination with the dark side of things allow it access to say and do things that realism and the romance cannot. In doing so, *Otranto*, and much of the gothic “brought into focus both the seeming limitations of the novel form as it emerged in the eighteenth century and the terms under which those limitations were to be overcome.”⁴³ By shifting the concept of reality towards that of a nightmare vision, Walpole performs a much-needed political critique of the status quo of the Whig myth of the Gothic constitution.⁴⁴ The novel’s overt political content is displaced onto an *unheimlich* representation of a family in which a secret of usurpation returns to haunt.

I spend so much time on Walpole’s early example of the gothic because it establishes so well a set of political and social concerns that are replicated and refined in both British and postcolonial gothic. Like *Otranto*, much of the postcolonial gothic is concerned with legitimacy, authenticity, usurpation, and the return of the “sins of the father.” Also like *Otranto*, it casts that set of political concerns onto an *unheimlich* representation of home and family. Because the gothic historical sensibility of both British and postcolonial gothic depends so much on the concept of the *unheimlich*, an in depth investigation of the term will be beneficial before proceeding further.

1.2 HOUSE, NATION, AND THE *UNHEIMLICH*

The *unheimlich*, or uncanny, concerns itself with strangeness and alienation, the appearance of the familiar in the midst of the unfamiliar, or the unfamiliar in the midst of something familiar. A feeling of uncanniness can be the result of repetition, doubling, coincidence, or an eerie feeling of déjà vu. The *unheimlich* is bound up with homelessness because at its core, it is triggered by the revelation that at the heart of what we call home is not comfortable domesticity, but an estranging, foreign place. The word *heimlich* means something homely, familiar, and at ease, so we may assume that the term *unheimlich* signifies the opposite—the unhomely, foreign, hidden, and concealed.

By and large, the gothic invokes the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich*, but the uncanny has a rich history that bears on both British and postcolonial gothic. The *unheimlich* appears in many different registers, ranging from Marxist, historicist, psychoanalytic, political, to (post)colonial discourse. For example, Marx and Engels begin *The Communist Manifesto* by invoking the return of the repressed and the gothic trope of the specter in order to represent the haunting effect of the French Revolution upon the present political moment: “A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.”⁴⁵ Marxist notions of alienation, revolution, and repetition invoke the uncanny.

The *unheimlich* is intensely cultural and bound up with the Enlightenment; as a metaphor for mystery, the concealed, and unknowable, the *unheimlich* may be seen as the Enlightenment’s dark, but necessary, double. Early gothic fiction, as I have noted, literally displaced its plots of

tyranny, usurpation, and illegitimacy onto exotic locations in the past. More sophisticated examples of the gothic, however, achieved gothic thrills without such geographical and temporal “travel” through a deployment of the *unheimlich*, which makes certain that all ills not only return home, but originate there as well. John Paul Riquelme contends that: “Early in its history, the Gothic is structurally and implicitly a negative version of pastoral because of its turn to foreign locales that are threatening and bizarre. It later relocates the antipastoral setting and its implications much closer to home: on native soil, on board ship, in the sanitarium, in the library, in the house, in the bedroom, in the schoolroom, in the mind, and in language” (587). Postcolonial gothic fiction is, in many respects, a “negative version of pastoral.” *Country* and *The Conservationist* exemplify the anti-pastoral gothic tendency by locating the gothic in both the South African farm and the Afrikaans language, while *Season*, *Small Things*, and *Shalimar* locate the gothic in the Occidental library, the familial house, the customs of village life, and idealist notions of regional hybridity.

Heidegger’s formulation of the *unheimlich* contributes much to the historical nature of the uncanny and its postcolonial employment. Heidegger, perhaps more than any other philosopher, was concerned with the uncanniness of ordinary events. The fundamental character of our being in the world is uncanny, unhomey, and not-at-home. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger contends that: “That kind of Being-in-the-world which is tranquillized and familiar is a mode of Dasein’s uncanniness, not the reverse. . . . [T]he ‘not-at-home’ must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon.”⁴⁶ Heidegger’s notion of Being in the world is, as David Farrell Krell remarks, “marked by the uncanny discovery that we are *not* at home in the world.”⁴⁷ Heidegger not only provides us with a mode in which to examine how elements of everyday life are marked by the *unheimlich*, but also allows us collectively to view the *unheimlich* as “a metaphor for a

fundamentally unlivable modern condition.”⁴⁸ Anthony Vidler explains that our uncanny Being in the world may also be attributed to more material elements: “Estrangement and unhomeliness have emerged as the intellectual watchwords of [the twentieth] century . . . generated sometimes by war, sometimes by the unequal distribution of wealth.”⁴⁹ Vidler understands modernity as commensurate with the *unheimlich* as both literal homelessness and displacement and the more metaphysical state of being ill at ease with the world.

Lastly, the notion of the uncanny as the return of something long repressed finds itself expressed in contemporary political and postcolonial discourse as both the “boomerang effect” and “blowback.” Martiniquan poet, author, and politician Aimé Césaire describes the violence of colonial conquest with the language of the gothic. Césaire understands the Jewish Holocaust in Europe as an instance in which European violence abroad uncannily returns in distorted form as European dehumanization of its own “others.” The boomerang effect is this return of colonial violence and the way it alters those involved:

[T]hese heads of men, these collections of ears, these burned houses, these Gothic invasions, this steaming blood, these cities that evaporate at the edge of the sword, are not to be so easily disposed of. They prove that colonization . . . dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity . . . inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it. . . . It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out.⁵⁰

In this instance, Césaire understands Hitler as the uncanny incarnation of colonial violence that has *returned home*.⁵¹ Blowback, another political register of the *unheimlich*, is a term that initially derived from the Central Intelligence Agency, and is now broadly used in espionage to describe the unintended consequences of covert operations.⁵² Because the public is unaware of

the secret operations that provoked it, blowback appears random and without cause. In actuality it is the reappearance and distorted response to the secretive political meddling of the United States abroad. With respect to gothic fiction, the term “blowback” is a useful way of understanding “the enduring legacy of empire . . . [and] the way it returns home”⁵³ in distorted and unrecognizable forms.

Homi Bhabha understands a body of international fiction, which he calls “world literature,” through the category of the unhomely. Taking Henry James’s representation of Isabel Archer’s marital dwelling in *The Portrait of a Lady* as a “house of darkness”⁵⁴ as his starting point, Bhabha claims that the domestic spheres of works such as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Nadine Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story*, and Tagore’s *The Home and the World* “become sites for history’s most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting.”⁵⁵ Bhabha essentially understands the collapse between the public and private spheres as the genesis for the unhomely in world literature. In that collapse, the banal events of everyday, private life take on political significance. For example, within the context of Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story*, everyday domestic events such as births, marriages, and rituals of food and clothing reveal their uncanny, racialized natures. The violence of everyday, racialized life occurs in where and how we live, who we are allowed to love, and what we are allowed to learn. Bhabha asks of world literature: “can the perplexity of the unhomely, intrapersonal world lead to an international theme?”⁵⁶ Bhabha hints that, because the unhomely inhabits the domestic space in which the collapse between public and private occurs, the answer to this question has much to do with gender and the figures of women in world literature: “in the figure of woman . . . the ambivalent structure of the civil State as it draws its

rather paradoxical boundary between the private and the public spheres.”⁵⁷ In many respects, Bhabha’s conceptualization of the unhomely as originating in the collapse between public and private, and the unsettling female figure that emerges from that collapse, resonates with my notions of the postcolonial gothic’s deployment of the *unheimlich*.

Each historical register of the uncanny finds resonance in the examples of postcolonial gothic fiction discussed herein, but Freud’s elucidation of the *unheimlich* in “The Uncanny” seems to describe best the postcolonial deployment of the *unheimlich*. Freud’s concept of the *unheimlich* is instructive not only in understanding gothic fiction, but also in illuminating the cathexis between locality, gender, and modes of representing colonial and intimate violence. The *unheimlich* is not an ahistorical psychoanalytic term that is deployed as metaphor only, but provides a material, historical way of understanding what the postcolonial gothic does with history and politics; and narrative mode and historical representation. Robert Mighall asserts that: “Freud’s theories are indeed most ‘Gothic’ on the metaphorical level, but without a systematic historical understanding of exactly why this is the case such discussions are merely self-reflective and never get beyond the metaphorical themselves.”⁵⁸ The *unheimlich* grounds itself in the home and notions of the unhomely, which Freud’s metaphorical discourse interprets solely as a metaphor for psychological interiority and the return of the infantile into the adult’s world. In the postcolonial gothic, the *unheimlich* is historicized and politicized, which allows it to utilize the concept without accepting the entirety of the uncanny’s biological-sexual component as Freud sees it. In the postcolonial gothic, the *unheimlich* becomes a way for a text to approach the topics of home and history; illegitimacy and contamination; gender, the body, and violence; and the vestigial and concealed of historical and political discourse.

In “The Uncanny,” Freud writes that the uncanny is “actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed.”⁵⁹ This once familiar, and now uncanny thing or memory returns in distorted form into consciousness, causing feelings of unease, fear, and dread. The uncanny offers us a way to think about the relation between foreign and familiar, and how repression causes the familiar to return as something foreign. “The Uncanny” is as interesting for what it says as it is about how it says it, and the avenues of thought it introduces, but does not pursue. Freud begins the essay sounding confident yet immediately distances or estranges himself from his proposed subject matter:

Only rarely does the psychoanalyst feel impelled to engage in aesthetic investigations. . . . He works in other strata of the psyche and has little to do with the emotional impulses that provide the usual subject matter of aesthetics. . . . One such is the ‘uncanny.’ . . . Indeed, the present writer must plead guilty to exceptional obtuseness in this regard, when great delicacy of feeling would be more appropriate. It is a long time since he experienced or became acquainted with anything that conveyed the impression of the uncanny.⁶⁰

In this strange beginning, Freud refers to himself in the third person (“the psychoanalyst” and “the present writer”) and claims to make a large intellectual leap from the “strata of the psyche,” which he characterizes as more scientific and emotionally detached, to that of aesthetics, which deals with the realm of emotional affect. Freud not only confesses that he lacks the “delicacy of feeling” necessary to investigate the uncanny, but that he has not experienced the uncanny for “a long time” even though later in the essay he admits to uncannily returning to the red light district when on vacation in Italy. There seems to be a simultaneous movement toward and away from

the subject of the *unheimlich*. Like Walpole's preface to *Otranto*, Freud's essay is a mode of expression of the effect of the word *unheimlich*. Both immediately mark themselves with strangeness and estrangement; readers get the sense that the author is compelled to write on a strange subject, and is treading unfamiliar intellectual territory. This strangeness is evidenced by Freud's constant hedging; he posits a definition for the uncanny only to negate it a few pages later. Indeed, as Robert Young notes: "Of all Freud's writings, 'The Uncanny' is generally recognized as the text in which he most thoroughly finds himself caught up in the very processes he seeks to comprehend."⁶¹ The process-like quality of the essay increases its strangeness, for we expect an authoritative, definitive definition of the *unheimlich*, but instead receive multiple possible meanings in which *none* are completely accepted by the author as definitive.

The root of the word "unheimlich" is home (*heim*), which automatically frames the discussion about the uncanny within actual houses and the families that dwell therein as well as the metaphor of the house, which may be understood more generally as dwelling, territory, and nation.⁶² Freud initially defines the *heimlich* as something "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, marked by a pleasant domesticity, intimate, [and] homely."⁶³ The prefix *un-* would lead us to believe that the *unheimlich* is everything that the *heimlich* is not: strange, unfamiliar, foreign, wild, unknown, and unhomely. And yet Freud's formulation of the relationship between homely and unhomely collapses the meaning between the *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, in which the *heimlich* connotes something foreign and fearful. In "The Uncanny," Freud includes an excerpt by R. Gutzkow that comments on the dual nature of each term:

'The Zecks are all mysterious.' 'Mysterious? . . . What do you mean by 'mysterious'? 'Well, I have the same impression with them as I have with a buried spring or a dried-up pond. You can't walk over them without constantly

feeling that water might appear.’ ‘We call that uncanny (“unhomely”); you call it mysterious (“homely”).⁶⁴

This quote is instructive, for it narrows the definition of the *unheimlich* to the return of the repressed (“you can’t walk over them without constantly feeling that water might appear”) and posits that the *heimlich*, what we would automatically associate as something cozy, comfortable, and free of such eerie feelings, is, in actuality, saturated with mystery. Thus, Freud contends, house and home are *constituted by* the repression of the past and the threatening other; the image of the comforting sphere of home is just a screen for the uncanniness that lurks within it. If this is true, then feelings of mysteriousness and dread signifies that one is “at home,” for home is always marked by mystery, repression, and the fear of the unknown other. In other words, a house may appear homely, but it is merely masking its true unhomely nature. Given the ever-present threat of the uncanny, the homely seems more like an illusion than a real thing that is stable, coherent, and always present.

Both the convention of the haunted house and the centrality of houses and other dwellings allow the gothic to represent the collapse between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. In gothic fiction, houses personify the family, and thus become useful metaphors for the gothic quest for origins, identity, family, and parentage. I have already noted how the mystery of concealed parentage (Theodore’s return to his ancestral home and his resemblance to the portrait of his grandfather Alfonso) is a major source of the *unheimlich* in *Otranto*. The mystery of concealed parentage functions similarly in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, with some crucial exceptions. Unlike *Otranto*, which is saturated with the gothic mode, *Bleak House* is a realist novel that is infused with gothic thematics and the logic of gothic historicity in that Lady Dedlock’s past uncannily returns to haunt the present in the form of her unknown and unacknowledged

daughter, Esther Summerson. In his preface to the novel, Dickens states that he “has purposely dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things.”⁶⁵ Maria Tatar contends that, “he [Dickens] might just as well have said that he proposed to depict the uncanniness of ‘canny’ matters.”⁶⁶ The “romantic side of familiar things,” or “the uncanniness of canny matters” essentially illustrates the gothic origins of family life and social institutions. Family secrets as well as the legal system, Chancery, patrilineal inheritance, and the poverty of urban life all constitute the romantic (uncanny) side of familiar (canny) things.

To be sure, the mystery of Esther’s parentage stages the *unheimlich* in ways that are, by now, conventionally gothic. In *Otranto*, Mathilda and Manfred remark on how closely Theodore resembles the portrait of his ancestor, Alfonso. Similarly, in *Bleak House*, the secret connections between Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson manifest themselves long before either discover their kinship to each other. It is Mr. Guppy who first intimates an uncanny resemblance between the two women as he studies a portrait of Lady Dedlock: “I’ll be shot if it ain’t very curious how well I know that picture! . . . I assure you that the more I think of that picture the better I know it, without knowing how I know it!”⁶⁷ He does not yet know that the reason why he “knows” the picture is that he was in recent conversation with her daughter, Esther.⁶⁸ Esther experiences a similarly uncanny moment when she first sees Lady Dedlock: “But why her face should be, in a confused way, like a broken glass to me, in which I saw scraps of old remembrances. . . . did Lady Dedlock’s face accidentally resemble my godmother’s?”⁶⁹ If *Otranto* answered the question of origins by returning the “rightful” heir of Otranto to his proper seat of legitimate power, then *Bleak House* answers that same question by refusing to follow the *unheimlich* logic that “the sins of the father are visited on their children.”⁷⁰ Esther quite pragmatically muses: “[I]f the sins of the fathers were sometimes visited upon the children, the phrase did not mean what I

had in the morning feared it meant. I knew I was as innocent of my birth, as a queen of hers; and that before my Heavenly Father I should not be punished for birth, nor a queen rewarded for it.”⁷¹ Esther clearly does not subscribe to the notion of blood entitlements, and values character and action over birthright. It is partly for this reason that the novel holds the domestic sphere as one that is recuperable from ruin.

These examples illustrate the ways in which Dickens deploys the familiar gothic convention of the *unheimlich* through the trope of mysterious parentage and family secrets in an otherwise realist novel. Readers familiar with the gothic recognize in these narrative gestures a long literary lineage in which typical gothic aspects such as supernatural frights (whether actual or “explained”), fearful foreign locales, and gothic heroines threatened by violent male protagonists are missing. Instead, Dickens deploys some familiar gothic conventions and modifies others; the gothic aids Dickens in his biting social critique of city life, corruption, and notions of propriety and legitimacy. For example, the title of Dickens’ novel signals certain gothic expectations, yet the eponymous Bleak House is no typical gothic structure. Bleak House “beams brightly,” and a “gush of light” emanates from its open doorway; its multitude of hallways and passages form no gothic labyrinth, but serve as a charming example of “one of those delightfully irregular houses.”⁷² Chesney Wold, with its turrets, mausoleum, moss and ivy, “ghost’s walk,” and family secrets takes on the characteristics of the typical gothic mansion; in its antiquity, rigid order, stagnation, and slow decline, it functions as the usual gothic metaphor for the aristocracy. Yet there exists a third, more compelling site for the gothic in *Bleak House*: London itself. The juxtaposition of various families and their houses with the grime of the city reinforces a synechdochal relationship and “presents home as a part for the whole, the homeland or nation.”⁷³ Dickens does away with the gothic convention of geographic and temporal

displacement and locates the uncanny gothic elements not only in the present moment, but in a strong critique of the both the domestic and social sphere of home.

Dickens's adaptation of gothic conventions for distinctly social and political reasons provides a model for my reading of the postcolonial gothic.⁷⁴ Whereas Walpole displaced the story of political usurpation onto medieval Italy, Dickens locates the seat of gothic horrors in the urban labyrinth of London. Allan Pritchard notes that: "*Bleak House* grows out of Dickens's perception that the remote and isolated country mansion or castle is not so much the setting of ruin and darkness, mystery and horror, as the great modern city: the Gothic horrors are here and now."⁷⁵ To be sure, exotic Africa and other colonial localities manifest themselves in *Bleak House*, but they do so in a way that seems superfluous, if not downright naïve and neglectful of the pressing problems "at home" in London. Patrick Brantlinger remarks that in nineteenth-century England, "imperialism functioned as an ideological safety valve, deflecting both working-class radicalism and middle-class reformism into noncritical paths."⁷⁶ Not so in *Bleak House*; Dickens attacks any attempts to deflect the suffering of the "savages" at home through "telescopic philanthropy" abroad to the many references to empire. Esther, ever the voice of moderateness and wisdom, comments on Mrs. Jellyby's project to educate the "natives of Boorioboola-Gha" in coffee cultivation: "It is right to *begin with the obligations of home* . . . and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them."⁷⁷ Africa exists in order to reflect England's own social neglect: British meddling abroad, whether in the form of social work or colonialism, is a literalization of the displacement of the *unheimlich* things about home to a location other than home. Just as Caddy Jellyby "wish[es that] Africa was dead"⁷⁸ because it distracts her mother from her maternal and domestic duties about the house, the novel, to a certain extent, holds the imperial accountable for

the social failures at home: “[I]n *Bleak House*, Dickens holds the imperial mission partly accountable for the failure of social reform in England.”⁷⁹ *Bleak House* is quick to unite the foreign and the familiar, and sever the act of foreign displacement through an absurd contradiction: Mrs. Jellyby plunges herself into her “Africa project”⁸⁰ while she neglects her own children. Bruce Robbins reads the “concentric gradualism” of the novel in which “all action remains continuous with and answerable to its originary center . . . an (inevitably imperfect) effort to replace systematic social reforms with ‘personal’ responsibility.”⁸¹ For Dickens, Mrs. Jellyby’s “telescopic philanthropy” is especially socially irresponsible because it not only neglects the suffering of the impoverished “savages” at home, but also because it causes Mrs. Jellyby to neglect the gendered work of the domestic sphere. Writing about empire always seems to engage with gender politics,⁸² and in *Bleak House*, that engagement focuses on the decline of the English domestic sphere because middle-class women meddle with things outside of the home and nation. In this way, *Bleak House* links England’s imperial projects with its domestic failures, which reinforces that “the civilizing mission begins ‘at home’ for both the imperial nation and the middle-class woman.”⁸³

Bleak House, as Timothy Carens argues, “Africanizes London,” because it projects “images and themes extracted from accounts of the [British] 1841 Niger expedition onto the imperial metropolis”⁸⁴ and makes many references to England’s imperial pursuits.⁸⁵ The imperial references in the novel do not displace foreign uncanniness to some dark corner of the globe, but reinforce the notion that the uncanny things are already present *within the home*, which allows the novel to engage in a *social critique of home*.⁸⁶ The novel’s oft-quoted opening representation of Chancery firmly locates the gothic horrors within the social institution of the

corrupt legal system, which puts pressure on the typical gothic representation of otherness and alienation in localities *other than home*:

This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with its slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance; which gives monied might the means abundantly of wearing out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart; that there is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give—who does not often give—the warning, ‘Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!’”⁸⁷

Chancery is described as a decrepit gothic mansion; everything it touches becomes itself a gothic house.

Alice van Buren Kelley comments that the “society of Victorian England, then, is the bleak house, which Dickens is intent on describing; and he builds his description with a series of physically and spiritually desolate houses.”⁸⁸ It is Chancery and the slum Tom-all-Alone's, and not a castle, abbey, or mysterious African interior landscape, that is the true gothic horror in *Bleak House*. Tom-all-Alone's is a dwelling (or “black, dilapidated street”⁸⁹ of houses) that personifies poverty, social neglect, and the corruption of Chancery.⁹⁰ It threatens to contaminate the rest of the London with its infectious diseases, much in the way that Stoker describes Dracula's vampirism:

But he has his revenge. Even the winds are his messengers, and they serve him in these hours of darkness. There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but

propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream of a Norman house. . . . There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, *through every order of society*, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge.⁹¹

Herein lies the brunt of Dickens' social critique. Because, in all likelihood, Tom-all-Alone's is a property in Chancery, the machinations of the corrupt legal system are tied absolutely to poverty and social neglect.⁹² One house (the *heimlich* Bleak House, from which Tom Jarndyce originates) is related absolutely to the other (the *unheimlich* Tom-all-Alone's, whose namesake in all likelihood is Tom Jarndyce), but the two are not containable in their separate spheres. One seeps into the other. Dickens uses gothic language in order to describe Chancery and Tom-all-Alone's in order to link the unseen social processes and to draw a visible line of causality between them. Grace Moore contends that:

Dickens reads beneath the superficial prosperity of the city and implicit within his reading is the fact that the national wealth is based upon, not simply the ornate products of India and China, but far more significantly on an impoverished workforce—in short, London is the 'capital of capital' precisely because it is the capital of poverty.⁹³

Dickens's sordid representations of the inhabitants of Tom-all-Alone's draws a much more complex picture of the relationship between empire and metropolis. Tom-all-Alone's is not so much Dickens's example of imperial blowback that uncannily returns from Africa to infect the

home. It would be easier to locate the *unheimlich* in a location far from home, but instead, Tom-all-Alone's manifests that home is essentially unhomey.

Gothic provides Dickens with convenient tropes by which he may reveal the uncanniness of the canny elements of everyday life.⁹⁴ In doing so, he reveals that the *heimlich* world of the everyday is saturated with the *unheimlich*. In distinction to earlier gothic works such as *Otranto* that featured the supernatural, “[g]hosts arise from human actions and may be dispelled by them.”⁹⁵ The postcolonial deployment of the gothic, likewise, invests human actions and social institutions with gothic potential. Similarly, Freud's concept of the *unheimlich* originates in psychoanalytic theory, yet upon closer investigation, may have more to do with the historical and social contexts of Enlightenment than with the “dark” places of individual development.

Freud's formulation of the collapse between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* is useful, but the conflation between the two terms must be understood in historical terms. Terry Castle argues that the *unheimlich* is a byproduct of the Enlightenment, and that the “age of reason or enlightenment—the aggressively rationalist imperatives of the epoch—also produced, like a toxic side effect, a new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, bafflement, and intellectual impasse.”⁹⁶ The “return” of the atavistic in the form of the uncanny is evidence that the Enlightenment was unable to surmount the “old” and shed light on the mysterious. It stands to reason, then, that European history since the Enlightenment, and even the project of modernity, is one shot through with uncanny narratives that tell quite a different tale. Castle iterates: “the more we seek enlightenment, the more alienating our world becomes; the more we seek to free ourselves, Houdini-like, from the coils of superstition, mystery, and magic, the more tightly, paradoxically, the uncanny holds us in its grip.”⁹⁷

Castle interprets the *unheimlich* as the Enlightenment's dark double. The double, for Freud, "is a creation that belongs to a primitive phase in our mental development, a phase that we have surmounted."⁹⁸ For Freud, the *unheimlich* double is a concept that works on two levels: that of the individual and that of the larger culture. For the individual, the double is the return of a "primitive" phase of development; for a "civilized" culture, the double is the return of "primitive" civilizations and beliefs that were supposedly surmounted. Castle writes:

The crucial developmental process on which the Freudian uncanny depends is rationalization: the "surmounting" of infantile belief. Yet as ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, so the individual repudiation of infantile fantasy simply recapitulates the larger process by which human civilization as a whole—at some paradigmatic juncture in its history—dispensed with "primitive" or "animistic" forms of thought and substituted new, rationalized modes of explanation.⁹⁹

In the Freudian hermeneutic, an individual's quest to surmount the primitive as infantile beliefs may be read as a larger allegory of an entire culture's attempt to surmount that which is primitive and animistic and enter the age of Enlightenment and modernity.

Freud does not mention what appears to be the obviously historical and political connotations of surmounting the primitive, which is that of colonialism, which militarily surmounted the "primitive" abroad. It is no coincidence that the historical emergence of Freud's conceptualization of the *unheimlich* coincides with the era of colonial exploration and expansion. Once we understand the *unheimlich* as modernity's "dark double" whose emergence coincides with the period of imperial expansion, we may view the *unheimlich* as a distinctly European process of spatially organizing difference, compartmentalizing the threat of violent colonial reprisals, and consolidating national identity.¹⁰⁰ Ranjana Khanna argues that:

Psychoanalysis is a colonial discipline. . . . It brought into the world an idea of being that was dependent on colonial, political and ontological relations, and through its disciplinary practices, formalized and perpetuated an idea of uncivilized, primitive, concealed, and timeless colonized peoples. . . . [A] national-colonial self was brought into existence . . . [and] into unconcealment. And it situated itself in opposition to its repressed, concealed, and mysterious “dark continents”: colonial Africa, women, and the primitive.¹⁰¹

Psychoanalysis encodes European subjectivity with colonial binaries of the primitive and the civilized; colony and metropolis; “dark continent” and Enlightened civilization; and frames the binary between homely and unhomely as the difference between those binaries. In this context, the *unheimlich* is literally mapped onto the primitive, colonial thing that must be repressed in order for the *heimlich* to maintain a semblance of cozy appeal. Yet as Freud demonstrates through the *unheimlich*, the distinction between the colony from the civilized metropolis doubles back on itself and collapses, which reveals the primitive at the heart of civilization. If the uncanny lent a sense of a “past-ness” to British gothic, then the postcolonial gothic historical sensibility is an effect of these present, but not always seen, colonial and historical components of the *unheimlich*. The gothic historical sensibility, or uncanny “past-ness” not only allows us to view the private sphere of the individual and family life as saturated with both the historical past and the present, but invests that temporality with the power to call the mysterious and concealed into visibility.

1.3 WHAT POSTCOLONIAL GOTHIC DOES

On my reading, postcolonial gothic fiction arises in response to certain social, historical, or political conditions. Postcolonial fiction adapts a British narrative form that is highly attuned to the distinction and collapse between home and not home and the familiar and the foreign. The appearance of the gothic in postcolonial fiction seems a response to the failure of national (or colonial, in the case of *Country*) politics that are riven by sectarian, gender, class, and caste divisions. “[S]hould we be surprised,” asks Bonnie Honig “to find that anxieties about the identities and agendas of one’s compatriots . . . might find expression by way of novels that are set in the uncanny domestic terrain of the . . . household?”¹⁰² Postcolonial gothic is one way in which literature can respond to increasing problematic questions of the postcolonial “domestic terrain:” questions concerning legitimate origins; rightful inhabitants; usurpation and occupation; and nostalgia for an impossible nationalist politics are all understood in the postcolonial gothic as national questions that are asked of the everyday, domestic realm. The gothic’s initial concerns about origins, usurpation, and justice, which were established by *Otranto* and modified by Victorian realist novels such as *Bleak House*, find themselves refined in the postcolonial gothic. Postcolonial gothic is less an intertextual “writing back” to empire than it is a form of commentary on the politics of home that asks foundational questions about the relations of family life and the private sphere.

In this context, postcolonial gothic accomplishes what Georg Lukács assigns to good realism: “Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created.”¹⁰³ By and large, postcolonial gothic fiction is far too experimental to be called realist. Its commitment to depicting the social, political, and cultural

problems of its day through the everyday goings on of the intimate sphere invest it with the *qualities* of this politically committed sort of verisimilitude. Indeed, fidelity to historical detail or exactness may be overlooked by the postcolonial gothic in favor for a more general sense of “past-ness” that characterizes the gothic historical sensibility. For example, *Small Things* may not represent the historical figure of EMS Namboodiripad faithfully, yet its more allegorical concerns with the “small” things of history that are silenced, enable the text to launch a critique of a particular form of radical politics.

These rather general claims about the postcolonial gothic become clearer once we investigate how the gothic functions in the specific works under consideration here. The postcolonial gothic pursues four distinct aims. First, the postcolonial employment of the gothic forms a dystopic representation that emerges when the idealist project of the national allegorical romance fails. The national allegorical romance is idealistic in its ability to imagine a unification of political, racial, and class difference; its narrative closure (political consolidation through the tropes of romantic love and marriage) is a form of political closure. For Sommer, erotic seduction serves a dual purpose that is simultaneously idealist and hegemonic. It allegorically signals a larger political or national project of assimilation in which differences are literally married together to form harmonious heterosexual couples. Indeed, the national romance functions in this idealist sense in both *Small Things* and *Shalimar* as romantic love and marriage forge personal as well as political unions between members of opposing castes and religions in societies in which sectarian differences are politicized. Erotic passion, however desirable to the lovers themselves, conceals a darker, coercive side, in which complicated political issues based on identity, democratic representation, or nation formation, are too easily erased through the trope of assimilation and romance. In contrast, the postcolonial gothic remains open, ambiguous,

and emphasizes the unsolvable nature of political and historical conflicts. For example, in *Season*, Mustafa Sa'eed's violent effect on British women is mirrored in Hosna Bint Mahmoud's unspeakable violence towards Wad Rayyes in the village. By the novel's conclusion, the political impasse between tradition and modernity is symbolized by the narrator being literally stuck in the middle of the Nile, crying for help. *Country* likewise ends with Magda spelling out cries for help to airplanes that fly over the South African hinterland. In *Shalimar*, the breakdown of *Kashmiriyat* signals the onset of militant Islam. The novel's conclusion is unwilling to represent the fate of Shalimar, the clown-turned-militant assassin, which emphasizes that the text is unable to show how, other than militancy and romantic love, to respond to the political question of Kashmir.

If postcolonial fiction is, as Frederic Jameson argues,¹⁰⁴ always bound up with the national allegory, then the postcolonial gothic thematizes both the failure of postcolonial national projects and the breakdown of the national allegory. With respect to the national allegory, I trace a trajectory that begins with *Season* and ends with *Shalimar*. *Season* is very much engaged with the national allegory: Mustafa Sa'eed clearly signifies a narrative of colonial Sudan; the narrator figures as the postcolonial intellectual; and Hosna represents the nascent postcolonial state. Written in the wake of the Arab defeat of 1967, Salih deploys the national allegory in order to name a political and cultural failure. In *Country*, the relations between masterful fathers, their subservient daughters, and the black labor on the South African farm gestures toward the national allegory. Magda's contradictory desires to uphold and dismantle the racial logic of the apartheid; to destroy and reinstate white patriarchy; and to align herself with and dominate black women cause a straightforward national allegory to unravel because it is incapable of containing the complexity within Magda's character. As a vessel for all of these contradictions, Magda is a

strange national figure in her own right: “Though I may look like a machine with opposed thumbs that does housework, I am in truth a sphere quivering with violent energies, ready to burst upon whatever fractures me.”¹⁰⁵ Magda’s contradictory nature breaks the bounds of a straightforward allegory, but in doing so it allegorizes the contradictory impulses of white settlers in pre-apartheid South Africa through the figure of a homely Boer farmwoman. In *Shalimar*, the national allegorical project fails because the political project it allegorizes—mainly that of *Kashmiriyat*—also fails.

Second, the postcolonial gothic is interested in the representation of the *unheimlich* nature of home as both dwelling and nation. If colonialism created a “home away from home” and metaphorized this spatial division in psychoanalysis through the relationship of the *heimlich* to the *unheimlich*, then part of the postcolonial gothic’s agenda is unveiling that behind the construction of hominess abroad lies something fundamentally unhomely. Mustafa Sa’eed’s English study in *Season*, and the dead bodies that keep resurfacing on South African farms in *The Conservationist* and *Country* turn houses and the land they occupy into mysterious spheres that threaten the political and social foundations of their respective historical moments. Just as Boonyi’s pink apartment in Calcutta masks the monstrosity that lurks within its walls, Nazarébadloor’s shack masks a fallen woman’s uncanny “return” from the prying eyes of the Kashmiri villagers, who believe her to be a *mritak*, or living dead. Lastly, the physical transformation of houses, such as EMS Namboodiripad’s house-turn-museum in *Small Things*, suggests that behind this popular figure of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) lurks the commodification of culture for foreign consumption. Likewise, the transformation of the History House into the Heritage Hotel suggests that personal narratives of tragedy and loss such as the

violent death of Velutha must be forgotten in order for larger, national narratives to be memorialized as official narratives of “heritage.”

Third, if the process of colonization relies on European unawareness or forgetfulness of that process (the massive displacement of people or the loss of indigenous cultural forms to more popular or hegemonic ones), then postcolonial gothic “encourages a rich sense of the presence of the past, the historical depth that underlies and helps to determine the shape and significance of the present”¹⁰⁶ through a gothic historical sensibility. Postcolonial gothic fiction creates this sense of “past-ness” in the present by investing intimate relations and private structures of relation and kinship (marriage and family life) with a deep historical and political sensibility. For example, Mustafa Sa’eed is clearly demarcated as an allegorical figure for colonial-era Sudan in *Season*. His relationships with British women model and ironize colonial discourse of the exotic other and Western literary representations of the East; Sa’eed’s sexual “conquest” of British women is an uncanny reminder of a historical narrative that has been forgotten or repressed and deep-seated Orientalist proclivities that are unacknowledged. In *The Conservationist*, the body of an unknown African man grants the land with an uncanny history that reminds the white occupants of the land of the repressed narrative of the displacement of black Africans from the South African hinterland. Only when the black community claims that body do we see the white evacuation from the land. In *Country*, Magda’s melancholic musings on Boer colonial history acknowledge narratives of displacement and reveal that the popular Boer genre of the farm novel (*plaasroman*) relies on that concealment in order to legitimate Boer ownership of the land. Only her coercive relationship with her masterful father enables her to realize these things.

Fourth, if the gothic is the narrative mode by which Britain frightened itself about cultural degeneration, the loss of racial or cultural purity, the racial other, sexual subversion and

the threat that colonial-era usurpation and violence might one day “return,” then postcolonial gothic deploys the gothic as a mode of frightening itself with images of transgressive women who threaten to expose the dark underbelly of their own historical and political contexts. “Gothic form,” George Haggerty reminds us, “is affective form. . . . [It is] primarily structured so as to elicit particular responses in the reader.”¹⁰⁷ The gothic’s uncivilized, barbaric, and excessive connotations grant the narrative mode with ample metaphors by which to elicit the reader’s horror through its representations of race and racial difference, and the threat of racial contamination. H.L. Malchow sees in the gothic representation of the racial other a

vocabulary . . . by which racial and cultural difference could be represented as unnatural—a “racial gothic” discourse that employed certain striking metaphoric images to filter and give meaning to a flood of experience and information from abroad, but that also thereby recharged itself for an assault on domestic social and physical “pathology.”¹⁰⁸

Gothic figures of monstrosity and vampirism such as Frankenstein’s creature, Dracula, Carmilla, and Melmoth provide readily recognizable metaphors of racial difference and racial contamination in monstrous figures, while other modes of gothic encode the racial threat through a representation of the otherwise “normal” European such as Stanley Kurtz, Dorian Gray, or Mr. Hyde, who has severed his ties to “civilized” society by indulging in immoral or excessive pleasures, unleashing wild or violent desires, or “gone native.”

The British gothic is a “form of racial discourse”¹⁰⁹ that defines the borders between what is British and what is not British, and what is familiar and what is foreign. Through its ability to represent racial otherness and the threat of the foreigner, the gothic functions as a “semi-ethnographic text”¹¹⁰ that constructs Englishness through its representation of what is *not*

English. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British gothic's construction of Englishness invokes a highly gendered discourse because it tends to represent the English nation as a woman who is threatened by an outside, foreign threat. Ann Radcliffe's fiction typifies this format, writes Schmitt:

Radcliffe and other women writers of the 1790s . . . call[ed for] . . . an “imaginative response to a world riven with crisis.” Whether viewed in terms of class (the rise of the bourgeoisie), gender (the redefinition of a proper femininity), or politics (the French Revolution abroad and reaction at home), that crisis was fundamentally national—not merely in the sense that it affected Britain as a whole but because it urgently posed to the English the question of what it means to be a nation. Radcliffe's novels respond to that question by elaborating in their pages a version of English national identity. In *The Italian*, Englishness manifests itself at the level of character in the shape of a Gothic heroine.¹¹¹

British gothic heroines such as Emily St. Aubert (*The Mysteries of Udolpho*), Ellena Rosalba (*The Italian*), Mathilda (*Otranto*), and Antonia (*The Monk*) are not British women because their narratives are displaced onto exotic locales other than Britain, but they embody British values, morality, deportment, right sentiment, and, above all, a “proper femininity” that may be understood allegorically as the British nation that is under political, social, or cultural attack. Later gothic fiction heroines such as Mina Harker (*Dracula*), Lucy Snowe (*Villette*), Jane Eyre, and Laura (“Carmilla”) are clearly British women and, by their actions and values, embody a fragile Britishness that is under attack by some threatening or foreign influence.

Because women signify nationness, a threat to their femininity or sexual purity constitutes a threat to national identity and serves as the grounds for a (generally male) defense.

Deniz Kandiyoti writes that:

[N]ationalism describes its object using either the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *patria*) or home (*heimat*), in order to denote something to which one is “naturally” tied. Nationness is thus equated with gender, parentage, skin-colour—all those things that are not chosen and which, by virtue of their inevitability, elicit selfless attachment and sacrifice. The association of women with the private domain reinforces the merging of the nation/community with the selfless mother/devout wife; the obvious response of coming to her defence and even dying for her is automatically triggered.¹¹²

In *Dracula*, a band of men pledge to defend Mina Harker from the vampire, and in “Carmilla,” General Spielsdorf is the one to confront Carmilla. Yet in many other examples of threatened femininity, the heroines must use their wit and intellect in order to *defend themselves* from an attack or the threat of an attack from without. For example, Jane Eyre and Lucy Snow both employ their keen intellects and soul-searching intuition in order to extrapolate themselves from their threatening predicaments.

The British gothic articulates, amongst other things, anxiety about protecting women as vessels of national identity, cultural values, and racial purity. In the postcolonial gothic, women are also vulnerable, but the anxiety surrounding them does not solely reside in their bodies as vessels. Women in postcolonial gothic are themselves *the threat* to nationness, notions of national cohesiveness, and the political status quo. If the British gothic contained the threat of

women within the body, then in the postcolonial gothic, that threat expands or exceeds the body.

Winifred Woodhull contends:

As the embodiment of conflicting forces that simultaneously compose and disrupt the nation, women are the guarantors of national identity, no longer simply as guardians of traditional values but as *symbols that successfully contain the conflicts of the new historical situation*. At the same time, women are the supreme threat to national identity insofar as *its endemic instability can be assigned to them*.¹¹³

In the postcolonial gothic, transgressive female characters are aligned with the private sphere, but they are emboldened to reveal the *unheimlich* nature of home. In this sense, the postcolonial gothic functions as a “Janus-faced” narrative mode¹¹⁴ that conceals and reveals the horrors of home. In *Season*, Hosna Bint Mahmoud reveals the perniciousness of tradition and in doing so, disrupts the narrator’s entire worldview. Hosna exposes that the *unheimlich* thing is not external to the Sudanese village, but instead is an internal function of that village. In other words, Hosna reveals that the status quo of the political deployment of tradition is perhaps the thing that haunts contemporary Arab society more so than its colonial era. In *Small Things*, Ammu reveals the contradictions of revolutionary Marxism on the grounds of caste and gender, and in *Shalimar*, Boonyi unveils *Kashmiriyat* as an idealist concept that rests on a foundation of male control of women’s sexuality. In *Country*, the relationship between Magda and her father unmasks the obvious historical facts of African displacement from the land, but makes a mystery of the ways in which racial and gender dynamics work in tandem for the white Boer woman. *Country* problematizes the notion that women can function as symbols that resolve political or cultural

problems.¹¹⁵ In *Country*, white women are precisely the problem because in certain contexts, race trumps any political consolidation on the grounds of gender.

Finally, a brief word on the order of things. The first chapter puts forth a comparative reading of *Dracula* and *Season* that addresses colonial narratives that uncannily return from the repressed. The second chapter addresses the gothic innovation of the South African farm novel in *The Conservationist* and *Country* and the question of whether or not the ghosts of the farm novel can ever be put to rest. The third chapter focuses on the gothic thematic of the haunted house and the problem of caste in the most self-consciously gothic novel, *Small Things*, while the concluding chapter investigates the nexus between the gothic representation of the maternal body and nostalgia for the bygone days of *Kashmiriyat* in *Shalimar*.

2.0 THE ALIEN WITHIN: WOMEN, THE GOTHIC, AND THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE IN *DRACULA* AND *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

Colonial metaphors of creating a “home away from home” map perfectly onto the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich*. Home is that sphere of comfort, familiarity, safety, and inclusiveness, and a place that is “not home” is but a reversal of home: that which is alien, uncomfortable, frightening; in short, all that home excludes. The colonial endeavor allowed for the extension of the borders of home from Britain, that sphere of comfort and safety, onto Africa, the unknown and fearful “dark continent,” with the hopes that an administered colonialism would eventually change what was unfamiliar and frightening into something “like home.” Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is the most noteworthy example of a literary work that tracks the process by which the colonial invader realizes the truly unhomely, frightening, and violent nature of Africa and, in the process, of his own self.

Conrad’s novel elicited quite a few fictional responses, as postcolonial writers satirized British migration south and responded to Conrad’s racist representation of Africa or the threatening racial other. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, V.S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*, and al-Tayyeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (hereafter *Season*) are amongst the most noteworthy responses to Conrad. Conrad’s text figures the migration from north to south and foregrounds the West’s exploration of its own violent nature as enacted in Africa. Edward Said

notes that *A Bend in the River* and *Season* “couldn’t be more different from each other, but both are unimaginable without the structure of Conrad’s prior imaginative feat to guide and then push them, so to speak, into *new avenues of articulation* true to the vision of a Sudanese Arab’s experience in the 1960s and that of a Trinidadian Indian expatriate a few years later. . . . The interesting result is not only that Salih and Naipaul depend so vitally on their reading of Conrad, but that Conrad’s writing is further *actualized and animated by emphases and inflections that he was obviously unaware of, but that his writing permits.*”¹¹⁶

The mystery surrounding Kurtz’ excessive violence and savagery, and the dark, brooding mood of both the plot and setting contribute to the gothic overtones in this otherwise modernist narrative. Salih reverses Conrad’s movement between colony and colonial center. Said notices that in engaging with Conrad, Salih not only replicates Kurtz, the river, and a rural village, but he reverses the direction of the migration (or *hejira*) into the heart of darkness by figuring migrations from both north to south and south to north, which allows him to explore areas heretofore ignored by Conrad’s narrative. Writes Said:

The interventions and crossings from north to south and from south to north, enlarge and complicate the back-and-forth colonial trajectory mapped by Conrad; what results is not simply a reclamation of the fictive territory, but an articulation of some of the discrepancies and their imagined consequences muffled by Conrad’s majestic prose.¹¹⁷

Season features a reverse colonization in which the violent deeds of the colonial era uncannily return in distorted form and exact a long overdue revenge. *Season*’s reversal of *Heart of Darkness* has been written on extensively, as has its intertextuality with Shakespeare’s *Othello*,¹¹⁸ and its parodic mimicry of *Nahda*-era Arabic fiction.¹¹⁹ Up until now, the novel’s

engagement with the gothic narrative mode via its deployment of the *unheimlich* has not received any critical attention. In *Season*, the *unheimlich* thematizes the movement from colonial to postcolonial, north to south, and foreign to familiar, as the foreign colonial subject from abroad uncannily returns in London. While the *unheimlich* is situated firmly in the Freudian hermeneutic, we may understand its use in *Season* much in the same way as the historical phenomenon of “imperial blowback,”¹²⁰ a term which refers to the “unexpected—and negative—effects at home that result from . . . operations overseas.”¹²¹ On my reading, these “discrepancies” from Conrad and the “imagined consequences” of such departures have much to do with the way in which the *unheimlich* (figured as imperial blowback) is enacted through intimate relationships and the familial structure. In particular, *Season* juxtaposes Mustafa Sa’eed’s violent colonial retribution in London alongside anxieties concerning unmarried women and female sexual expression, the dangers of arranged marriage to women’s autonomy, and male patriarchal prerogative in the traditional Sudanese village. In other words, the reverse colonization plot in *Season* not only features the *unheimlich* violent return of the repressed as sexual violence against women in Britain, but mirrors that violence at home, in a series of violent conflicts concerning marriage and sexuality in the rural Sudanese village. Ultimately, this textual doubling between violence abroad and violence at home produces a gothic variation of the national narrative, or allegorical narrative of the nation or nationalism.¹²² While the national narrative is itself a highly gendered narrative form, *Season* intervenes and proclaims the national narrative is a distinctly gothic form, for the reclamation of postcolonial independence, revenge for past wrongs, and the mediation of tradition and modernity produce forms of violence upon women that best seek expression through gothic modes of excess.

Season is unarguably intertextual with *Heart of Darkness*, but there is much more to gain by reading the novel's brooding gothic sensibilities, its gothicization of the national narrative, and its deployment of the *unheimlich* with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. There are striking similarities on the level of plot between the two novels: both feature a reverse migration and colonization plot; both represent the reverse colonization as the return of a repressed colonial narrative from the past; both feature men who invade the spaces of their victims' bodies and land by first invading the "spaces of their knowledge"¹²³ through avid Occidentalism; both enact that plot through a sexualized victimization of British women; both figure women as the signifiers of the nation and call on men for help defending that national body; both are concerned about racial and cultural purity and the threat of contamination; and both mirror the threat against femininity with an anxious discourse about the institution of marriage and female reproduction. This is not to substitute *Dracula* for *Heart of Darkness* in yet another comparative reading of *Season*, but to broaden the political and narrative scope of the novel by illustrating that reading the novel through a distinctly gothic lens, such as *Dracula*, allows for a reading that connects colonial politics with domestic institutions of marriage and sexuality. In this sense, it is not surprising that the narrative of colonization and its reprisals, or the creation of a home away from home, should be mirrored back onto an uncanny rendering of home as both domestic and national space.

On my reading, both *Dracula* and *Season* are allegorical reverse colonization narratives that represent the threat of degeneration and contamination of the race, nation, or culture through a foreign male's sexual victimization of women. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis posit that nationalist discourse links women and nation on account of women's ability to biologically reproduce "members of ethnic collectivities;" their ability to reproduce the "boundaries of ethnic/national groups;" their role as 'transmitters of . . . culture;" their ability to signify

“ethnic/national differences;” and their participation in “national, economic, political and military struggles.”¹²⁴ Both *Dracula* and *Season* may be read as gothic variations on the national narrative with respect to women’s role in national formation and consolidation. Because women signify nationness in the national narrative, a threat to their femininity or sexual purity constitutes a threat to national identity and serves as the grounds for a (generally male) defense.

Deniz Kandiyoti writes that:

[N]ationalism describes its object using either the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *patria*) or home (*heimat*), in order to denote something to which one is “naturally” tied. Nationness is thus equated with gender, parentage, skin-colour—all those things that are not chosen and which, by virtue of their inevitability, elicit selfless attachment and sacrifice. The association of women with the private domain reinforces the merging of the nation/community with the selfless mother/devout wife; the obvious response of coming to her defence and even dying for her is automatically triggered.¹²⁵

In both *Dracula* and *Season*, men are called upon to protect women in the face of a foreign menace. In *Season*, the threat to nationness functions doubly in Mustafa Sa’eed’s sexual conquest of British women and in the narrator’s failure to “rescue” Sa’eed’s Sudanese widow from enforced marriage. In *Dracula*, the international “band of brothers” who defend Mina Harker against the vampire consolidates the modern West in the face of something unambiguously atavistic and Eastern. While *Dracula* features no clear sign of victory of West over East in its conclusion, its narrative resolution is by far more hopeful than that posited in *Season*. In *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker does eventually repossess Mina from the vampire’s clutches, and, despite her contamination, the two have a child together. In *Season*, the narrator is

unable to possess the woman (and the land) he loves. His feminization stands in for a larger narrative of Arab political defeat in the wake of 1967. These threatening tales of violent retribution conducted on the bodies of women *is*, in essence, the gothic variation on the national narrative.

2.1 THE CASE OF *DRACULA*

The national narrative of *Dracula* is conducted on multiple levels. First, we may read *Dracula* as an anxious narrative that speculates what might happen if the violent acts of conquest abroad return home to Britain. Dracula's origin in the exotic Eastern locality of Transylvania positions the novel as a colonial discourse that mediates the anxious binary between Occident and Orient, colony and metropole. Vampirism in *Dracula* is a colonization of the body that is conducted through the contamination of blood. Stephen Arata notes that: "Horror arises not because Dracula destroys bodies, but because he appropriates and transforms them. Having yielded to his assault, one literally 'goes native' by becoming a vampire oneself. . . . [I]f blood is a sign of racial identity, then Dracula effectively deracinates his victims"¹²⁶ by turning humans into vampires. Second, we may read the novel's concern that a foreigner may mask his foreignness and pass through the London streets undetected as a fear concerning the Irish infiltration and contamination of Britain. In this case, Transylvania masks a political concern much *closer to home*. David Glover notes that: "Unlike the African colonies, Ireland represents no unbridgeable divide, no low Other beyond the pale of civilization, but rather a neighbor of equal status."¹²⁷

The supposed “equal status” of the Irish is enough to provoke gothic narrative responses to their eventual assimilation and contamination of British national identity.

Readings of *Dracula* as a national allegory of British/Irish relations, however compelling, seem to founder on the fact that the novel continually exceeds or overrides its own allegory.¹²⁸ For example, after a particular dense reading of Count Dracula as an allegory of the Irish national figure Charles Stuart Parnell, Michael Valdez Moses admits that the “highly fluid character of Dracula’s identity”¹²⁹ exceeds a simple allegorical reading of the novel. Dracula seems too ambiguous on the subject of race, then, to be a simple allegory of Irish/English relations. Christopher Craft comes to a similar conclusion with respect to Dracula’s ambiguous gender and sexuality. Dracula, is both male and female; heterosexual and homosexual. As a result, argues Craft, “[t]he text releases a sexuality so mobile and polymorphic that Dracula may be best represented as a bat of wolf or floating dust.”¹³⁰

The Count’s presence as foreigner at home abroad is *unheimlich* to Harker, and *heimlich* to Mina. The vampire is able to occupy both the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* simultaneously. Dracula’s ability to pass undetected through the London streets arguably stands as the epitome of the novel’s horror, for it figures the moment in which the distinction between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* collapses and the two are indistinguishable. On a stroll through Green Park one afternoon, both Jonathan and Mina see Dracula, yet his presence in London is only unhomey to Jonathan. Mina catalogues Jonathan’s reaction:

“My God!” . . . He was very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out as, half in terror and half in amazement, he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard. . . . “It is the man himself!” . . . The poor dear was evidently terrified

at something—very greatly terrified. . . . “I believe it is the Count, but has grown young. My God, if this be so! Oh, my God!”¹³¹

Jonathan registers horror because he recognizes the man as Dracula, who has grown young and mastered English customs so that he may circulate undetected throughout the city. By way of comparison, Mina describes Dracula as ugly, but nothing so out of the usual as to elicit fear or alert her to his foreign status. She describes the man as “a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard. . . . His face was not a good face; it was hard, and cruel, and sensual, and his big white teeth, that looked all the whiter because his lips were so red, were pointed like an animal’s.”¹³² Joseph Valente writes: “His [Dracula’s] sudden appearance near Green Park, accordingly, is not just uncanny but doubly so: to be sure, his mimicry is *unheimlich*, estranging, in its effectiveness at making him seem at home, familiar, *heimlich*; but his performance is far more *unheimlich* in registering the reality that, in a sense, *he already is at home*, after all, is the familiar fellow citizen of those he encounters.”¹³³

Dracula’s ability to mimic the British demonstrates the degree to which the foreign *already* resides within the home. This unhomely homeliness constitutes much of the gothicization of the national narrative in *Dracula*. Dracula’s simultaneous homeliness and unhomeliness in London speaks to the complex relationship between the “mother country” and its colonial outposts as well as Britain’s relationship to Ireland. In one sense, a reading of *Dracula* as an allegory of England’s colonial relationship with Ireland emphasizes the ease with which Dracula may “pass” as British, and the extent to which he may infect British women with his “tainted” blood. Yet in another sense, the geographic distance of Transylvania, its exotic allure, and its undeniable Oriental difference cast the threat of the foreigner much further than just Ireland. Glover goes on to write that “[t]hough shot through with Irish references, *Dracula*’s

horror ultimately eludes the deftness of allegory, spilling out in too many directions to be contained by any single racial logic.”¹³⁴ Instead, we may read the novel for what Valente calls its “metrocolonial conditions of production.”¹³⁵ Metrocoloniality is, Valente argues, a “more compromised, more conflicted, and yet, for that very reason, less conspicuous and less pathologized cognate [of colonial hybridity]. . . . [It is] a form of identity that both lacks and exceeds coherence and closure and so perpetually both desires and threatens itself.”¹³⁶ Metrocoloniality exceeds simpler categories of race predicated on clear distinctions between of self/other or West/East; for this reason, *Dracula* “breaks the frame of allegory” because the figure of Dracula can signify the Irish, the colonized other, and the exotic East simultaneously.¹³⁷

Valente and Glover have written extensively on the ways in which *Dracula* exceeds the Irish allegorical reading and problematizes the category of race and racial discourse. Yet despite the problems of how one reads the figure of Dracula, what does remain constant is the way in which the national allegory constructs gender and utilizes the feminine as a signifier for the English nation and Britishness. In this sense, *Dracula* invokes conventions of the national narrative in that it metaphorizes the nation as a woman.

Just as the novel engages with metrocoloniality in order to blur the boundaries between England and the West and Ireland and the East, we see in Mina Harker is the potential to signify *both* the England and the West that are under attack. Yet even before the novel engages with this gendered and sexualized allegorical trope for its invasion, conquest, and contamination, it engages in a subtler act of gendering the nationalist narrative by gendering Orientalist discourse by which one “penetrates” and “knows” a foreign culture. *Dracula*’s main mode of penetration and reverse colonization is through the contamination of blood, yet his first mode of penetration into Britain is through an avid Occidentalism, which counters the novel’s Orientalist discourse.

Jonathan Harker's journey East into the "mittel land," as well as Van Helsing's pseudo-scientific theories of Dracula's "criminal mind" function as objective observations and scientific facts are recognizable as Orientalist modes of cultural discourse.¹³⁸ In *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes these more subtle forms of domination as creating

a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts . . . by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description. . . . [I]t not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different world.¹³⁹

It stands to reason, then, that Dracula's Occidentalism perpetuates a reversal of the Orientalist impulse to control, manipulate, or incorporate a "manifestly different world."

Dracula's Occidental library, a bright spot in the "one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe",¹⁴⁰ is a collection that replicates the best of English thought, culture, and manners:

In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, though none of them were of very recent date. The books were of the most varied kind—history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law—all relating to England and English life and customs and manners.¹⁴¹

Through textual study, Dracula becomes quite knowledgeable about England and its capital city, London. He becomes fluent in the English language and imparts on a multi-disciplinary study of

England. Yet the mode in which this cultural transmission takes place—scholarly study through the consumption of textual material—is feminized and sexualized. Dracula’s books, over the years, become special “friends” that initiate him into an almost romantic relationship with the geography of Britain: “‘These friends’—and he [Dracula] laid his hand on some of the books—‘have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me *many, many hours of pleasure*. Through them I have come to know your great England; and *to know her is to love her*.’”¹⁴² The Count provides a counter figure for Said’s notion of Orientalism. The scholarly exploration and explanation of another culture through the creation, explanation, and dissemination of textual scholarship constitutes a highly political form of control, manipulation, and incorporation that masks a very political agenda.

The language that Dracula uses to describe his scholarly engagement with a foreign culture betrays the highly gendered and sexualized dimension of Orientalist and Occidentalist discourse. Dracula describes his learning with words such as “friends,” “hours of pleasure,” “knowing,” and “loving,” and describes England as a woman with whom this romanticized affair transpires, which calls for an expansion of the Saidian framework along the lines of gender. Like Mustafa Sa’eed, Dracula feminizes Britain as a woman. When he tells Harker that he “knows her,” he puns on both *textual* and *sexual* meanings of the word, revealing the hidden relationship between the Occidentalist’s reading and study about the other and the vampire’s contamination of blood through the targeted attack on British women. *Dracula* connects two formerly disparate axes of the national narrative. Dracula’s consumption and penetration of British texts is uncannily mirrored in his pleasurable attack of women (namely Mina Harker), which are all done in the name of historical revenge and a delayed justice that uncannily returns.

What remains constant throughout the fluctuating allegory is the extent to which those fears of *unheimlich* return are projected onto the bodies of women, who signify nationness. Cannon Schmitt argues that in *Dracula*, “threatened femininity comes to stand in metonymically for the English nation itself, a generalization of Gothic narrative with imperial as well as domestic consequences.”¹⁴³ The “band of brothers” that brings together men from various Western countries that span the Atlantic divide between Europe and The United States, combined with Dracula’s first victim, aptly punned Lucy *Westenra*, consolidates the West as Dracula’s subject for attack.¹⁴⁴ If so, then Mina Harker signifies something much larger than just “the English nation itself.”

The novel’s anxiety about the vampire as the (*un*)heimlich embodiment of an ancient and repressed imperial past is doubled in an equally anxious discourse about the role of women in late nineteenth-century London. Mina Harker initially represents an untraditional formation of womanhood in that she is intellectually ambitious and precocious. Mina Harker resembles the “new woman”¹⁴⁵ in her avid studying, working, and writing; her first appearance in the text is as an industrious worker. In a text full of intellectually capable men, she is the only person in the novel who is able to construct a cohesive narrative from the various fragmentary notations and observations about Dracula. As the novel progresses and the threat from abroad touches closer and closer to home, Mina’s more modern roles are discarded for “safer,” more traditional and conventionally feminine positions. The death of the vampire in the novel’s conclusion does not necessarily bring about the reversal of such traditionalism. The modernized woman does not resume her former role, in large part, because the vampire is dead, but the contamination still lingers. Even though Mina did not transform into a vampire herself, her blood (and hence, her ability to reproduce pure nationness) was contaminated.

Normally, the figure of the new woman would disrupt the status quo of any national narrative. By her very nature, the new woman disrupts status quo definitions of femininity, while the national narrative tends to consolidate women's traditional roles as wives and mothers who reproduce nationness. Sos Eltis notes that the "greatest danger of the New Woman . . . was her supposed threat to the future of healthy civilization and the human race."¹⁴⁶ *Dracula* neutralizes the threatening figure of the new woman by forcing her into a position where she is under threat and is in need of male protection. When Van Helsing decides that this work of hunting vampires is no place for a woman, one of his most compelling reasons for Mina's confinement is the protection of her ability to bear children who are authentically English. He claims: "We men are determined—nay, are we not pledged?—to destroy this monster, but it is no part for a woman. . . . And besides, she is young woman and not so long married; there may be other things to think of some time, if not now."¹⁴⁷ Those "other things to think of" are not explicitly named, but they most definitely refer to Mina's ability and even marital obligation to bear children. The "unspeakable" threat that Dracula poses is to women's ability to reproduce the nation as an uncontaminated entity, which implicitly names women as the threat to the nation insofar as their bodies are the vessels that carry its future generations.

Just as Dracula's first penetration of England occurred through textual study that metaphorized the land as a woman's body, it is fitting that one of the first steps towards protecting the nation is by limiting women's access to knowledge and the written word. Mina's textual skills, her "memorandum" in particular, illuminates key knowledge about the vampire's agenda and *modus operandi*. In his diary, Dr. Seward describes how the band of men have decided to protect Mina by secluding her in her room as well as barring her from any new knowledge of their doings. Curiously, he describes this process with a textual metaphor:

I hope the meeting to-night has not upset her [Mina]. I am truly thankful that she is to be left out of our future work, and even of our deliberations. It is too great a strain for a woman to bear. I did not think so at first, but I know better now. . . .
Henceforth our work is to be a sealed book to her, till at least such time as we can tell her that all is finished, and the earth free from a monster of the nether world.¹⁴⁸

In Dracula's Occidental library, England was feminized and transformed into a text that could be read and "known" with a sexual sort of pleasure. Dracula's reverse colonization and his Occidental study links "knowing" the other to a violent sexual consumption of women. As noted previously, the link between kinship and nationalism is often made through women or mothers. In its most basic formation, defending the nation means defending one's women from foreign penetration and sexual contamination. In this case, Mina is quarantined for her protection, but part of that quarantine bars her access to the written word: the hyper-masculine "band of brothers" who rally to her protection describe Mina's protected status as being one in which *she may neither read nor write*. In this way, the text performs a sort of regression or backlash from the figure of the new woman whose intellectual vivacity, despite its integral role in solving the mystery of the vampire, is punished and curtailed.

Mina's ability to have children is an ability to reproduce a form of nationness—as Britishness, Westernness, or both. The novel concludes with the death of the vampire and the birth of Mina and Jonathan's child, which would normally signal also the defeat of the vampire and the threat he allegorizes. Not so in *Dracula*; because Mina was contaminated by the vampire's blood, the question remains whether or not she and her child are likewise contaminated in some way. Dracula's reverse colonization of London failed to create an empire

of vampires with Dracula at its head, but that failure allowed for the reinstatement of patriarchy, a backlash against the new woman, and the reconsolidation of the West under the sign of baby Quincey. *Dracula* articulates a culture's anxieties about purity, progress, and degeneration. The vampire from abroad who invades the comfortable sphere of the home is the embodiment of a repressed, colonial history. The *unheimlich* return of that history in the form of the vampire is an act of historical revenge, but it is also a demonstration that these uncanny threats lie as "alien" elements within the body that are passed onto the figure of woman.

Just as the novel "eludes the deftness of allegory" when it exceeds a single racial or national logic, *Dracula* seems ambiguous on the question of the new woman as both the cause and the antidote to the problem of racial purity and degeneration. On the one hand, only Mina is intellectually savvy enough to solve the mystery regarding Dracula, but on the other hand, she is the source of contamination. Glover reads this ambiguity as a statement on "the multiplicity of forms that the ideology of degeneration could take."¹⁴⁹ The novel engages with, but ultimately cleverly eludes the "simpler" logic of the Irish/English, East/West, and female/male dialectic. Mina's contamination is an unspoken threat that lingers throughout the novel's conclusion and disrupts the tidy resolution that a national narrative might require in order to be truly triumphant. *Season*, like *Dracula*, features a story of repressed, historical retribution that is conducted sexually, and represented through bodily metaphors of contagion, contamination, and poison. The blood that courses through the "veins of history" in *Season* is contaminated by centuries of colonial conquest. The character of Mustafa Sa'eed, much like Stoker's vampire, is a product of that awful history. Unlike *Dracula*, *Season* narrates an undeniable national failure that is acted violently upon women's bodies.

2.2 SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH, THE GOTHIC, AND THE NARRATIVE OF FAILED NATIONALISM

There's obviously much in the way of plot that links *Season* with both *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness*. As previously noted, *Season* seems a reversal of *Heart of Darkness*. Just as Kurtz migrated to the heart of Africa and, in doing so realized his own inner darkness, so does Mustafa Sa'eed migrate to the heart of England and, in doing so, realizes the crux of colonial domination and dependency. For both *Dracula* and Mustafa Sa'eed, England is first and foremost a text that is violently and sexually consumed. Sa'eed's migration from a rural Sudan to London is put in dialog with ancient Islamic conquests of Europe, Kitchener's capture of the Sudan, and the Mahdist revolt against foreign occupation. These conquests are projected onto the body of British women as Sa'eed plots revenge against Britain. In his efforts to revenge himself upon the West, Sa'eed parodies literary representations of the African and Arab such as Othello. *Dracula* represents male anxiety about the reproduction of the nation through women and a backlash against the new woman. While women in *Dracula* are ultimately compliant with the conservative revision to their roles, in *Season*, Sudanese women are uncompliant and rage against attempts to control them in the name of national cohesion. Sa'eed's violent revenge against the British Empire is doubled in an equally sexual violence in the Sudanese village in which Hosna Bint Mahmoud fights against the destructive nature of traditional, patriarchal culture in the case of her arranged marriage to an aging patriarch. Arguably, Hosna succeeds where Sa'eed fails; her rebellion against patriarchal tradition is "unspeakable" and unrepresentable in its violence. The novel's obsession with concealment and the *unheimlich* return of violence is not only

metaphorized through gender, but is also a question of women's roles and rights within the domestic sphere and its institutions of marriage.

Peter Clark writes that: "Modern Sudanese history is perceived in neat chunks—the Turkiya from the Egyptian conquest of 1821 to the fall of the city of Khartoum in 1885; the Mahdia from 1885 to the battle of Omdurman in 1898; the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium from 1899 to Sudanese independence in 1956."¹⁵⁰ The novel situates Mustafa Sa'eed's life within the period between the battle of Omdurman 1898 and Sudanese independence in 1956. Sa'eed is born in Khartoum, on August 16, 1898, which corresponds to the defeat of the Sudanese *Mahdiyya*¹⁵¹ and the reconquest of the Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian army under Kitchener.¹⁵² Within the narrative time of *Season*, Mustafa Sa'eed disappears mysteriously around 1953. Saree Makdisi notes that:

I've been told that if one keeps very careful account of the dates and times of the novel (which is very difficult to do), it emerges that Mustafa disappears at the age of fifty-eight, or in 1956, the year of Sudan's independence—that is, his life coincides with the period of direct British occupation of the Sudan.¹⁵³

Britain publicly claimed that the 1896 "reconquest" of the Sudan was launched to suppress the slave trade that was rampant in the southern Sudan. In actuality, the reconquest was probably conducted in retribution for the death of Charles Gordon, a British soldier who was appointed as the governor-general of the Sudan under Khedive Isma'il, who was killed in 1885 by the Mahdist army. Prior to the reconquest, Britain had little interest in the Sudan.¹⁵⁴ Peter Clark argues that under Kitchener, "[t]he new regime [in Sudan] was based on an ideology of vengeance for the death of Gordon."¹⁵⁵ *Season* engages intertextually with *Heart of Darkness* on the level of plot, but the novel also corresponds to a distinctly Sudanese historical moment. Mustafa Sa'eed's

vengeful reverse colonization can be understood as an *unheimlich* mirroring of Kitchener's own recolonization of the Sudan, which, in all likelihood, was conducted in order to avenge the death of Charles Gordon. Sa'eed frames his sexual victimization of women (and their suicides and murders) as a historical response to Kitchener's military conquest of the Sudan, which faced meager opposition and concluded in a tragic loss that made obvious the Mahdiyya's inability to compete with British firepower. In April 1898, British shelling practically leveled Atbara, a town in the north of Sudan. Using their vastly superior weaponry, the British killed some two thousand Mahdist soldiers at Atbara and savagely defeated the Khalifa Mahmoud Wad Ahmad, a figure to whom Sa'eed likens himself. British victory was insured in a decisive battle at Karari north of Omdurman in September 1898, where over 10,000 *Ansar* (Mahdist supporters) were mowed down by British machine guns.¹⁵⁶ The Khalifa managed to flee the battle of Omdurman alive, but within a year, was eventually hunted down and killed by the British. By the end of the summer of 1898, the Mahdist state had collapsed in a bitter, humiliating defeat. Sa'eed last book, *The Rape of Africa*, serves as a model for his counter-revenge, as he attempts to "liberate Africa with . . . [his] penis."¹⁵⁷

This summer of defeat provides the historical context from which Mustafa Sa'eed is born. Sa'eed's characterization certainly appears to work on the level of the national allegory—born of the summer of defeat, Sa'eed signifies the failure of the Mahdist resistance to establish a state independent of British and Egyptian colonial interests, and a desire for retribution and justice. Later in the novel, when Sa'eed is brought to trial in London for the murder of Jean Morris (as well as countless other women), he likens his appearance before the court to the defeated Khalifa Mahmoud Wad Ahmed, who was brought in shackles to Kitchener upon the defeat at Atbara in the summer of 1898:

I, over and above everything else, am a colonizer, I am the intruder whose fate must be decided. When Mahmoud Wad Ahmed was brought in shackles to Kitchner after his defeat at the Battle of Atbara, Kitchner said to him, “Why have you come to my country to lay waste and plunder?” It was the intruder who said this to the person whose land it was, and the owner of the land bowed his head and said nothing. So let it be with me. In that court I hear the rattle of swords in Carthage and the clatter of the hooves of Allenby’s horses desecrating the ground of Jerusalem. The ships at first sailed down the Nile carrying guns not bread, and the railways were originally set up to transport troops; the schools were started so as to teach us how to say “Yes” in their language. They imported to us the germ of the greatest European violence, as seen on the Somme and at Verdun, the like of which the world has never previously known, the germ of a deadly disease that struck them more than a thousand years ago. Yes, my dear sirs, I came as an invader into your very homes: a drop of poison which you have injected into the veins of history. (94-95)

Much like Dracula, Sa’eed serves as a repository for historical memory. Sa’eed and Dracula are not indicators of just any history, but one that is born of invasions and conquests, victories and defeats associated with the colonial period. Sa’eed’s trial summons the ghost of empire from the battle at Carthage to Allenby’s stomp on Jerusalem.¹⁵⁸ Conquest creates a distorted logic that reverses roles of who is native and who is intruder. As a product of this distortion, Kitchener can accuse Mahmoud Wad Ahmad of plundering his nation, and Sa’eed can arrive at London as a colonizer. For Sa’eed, history is a feminine body that he will contaminate with his poisonous presence.

These echoes of battles are countered with non-militaristic images of warfare—namely, colonial schools that indoctrinate Sudanese Calibans in the English language.¹⁵⁹ Gordon College, the only British educational institution for Sudanese boys, saw itself as an institution that, as Heather Sharkey claims, could “regenerate the Sudan through character training.”¹⁶⁰ “Character training” was conducted first through organized sports in the school, and second through academics. Sharkey describes the school as “rich in books. . . . [T]he school library contained rows and rows of the stirring tales of Defoe, Scott, Dickens, Henty, Ballantine, and Rider Haggard. By encouraging students to use this library, *authorities inducted them into the practice of reading for pleasure.*”¹⁶¹ We can deduce from this that, like Dracula, Mustafa Sa’eed was introduced to the manners of British culture through the “practice of reading [foreign literature] for pleasure.”

We know that Sa’eed enjoyed reading—his impressive collection of English books is all the proof we need. Yet despite the pleasures of reading British literature, Sa’eed describes his encounters with British texts with violent metaphors. The violence inherent in the colonial school is discussed in the same breadth as the battles of the First World War at the Somme and Verdun. Sa’eed describes his consumption of English texts through violent metaphors of the body and bodily ingestion. Inside the colonial school, Sa’eed’s body transforms itself into something different—sometimes a beastly animal devouring its prey, and at other times, a machine that mechanically processes its product. Sa’eed describes the process of learning with metaphors like biting, cutting, ripping, and tearing. His body becomes “cold” and “like a rock” and he disassociates his brain from his heart and the rest of his body. His brain ravages his textbooks with “cold effectiveness” and a machine-like processing ability, tearing out and assimilating knowledge as a plough tears at the roots, ripping its harvest from the ground. He memorizes

things by rote. Despite the metaphor that describes such a rote education (“to learn something by heart,” Sa’eed disassociates his brain from his heart: “I discovered in my brain a wonderful ability *to learn by heart*, to grasp and comprehend. On reading a book it would lodge itself solidly in my brain” (22, my italics). His mind is described as a weapon: “My mind was like a sharp knife, cutting with cold effectiveness . . . the pupils began seeking my friendship, but I was busy with this wonderful machine with which I had been endowed. I was cold as a field of ice” (22).

Sa’eed’s violent narrative of education stands in contradistinction to Dracula’s pleasurable consumption of English texts. Rather, Sa’eed’s experience with English textuality corresponds to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s concept of “colonial alienation,”¹⁶² for it is an experience that irrevocably severs any sense of “harmony” between the individual, his environment, and his culture. Sa’eed’s education enacts the *unheimlich* in that it transforms him from something familiar into something alien and other. The measure of Sa’eed’s alienation is enacted upon the body; he disassociates his mind from his body and heart, developing and sharpening his mind to the detriment of everything else. Just before he leaves Sudan for a more advanced education in Cairo, he describes his learning as machine-like: “I discovered other mysteries, amongst which was the English language. My brain continued on, biting and cutting like the teeth of a plough” (22). Sa’eed takes this “mysterious” English language and makes it like his “mother tongue” by making it a part of his physical body. His near-native pronunciation of English is achieved by physically distorting his mouth. One of his former schoolmates remembers this well:

We used to articulate English words as though they were Arabic and were unable to pronounce two consonants together without putting a vowel in between, whereas Mustafa Sa’eed would contort his mouth and thrust out his lips and the

words would issue forth as though from the mouth of one whose mother tongue it was. (53)

So good was his mastery of the English language that his schoolmates called him “the black Englishman” (53). Sa’eed masters the English language, in a sense, because he allows it to enter his physical body and to change it internally. Whereas Dracula was able to “pass” as English through a supernatural ability to transform his outward appearance, the “black Englishman” is unable to do so because his color and features distinguish him as other, no matter how fluent his English. It is precisely because of this very physical limitation that Sa’eed’s transformation has to be an internal one that modifies his internal body and mind.

Season frames Sa’eed’s *unheimlich* return to London through gendered metaphors that make evident that the national narrative is not only gendered, but frequently invokes violent metaphors of gender. Sa’eed describes both Cairo and London as the bodies of women, utilizing the oft-used trope of woman’s body as signifier of national boundaries and repository for tradition and ethnic heritage. The novel associates Cairo—the capital city of one of the largest Arabic speaking nations—with the body of a British, and not Egyptian or Arab, woman, which emphasizes Egypt’s complicity in the British conquest of the Sudan:

Then the man [Mr. Robinson] introduced me to his wife, and all of a sudden I felt the woman’s arms embracing me and her lips on my cheek. At that moment, as I stood on the station platform amidst a welter of sounds and sensations, with the woman’s arms round my neck, her mouth on my cheek, the smell of her body—a strange, European smell—tickling my nose—her breast touching my chest, I felt—I, a boy of twelve—a vague sexual yearning I had never previously experienced. I felt as though Cairo, that large mountain to which my camel had

carried me, was a European woman just like Mrs Robinson. (25)

Travel to a “foreign” capital city is described by Sa’eed as the travel to Mrs. Robinson, and is commensurate with Sa’eed’s sexual awakening. The narrative forges connections between two seemingly disparate things: gender and desire (desire to possess women sexually); and violent colonial conquest and notions of ownership (Kitchener asks Mohammed Wad Ahmed why he is making trouble in *his* land). The result is that Sa’eed identifies his nascent sexual desire for women as a desire to conquer foreign territory; once in London he consolidates these desires as he selects women to “infect” with his foreign contagion. Mrs. Robinson is the first in a long stream of examples that illustrate that for Sa’eed, desire is always for the foreign.

After this initiation into sexuality through Mrs. Robinson, all sex and sexual feelings are represented as acts of aggression for Sa’eed. The gendering and sexualization of colonial history—and its revenge—come to fruition upon Sa’eed’s arrival in London. In the fall of 1922, Sa’eed has taken up five different names, cohabits with five women simultaneously, promising to marry each. He tells the narrator:

The city [London] was transformed into an extraordinary woman, with her symbols and her mysterious calls, towards whom I drove my camels till their entrails ached and I myself almost died of yearning for her. My bedroom was a spring-well of sorrow, the germ of a fatal disease. The infection had stricken these women a thousand years ago, but I had stirred up the latent depths of the disease until it had got out of control and had killed. (34)

Like *Dracula*, *Season* uses metaphors of disease, contagion, and contamination by which to engage with notions of national purity. In *Dracula*, the vampire’s contamination of blood transmitted that contagion. In *Season*, Sa’eed uses the trope of interracial sex to signify cross-

cultural contact, assimilation, and conquest. Unlike William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, which concerned itself with the actual products of miscegenation, *Season* concerns itself with the *idea* of the Oriental exotic, which it calls a "latent disease" that is present, but fervently denied in all of Sa'eed's female victims. For Ann Hammond and many others, Sa'eed is the *unheimlich* thing that triggers the release of this "latent disease" into consciousness. Once out in the open, each woman is forced to face the fact of her own colonial desire. In his reversal of history, Sa'eed performs a peculiar role as Eastern exotic that confirms Western belief that the African is oversexed, erotic, and primitive.

Sa'eed constructs his oriental, masculine persona through a manipulation of literary representations of masculinity, including the eighth-century Arab poet Abu Nuwas and the Moor Othello. Sa'eed's reading of Abu Nuwas's poetry demonstrates the ironic, performative nature of Arab-African identity. He fabricates completely the poet's background and mode of poetic delivery: "I read them some of his [Abu Nuwas's] poetry about wine in a comic oratorical style which I claimed was how Arabic poetry used to be recited in the Abbasid period. . . . [It was] all arrant nonsense with no basis of fact" (143). Nuwas was best known for his satirical mockery, his elevated sense of masculinity and male sexual prowess. Adonis comments that for Nuwas, "joy comes from the pursuit of the forbidden and illicit. He adopts the mask of a clown and turns drunkenness into a symbol of total liberation."¹⁶³ Othello's marriage to Desdemona provides a model for intercultural relations; the marriage signals an attempt, however futile, to unite East and West, Christian and Muslim. Barbara Harlow suggests that the "nature of the love affair cum marriage between Othello and Desdemona is emblematic in a sense of the terms on which the affair—or affairs—between the East and the West have enfolded and long been carried on."¹⁶⁴ Sa'eed's references to Nuwas are notable for their engagement with an exaggerated male sexual

performance; his allusions to *Othello* project the text's political concerns about "affairs between East and West" onto the realm of intimate relations and marriage. The combination of the two (Nuwas and Othello) produces intimate relations in which *the performance of a hyperbolic masculinity becomes a political act* in the manipulation of British Orientalist sensibilities. Sa'eed's seduction of British women becomes the occasion for the reclamation of Arab masculinity, "a metonymic equivalent of conquering territory, and a symbolic revenge on Europe" for the colonial-era "rape" of Africa.¹⁶⁵ Mustafa Sa'eed may be an agent of "imperial blowback," but the historical reversal of events occurs in the bedroom instead of in the political sphere, which, like *Dracula*, connects colonial politics and their ramifications to the domestic sphere of marriage, sexuality, and intimacy.

If Kurtz's sojourn into the darkest recesses of Africa made manifest "the horror" of his own colonial desires, then Sa'eed's inability to extract himself from the abusive Jean Morris makes visible the machinations of colonial dependency. Jean repudiates Sa'eed's exoticism, and in so doing, rescripts him as powerless, subservient, and compliant. She does this by violently emasculating him, turning him into a powerless and sexually impotent cuckold. The scene in which she shows up naked and unannounced in Sa'eed's Oriental boudoir is one such example of her efforts to destroy the power that Sa'eed derives from his exotic male sexuality. Once in the apartment, she taunts Sa'eed with the promise of sex, on the condition that she destroy every marker of his foreign allure:

[S]he pointed to an expensive Wedgwood vase on the mantelpiece. "Give this to me and you can have me," she said. If she had asked at that moment for my life as a price I would have paid it. I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the vase, she smashed it on the ground and began trampling the pieces underfoot. She

pointed to a rare Arabic manuscript on the table. “Give me this too,” she said. . . . I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the old, rare manuscript she tore it to bits, filling her mouth with pieces of paper which she chewed and spit out. It was as though she had chewed at my very liver. And yet I didn’t care. She pointed to a silken Isphahan prayer-rug which I had been given by Mrs. Robinson when I left Cairo. It was the most valuable thing I owned, the thing I treasured the most. “Give me this too and then you can have me,” she said. . . . Taking up the prayer-rug, she threw it on the fire and stood watching gloatingly as it was consumed. . . . Suddenly I felt a violent jab from her knees between my thighs. When I regained consciousness I found she had disappeared. (156–57)

The destruction of the vase, the rare manuscript, and the beloved prayer-rug signifies Jean’s attempt to annihilate Sa’eed’s carefully constructed eastern personae. The strange thing is that Sa’eed allows her to do this, and even seems to welcome his own destruction. Wail Hassan notes that: “What draws Jean to Mustafa is the same thing that draws Mustafa to English women—namely, a struggle for imperial power and hegemony, one that unfolds in terms of a masculinist discourse on sexuality, working in alliance with colonial discourse.”¹⁶⁶ Whereas Sa’eed used his masculine and sexual prowess in conjunction with his exotic allure to captivate and undo British women, Jean finds power in her ability to curtail Sa’eed’s masculinity, sexual abilities, and in the destruction of his Eastern relics, which construct an exotic performative identity.

Sa’eed is unable to fulfill his roles as Nuwas and Othello, for he is unable to break the spell that holds him under Jean’s power. Sa’eed is unable to act or express anger when he finds evidence of her infidelities. In fact, he derives an odd pleasure from her mistreatment. Such inaction baffles him: “Having been a hunter, I had become the quarry. I was in torment; and, in a

way I could not understand, I derived pleasure from my suffering” (159). Sa’eed’s inexplicable attachment to the abusive Jean Morris gestures towards the so-called “dependency complex,” a psychological justification for the colonizer’s need for dependency and domination. Octave Mannoni formulates the African’s “dependency complex,” much as Freud understands the *unheimlich* as the return of the West’s triumph over the atavistic and primitive. Mannoni writes that dependence “is not peculiar to the Malagasy. . . . It is a fact, however, that whereas most Europeans resolve their dependence complex by repressing it or sublimating it, most Malagasies avoid the consequences of inferiority by accepting dependence.”¹⁶⁷ In *Season*, the dependency complex is formulated along the lines of gender and sexuality. For both Sa’eed and the narrator, who becomes indecisive and unable to act when the widow Hosna proposes marriage to him, women render them temporarily “dependent” and unable to act fully as decisive men who are in control of their own destinies. In both Lucy Westenra and Jean Morris, we find figures of a horrible femininity that devour both men and children. In this sense, Lucy and Jean are allegorized as feminized threats to national purity because they act as literalizations of the thing that an individual or culture must surmount in order to achieve its status as rational, civilized, or postcolonial.

The second half of *Season* focuses on a different configuration of the allegorical figure of woman as nation in the figure of Hosna Bint Mahmoud. The equivalent of a “new woman” in her Sudanese village, Hosna is a threat to the steadfast traditionalism that the narrator cherishes. Sa’eed’s victimization of British women in 1920s London is mirrored in the village’s 1950s anxiety concerning the potentially changing status of traditional roles for women. Within three years of her husband’s disappearance, Sa’eed’s widow is forced against her will to marry one of the decrepit village patriarchs, Wad Rayyes. The forced marriage is consummated in a night of

“unspeakable” violence in which Hosna brutally kills Rayyes, resulting in both of their deaths. Hosna’s violence against Rayyes, a figure embodying ancient Islamic traditions and the patriarchy itself, completes Sa’eed’s project to avenge history and makes even more apparent the links between colonial politics (or its “blowback”), gender, and violence within the intimate sphere. Hosna succeeds where Mustafa Sa’eed fails, but instead of lashing out at the foreign, she attacks the alien, contaminating element within, which, for her, is patriarchy and tradition itself.

As a girl, Hosna was not afraid to break with tradition, as evidenced in her tendency to be “wild” and pick fights with the boys. The narrator grew up in the village with Hosna and remembers her as “one of the boys”: “Do you remember her as a wild young girl climbing trees and fighting with boys? As a child she used to swim naked with us in the river” (100). Hosna’s “wild” behavior hinges on a willingness to break the bounds of highly gendered modes of behavior and decorum, which derive from Islamic and Arab notions of propriety. The narrator’s childhood friend, Mahjoub, believes that a part of Mustafa Sa’eed that has “rubbed off” onto her, making her even more willing to break the traditional ways: “Mahmoud’s daughter changed after her marriage to Mustafa Sa’eed. . . . [S]he in particular underwent an indescribable change. It was as though she were another person. Even we who were her contemporaries and used to play with her in the village and look at her today and see her as something new—like a city woman” (100-101). Being a “city woman” means that Hosna is markedly different from other women of the village. Her difference is manifest in her adamant refusal to marry the ancient Rayyes, and her insistence that she choose who she will marry, or whether she will marry at all.

Cities for Mustafa Sa’eed were women whom he could conquer sexually. The text performs an ironic reversal of this metaphor by describing Hosna as a “city woman.” Hosna challenges the foundations of tradition and, in doing so, disrupts the narrator’s entire worldview

that the steadfastness of tradition is a necessary balance to an encroaching Western modernity and its decayed sense of morality. The house of the narrator's ancient grandfather, Hajj Ahmed, stands as the *heimlich* one in the text, because Islamic and Arab traditions are anchored in place by the family structure, which is further cemented by the religious and local traditions he practices. Hajj Ahmed signifies the stability of the past and its traditional ways: "I [the narrator] go to my grandfather and he talks to me of life forty years ago, fifty years ago, even eighty, and my feeling of security is strengthened. . . . [W]hen I embrace my grandfather I experience a sense of richness as though I am a note in the heartbeats of the very universe" (5). Like Hajj Ahmed, his house is a testament of the old ways and their precarious continuance in the face of modernization: "A maze of a house . . . if one looks objectively at it from the outside one feels it to be a frail structure, incapable of survival, but somehow, as if by a miracle, it has surmounted time" (71–72). The stability and goodness of tradition and the past are the bedrock foundation upon which the narrator builds his entire worldview.

The narrator's glorification of tradition has much to do with his own migration north. The novel juxtaposes the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed as uncanny doubles: Sa'eed penetrated British culture to its fullest extent while the narrator tried to keep himself culturally "pure" during his time in a foreign land; Sa'eed embraces modernity while the narrator remains skeptical of its changes; Sa'eed is forward with women while the narrator whelms his feelings within himself and is too afraid to act. The narrator's first appearance in the novel is marked by the specter of Sa'eed, and a naïve denial of the historical past and its possible contamination of the present. The very first phrase of the original Arabic version of *Season* reads: "*‘udtu ila ahli,*" or, "I returned to my people" (1). This sentence situates itself immediately in a movement between the foreign and the familiar, and foregrounds the novel's structural emphasis on migration, a return to the

familiar, and a repression of the foreign. The grammatical construction of the first sentence is dynamic and active, linguistically foregrounding a movement away from the foreign, emphasizing a return to belonging. Mona Takieddine Amyuni explains that: “the dynamic first person singular in ‘*udtu* (I returned), and the possessive first person pronoun *ahli* (my people) immediately convey a sense of intimacy and belonging (I, my people, my tribe, us) which are assumed by the narrator and taken for granted at the beginning of the novel.”¹⁶⁸ The English translation of *Season* conveys these sentiments of movement between the foreign and familiar, yet lacks the immediacy of the active construction found in the original Arabic text. In the English translation, the first sentence reads: “It was, gentlemen, after a long absence—seven years to be exact, during which time I was studying in Europe—that I returned to my people” (1). The English translation features dependent clauses within the sentence that linguistically delay the return to the familiar (“I returned to my people”) until the end of the sentence. The effect is that the translation fails to capture the linguistic immediacy of return to belonging. The result is something far less direct and more formal than the original.¹⁶⁹

The first two pages further locate the novel in a movement between return and repression. The glory of the long-awaited homecoming is temporarily eclipsed by the memory of time abroad, which the narrator quickly dismisses as inappropriate for his story. The migration abroad is dismissed out of hand—“but that’s another story,” as if it belongs in *another* narrative (1). The narrator’s repression of his “other story” is couched in literary terms, as if within a rural Sudanese story, no place exists for stories of urbane London, even though the narrator has experienced both. The narrator’s denial hinges on the repression that Western narrative forms and their “other stories” may impinge on the Sudanese one. The narrator’s strict repression of his time abroad teaches the reader not to trust him, for he so obviously keeps his time of migration

alive and within his very body. If his mind represses the memory of the foreign, his body contains it: “I felt as though a piece of ice were melting inside of me” (1), he notes, as he returns home. The foreign North is described not only in terms of difference, but also in metaphoric language that characterizes difference as a contagion capable of invading and contaminating the body of the host. The winter season that most clearly differentiates North from South has lodged itself within the narrator as ice, only to be melted away by “that life warmth of the tribe which I had lost” (1). This icy mass stands figuratively as some sort of Britishness that has, like a contagion or altering agent, taken hold and grown within the body of the Arab African student. Like Mustafa Sa’eed, who allowed the English language to change him from the inside out, the narrator also experiences a physical and psychological change as a result of engaging in foreign study. The contaminating ice that has taken hold of the narrator’s inner core has supposedly been isolated and melted by the warmth of the South, and by a sense of belonging and tradition.

Aside from the initial dismissal that his time abroad is fodder for “another story,” the narrator experiences an uncanny moment upon his return home, as his cherished memories of family and people from home meet the living, actual beings. “Because of having thought so much about them [his family and the people of the village] during my absence, something like a fog rose up between them and me the first instant I saw them” (1). The fog of repressed memories of a time in London causes a moment of disjuncture between reality and memory, present and past. This disjuncture produces confusion and disorientation, as well as an inability to inhabit the present moment and perceive it accurately. The memories of home that are created and cherished while abroad have, in the absence of the “real thing,” become more real than that which they signify. Upon return, the narrator is faced with the image of his created, imagined home; it surfaces mist-like and obscures the actuality of home:

But the fog cleared and I awoke, on the second day of my arrival, in my familiar bed in the room whose walls had witnessed the trivial incidents of my life in childhood and the onset of adolescence. I listened intently to the wind: that indeed was a sound well known to me, a sound which in our village possessed a merry whispering—the sound of the wind passing through palm trees is different from when it passes through fields of corn. (1-2)

The threat of the foreign “fog” is eliminated by the coziness of home. The narrator’s bedroom gives rise to a happy nostalgia of childhood and early adolescence. More significantly, the power of home derives greatly from its unchanging nature, and the steadfastness of traditions that stand the test of time. In addition to marking the distance between here and there, the palm tree becomes the signifier of a static, traditional culture that anchors and stabilizes the foreigner’s experience of disorientation abroad. The palm tree gives the narrator a “feeling of assurance. I felt not like a storm-swept feather but like that palm tree, a being with a background, with roots, with a purpose” (2). The palm tree prefers the warmer seasons and cannot thrive in the icy North. Upon waking after his first night’s stay back home, he proclaims: “we all [the family] sat down and drank tea and talked, as we have done ever since my eyes opened on life. Yes, life is good and the world as unchanged as ever” (2). The disruptive movements of migration are stabilized by the rootedness of culture, and the repetitiveness of familial traditions, which are understood as timeless and eternal. The rootedness of the palm tree is actualized in the microcosm of the individual family.

Readers of the English translation of the novel may see in this phrase, “something like a fog,” a link to the foggy mist that is universally associated with London. The link between fog and London is made more explicit in the Arabic version, as the Arabic word for fog, *dabaab*, is

closely related to another Arabic phrase, *al-madinat al-dabaab*, “the foggy city,” which is the Arabic appellation for London. Arabic readers will be aware of this double meaning of *dabaab* with London, especially given the narrator’s recent return from the “foggy city.” In the midst of his reunion with his people, the “foggy city,” London, that “other story,” uncannily arises in his midst, lingering specter-like between himself and the villagers.

Hosna’s violence, like the mirage of London itself, disrupts the narrator’s initial return to the coziness of home in its unspeakable, sexualized content: “The thing done by Bint Mahmoud is not easily spoken of,” Bint Majzoub tells the narrator (124). Hosna’s violence rocks the very foundations of home, and exposes that the eternal goodness of tradition is an illusion, a house of cards, that easily tumbles down when women challenge their roles within those traditional structures. In other words, this “city woman” functions as an *unheimlich* intrusion on the narrator’s cozy, *heimlich* fantasy of home much in the way that London itself threatens to undo the narrator’s fantasy of home. Hosna’s violence invades the safe haven of Hajj Ahmed and his old-but-solid house, and changes it from *heimlich* to *unheimlich*. *Season* frames the problem of the *unheimlich* “return” of colonialism as the postcolonial intellectual’s inability to navigate his way around modern mediations of traditional gender roles and their place within the greater structures of marriage and family. The narrator is unable to see that tradition is not timeless like the palm tree, but that *tradition has always been unstable and manipulated* for the interests and gains of those in power. Only after the violent tragedy between Rayyes and Hosna does the narrator begin to see tradition’s destructive nature, but this insight is enabled only because he secretly harbored love for Hosna, the victim of tradition. “I felt real anger, which astonished me for such things [forced marriages] are commonly done in the village” (86). For all of his education, the narrator is unable to see that forced marriages occurred. This inability to see

precludes him from navigating the tradition of polygyny in order to save a woman for whom he obviously cares. Mahjoub tells the narrator that Hosna “wanted you to save her from Wad Rayyes and the attention of suitors. All she wanted was to become formally married to you, nothing more. She said, ‘He’ll leave me with my children and I want nothing whatsoever from him’” (132). The narrator is unable to view the institution of marriage as something so utilitarian (one may escape an enforced marriage to Rayyes by making a marriage of pure formality to another man). The narrator is unable to make up his mind and act decisively about Hosna’s predicament, and so Hosna is forced to solve the problem on its own terms—she responds to the violence of forced marriage and rape by murdering Rayyes and killing herself.

As noted previously, women figure as symbols of the nation in *Season*. Following from this, we may speculate that if British women were British territories ripe for conquest to Mustafa Sa’eed, then Hosna is a figure for post-colonial northern Sudan.¹⁷⁰ The narrator’s inability to act on anything, the extent to which he denies any lasting impact of the West, and his indecisiveness with respect to a possible mediation of tradition is part of a larger political commentary on the inefficacy of the modern Arab intellectual. The narrator refuses to view the past as something that can effect, or even contaminate, the present:

The fact that they [the British] came to our land . . . does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country . . . we’ll speak their language without either a sense of guilt or a sense of gratitude.

Once again we shall be as we were—ordinary people. (49-50)

The very fact that the ghostly face of Mustafa Sa’eed continues to haunt the narrator is evidence that the present and future is, in fact, “poisoned” in some way and that ordinary people cannot resume being “as they were” prior to the colonial encounter. Wail Hassan explains that the

narrator's historical naivete, as well as his "indecisiveness and failure to take action can be seen as Salih's indictment of the Arab intelligentsia's failure to struggle for the implementation of a vital part of the Nahda's social reform project."¹⁷¹ Abdallah Laroui defines the *Nahda* as

a vast political and cultural movement that dominates the period of 1850 to 1914.

Originating in Syria and flowering in Egypt, the *Nahda* sought through translation and vulgarization to assimilate the great achievements of modern European civilization, the while reviving the classical Arab culture that antedates the centuries of decadence and foreign domination.¹⁷²

Indeed, the narrator is reluctant to change the foundational structures of his society; technical innovations please him, but any modification to the intimate structures of the private sphere such as marriage, give him great concern. Insofar as the narrator has difficulty accepting changes to the patriarchal structures of tradition and denies the colonial effects on his society, he is a recognizable allegory for the failure of the *Nahda* and what Hisham Sharabi calls "neopatriarchy," or the "marriage of imperialism and patriarchy."¹⁷³

To be sure, Mustafa Sa'eed's acts of violence toward British women constitute a form of vampirism that parallels that seen in *Dracula*. Yet the more frightening *unheimlich* return of the repressed is in both Hosna's desperate act of violence and in the narrator's inability to see the traditions of "his people" as equally destructive to women as colonialism was to the Arabs. If Hosna is the figure for the newly assertive postcolonial nation, then the narrator surely fails in his masculine "imperative" to protect her from any threat. He fails because he is unable to view tradition as something other than a life-affirming necessity in the face of impending modernization and change. Only when the narrator eventually views Mustafa Sa'eed's violent revenge abroad and his village's traditionalism as equal "evils," can he break out of the historical

deadlock that had previously paralyzed him. If Sa'eed's actions were byproducts of a repressed, colonial history, then Rayyes's conflict is one in which patriarchy and tradition are "naturalized."

In one breath, he critiques both colonialism and patriarchy:

I imagined Hosna Bint Mahmoud, Mustafa Sa'eed's widow, as being the same woman in both instances: two white, wide-open thighs in London, and a woman groaning before dawn in an obscure village on a bend of the Nile under the weight of the aged Wad Rayyes. If that other thing was evil, this too was evil. (87)

Readers may not feel a great degree of sympathy for Sa'eed's female victims in London; their violent fates may be a form of poetic justice for their own hidden racist beliefs. The narrative constructs Hosna differently, however. In her ability to play and fight "like one of the boys," we recognize a person who has the ability to challenge the status quo, insofar as gender and tradition are concerned. Through a perceived injustice to Hosna, the narrator thus comes to feel sympathy for Sa'eed's female victims, and to condemn all male sexual victimization of women. The narrator comes to understand that Sa'eed's mission—to avenge the sullied honor of the East—was irrevocably undercut by his means, which not only succeeded in perpetuating one form of violence (colonial) for another (sexual violence against women) but in making visible the ways in which colonial violence is distinctly gendered and sexualized. The narrator finally realizes that "imperial blowback" of any sort finds itself mirrored in the way that the patriarchal imperatives of tradition assert themselves in intimate struggles between men and women, and the social and political uses of arranged marriage, polygyny, and family.

If the narrator is an allegory for the goals of the *Nahda*, then his story is an allegory of a political and cultural failure. Makdisi proclaims that

the old goals or projects of national economic development and modernization are

no longer possible as such, or at least not in the terms in which they were originally proposed. And, hence, the great drive to modernize into the status or the level of the modern—that is, to move along the great stream of evolutionary time toward the bountiful waterfalls of modernity—must now be seen as a failure, not because the goal at the end of the river could not be reached, but because the river of time itself never existed as anything other than a lure, a conceptual analogue to the notion of unilinear and universal history itself.¹⁷⁴

The gothic *unheimlich* demands a different understanding of historical time, for the return of the repressed depends not a notion of “evolutionary time,” but a temporality based on recursiveness, repetition, and doubling. Gothic fiction, distopic though it may be, *is* capable of imagining a break with the past. Abandoning, rebuilding, renaming, or burning down the eerie houses that allegorize contested historical narratives and the “sins of the father” in works such as *Otranto*, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” *The House of the Seven Gables*, *Bleak House*, and *Absalom*, *Absalom!* signals the attainment of justice and the commencement of something hopeful and new.

Season offers no such break with the past. The Occidental library, no longer the scene of colonial “character training,” has become the equivalent to the gothic chamber of horrors. When the narrator enters Mustafa Sa’eed’s secret English study in the novel’s conclusion, he confronts the darkest part of both himself and his historical moment. Mustafa Sa’eed constructed his room in London as a “den of lethal lies” (146) in which the myths of Orientalist discourse flourished; British women killed themselves when they realized that they subscribed to the awful lies of colonial discourse. Likewise, what the narrator discovers in Sa’eed’s study is not so much the strange duplication of a cozy English study in the middle of a rural Sudanese village, but the

realization that he finds Mustafa Sa'eed compelling and, to a great extent, identifies with him. The narrator confesses that "[t]hough I sought revenge, . . . I could not resist my curiosity. First of all I shall see and hear, then I shall burn it [the study] down as though it had never been" (136). Yet the narrator is unable to commit the final act that would have put an end to Mustafa Sa'eed and his uncanny project of revenge. The novel concludes instead with the narrator swimming in the Nile, caught "half-way between north and south" (167) banks of the river, and literally screaming for help. As the allegory for the postcolonial intellectual, the narrator is incapacitated from making decisive choices precisely because he finds himself "caught in the middle" between North and South; English and Arabic; secular and Muslim; postcolonial cosmopolitan and rural villager; and modernizer and compliant follower of age-old traditions. Through a rather gothic rendering of the national narrative, *Season* speaks to a vast political impasse that seems all the more bleak in the wake of the 1967 defeat. In the aftermath of the 1967 defeat, or *naksa* (setback), Arabic political discourse centered on the demonization of the Israeli state and the failure of the Arab political leaders to meet adequately their political realities. Absent from the reevaluation of Arab society in the aftermath of 1967 was a discussion of gender. Salih's gothicization of the national narrative allows him to gesture toward what needs to change in order for Arab society, languishing in defeat and despondency, to put the ghosts of its colonial past to rest and meet the political realities of its day.

3.0 “MAY IT COME BACK:” THE SOUTH AFRICAN FARM AS GOTHIC TOPOGRAPHY

“Afrika! Mayibuye!”

---Popular rallying cry of the African National Congress in the 1950s, translated as “Africa! May it come back!”

3.1 THE *PLAASROMAN* AND THE “BURIED GIANT”

Between 1920 and 1940, the South African novel in Afrikaans concerned itself almost exclusively with the African farm and rural life. These farm novels, or *plaasromans* in Afrikaans,¹⁷⁵ represented the Afrikaner relationship to South Africa through the relationship between the Boer farmer and the land. In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee notes that *plaasromans*

celebrated the memory of the old rural values or proclaimed their durability or elaborated schemes for their preservation; they tracked the forces of change to their origins in history (capitalism), society (the Jews), or the cosmic order (God’s will, the indifference of the universe); they denounced the rapacity of the new class of speculators; they satirized the pettiness, selfishness, and lack of family feeling of the *verengelste* (anglicized) urban Afrikaner.¹⁷⁶

The farm was a key signifier that glorified a simpler pastoral way of life and white land ownership as the South African economy became increasingly industrial and capitalist. Even though they represented themselves as apolitical and romantic depictions of rural life, *plaasromans* written between 1920 and 1940 constituted an extremely political genre in their reinforcement of conservative moral, nationalist, and racial ideologies, which resulted in the production of a “transcendental justification for [white] land ownership.”¹⁷⁷

After its initial heyday between the 1920s and 40s, the *plaasroman* became a popular light genre.¹⁷⁸ In the 1960s, there was a renewed interest in the form, as white South African writers began to satirize and ironically revise the genre as a “vehicle of criticism of the ideological order of apartheid.”¹⁷⁹ This period of ironic revision began in the 1960s, continued through the 1990s, and produced critical *plaasromans* such as Eben Venter’s *Foxtrot van die vleisters*; Etienne van Heerden’s *Toorberg* and *Die stoetmeester*; Reza De Wet’s *Diepe grond*; and Ben Schoeman’s *Hierdie lewe in Afrikaans*¹⁸⁰ and Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*; J.M. Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* (hereafter *Country*) and *Disgrace*; André Brink’s *Rumours of Rain*; and John Conyngham’s *The Arrowing of the Cane* in English.

The relationship between Boer farmer and the land in the *plaasroman* constituted a lineal consciousness,¹⁸¹ or a sense of land ownership established through generations of labor on the farm. Coetzee writes that: “The manifestations of the lineage in historical time is the farm, an area of nature inscribed with the signs of the lineage: with evidences of labour and with bones in the earth” (*White Writing* 109) The initial period of *plaasromans* was instrumental in articulating a nationalist lineal consciousness that justified white presence and ownership of the land. In making visible Boer labor and inheritance of the land, the *plaasroman* had to make black existence and labor invisible. Rita Barnard explains that the displacement of Africans is the

heimlich element in the South African *plaasroman*: “This displacement [of the Africans and their earlier nomadic, pastoralist ancestors] is *the secret historical precondition* of the Afrikaner’s idyllic map of rural homesteading.”¹⁸² Any history of the colonial settlement of South Africa must acknowledge that with the eighteenth-century *trekboers* and the Afrikaner Great Trek of 1836-54 came massive displacement of the indigenous population. The founding of the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 as a “refreshment station” for the Dutch East India Company, brought the Dutch settlers, called Afrikaners, or Boers, to the land. The founding of the Cape of Good Hope began the process by which the original African pastoralists, the Khoikhoi, were displaced from the land in order to make way for Boer pastoralism. By the 1770s, Boer pastoralists, known then as *trekboers*, had displaced many of the indigenous pastoralists by expanding some 300 to 450 miles from the peninsula where the urban center of Cape Town was located. ” Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xix, 46.¹⁸³ Leonard Thompson remarks on the displacement of Africans that resulted from the *trekboer* expansion:

The indigenous pastoralists, who called themselves Khoikhoi, demoralized by the collapse of their communities in the vicinity of the Cape peninsula and, after 1712, devastated by smallpox, were unable to prevent the colonists from getting access to the streams and the springs and from gradually establishing control of the land. The result was a process of dispersal of whites from the agricultural colony.¹⁸⁴

The dispersal of whites from the colony meant that the Khoikhoi were not only prevented from settling their own land, but they were ghettoized in small areas, or “locations,” which for many meant an end to the pastoral style of living. Many of the original pastoralists became servants or

slaves on Boer farms. With the discovery of diamonds and gold in 1867 and 1886 respectively, many Africans sought employment in the mines and migrated to the urbanized slums that emerged almost overnight on the periphery of the mines.

For the *plaasroman*, however, the historical displacement of Africans and their presence on Boer farms as cheap labor is not visible and acknowledged, but the silent, “secret precondition” of the Afrikaner rural idyll that lurks on the unspoken margins of the narrative. Coetzee argues that the development of lineal consciousness conflicted with the representation of black labor on the farm: “If the work of hands on a particular patch of earth, digging, ploughing, planting, building, is what inscribes it as the property of its occupiers by right, then the hands of black serfs doing the work had better not be seen” (*White Writing* 5). Neither the Afrikaans *plaasroman* nor the anti-colonial farm novels written in English—such as Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (hereafter *African Farm*), Pauline Smith’s *The Little Karoo* and *The Beadle* were capable of representing displacement as a historical condition of colonial settlement. For all of these works, the existence of the Boer farm was an ahistorical, God-given entity, which made the prior existence of black pastoralists on the land a “secret historical precondition” that was never permitted representation or acknowledgement. The *plaasroman*, therefore, is a genre that must repress its historicity; it must willingly repress the historical fact of black displacement in order for its pastoral vision of South Africa to be possible. Coetzee writes that “[o]nly part of the truth . . . [for the *plaasroman*] resides in what writing says of the hitherto unsaid; for the rest, its truth lies in what it dare not say for the sake of its own safety, or in what it does not know about itself: in its silences” (*White Writing* 81). This historical unconscious creates a problem for the genre that mirrors larger political problems in South Africa: How can the *plaasroman* reconcile the conflict between the Boer nostalgic call for *a return to the land*

with the growing sentiment amongst Africans and liberal whites concerning *a return of the land* to its original inhabitants? During the 1950s, the rallying cry of the African National Congress was “Afrika! Mayibuye!,” or “Africa! May it come back!” In many respects, this slogan rings uncannily in the works of *all* South African *plaasromans*; if the earnestly ideological *plaasromans* of the first period made a historical repression of black Africa complete, then the ironic revisionist *plaasromans* of the 1970s represented the return of that repressed Africa, which had always promised to “come back.” The genre could only keep its own historical repression at bay for so long.

Questions of belonging, inheritance, unspeakable violence towards Africans, and the invisibility of certain forms of existence already seem to engage with gothic idioms that capture the anxieties and political stakes of national and class conflict in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British gothic novels. Just as gothic novels dramatize the loss of an ancestral line through the actual destruction of a family and their house in gothic works such as *Otranto*, Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest*, Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, *plaasromans* feature family farms as “the seats to which their lineage are mystically bound, so that the loss of a farm assumes the scale of the fall of an ancient house, the end of a dynasty” (*White Writing* 83). A few, though by no means all, *plaasromans* represent the political anxieties of the genre with gothic idioms of haunting and historical retribution. The overt usage of gothic idioms in these few *plaasromans* makes visible the genre’s willing repression and unconsciousness, which modifies the ideological vision of the farm novel in question. Instead of screening the colonialist Boer ideology from view, these proto-gothic *plaasromans* make visible the fissures and contradictions within that ideology through the trope of madness, isolation, and despair. As Africa “comes

back” from its narrative and historical repression, the gothicized *plaasroman* has the opportunity to function as a vehicle of political reconciliation through the full acknowledgement and integration of the past with the present.

These questions and concerns form the broad scope of this chapter. More specifically, it will investigate how contemporary white South African writers engage with the *plaasroman* genre in order to critique the Boer ideology of land ownership and nostalgia for the simple life in the rural African hinterland. This chapter traces the development of the gothic idiom of the return of the repressed in the form of a dead and buried body that signifies the repressed narrative of a colonial past, which prevents a political solution to the problem of colonial land ownership and African historical dispossession. The corpse’s symbolic significance is at once one of uncanny fear and dread and the possible harbinger of a new political era that may bring new political possibilities and change. The buried bodies of unknown Africans and murdered Boer masters are threatening portents of the old as well as the seeds of possibility for the future that, within the symbolic economy of the *plaasroman*, may or may not be politically realizable. I will trace the development of this idiom from its inception in *African Farm* to more contemporary revisionist *plaasromans* *The Conservationist* and *Country*.¹⁸⁵ Of the three texts, I am most interested in the ways in which Coetzee’s *plaasroman* manipulates the gothic signifier in order to make a different, if controversial, political statement about the relationship between the colonial past and the apartheid-era conflict in South Africa.

Many are unfamiliar with the *plaasroman* in Afrikaans, but the *plaasroman* in English is likely to conjure references to *African Farm*, despite the fact the novel was written in English much earlier than the 1920s and is largely a critique, not a justification, of Boer colonial culture. Even though *African Farm* is often understood as a combination of both the liberal and pastoral

modes,¹⁸⁶ the novel offers a dismal image of the pastoral and a critique of colonial culture. Schreiner's Boer farm is a desolate, barren place that is completely isolated from the outside world. The farm's barrenness is mirrored in the inability of Boer women to successfully reproduce; Tant' Sannie is barren and Lyndall gives birth to a sickly illegitimate child who dies within a few hours.¹⁸⁷ The farm's isolation causes all relationships on the farm to be distorted and strained. Power relations are amplified because there exist no limitations to the master's authority. Schreiner demonstrates the corruptibility of power on the farm in the abusive relationship between the sensitive child Waldo and Tant' Sannie's manipulative amour, Bonaparte Blenkins, who cruelly abuses and tortures the boy for no clear reason other than the fact that he can.

This chapter takes *African Farm* as a reference point, for the novel establishes a connection between the African farm and the gothic logic of the repressed and buried thing that will uncannily resurface in a distorted form at a later time. Many readers may fail to notice that the farm, which is set on an isolated *kopje* or hill, is described initially as the burial ground for unknown African bodies and histories that lay dormant just under the surface. Waldo muses on the history of the farm's *kopje*:

When I was little, I always looked at it and wondered, and I thought *a great giant was buried underneath it*. Now I know . . . of the time when the strange fishes and animals lived that are turned into stone now, and the lakes were here; and then of the time when the little Bushmen lived here, so small and ugly. . . . It was one of them, one of these wild Bushmen, that . . . used to kneel here naked, painting, painting, painting; and he wondered at the things he made himself. . . . Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a little yellow face peeping out among the stones. . . . And the wild bucks have gone, and those

days, and we are here. But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now.¹⁸⁸

African Farm critiques colonial culture, but it does not launch that critique through Waldo's observation that a "giant" or "wild Bushman" lies just below the surface of their seemingly quiet farm. The buried giant is only tangential to the larger feminist narrative of the text. Instead, the buried Bushmen remain entombed in the *kopje*, but emerge in other South African *plaasromans*. Van Wyk Smith argues that Schreiner "having powerfully sensed a deep disruptive presence on the farm, leaves the giant buried to reemerge in several subsequent South African texts."¹⁸⁹ In other words, *African Farm* registers the notion that the farm is haunted by the historically "gigantic" bodies of the African past, but the *plaasroman* form prohibits it from developing that notion much further. Instead, Schreiner's critique of colonial culture is launched through the rubric of feminist emancipation, which leaves the larger question of historical repression to fester and reemerge in subsequent *plaasromans*.

Both *The Conservationist* and *Country* pick up on Schreiner's gothic gesture, and develop it in ways that respond to the distinct political climate of 1970s South Africa. *The Conservationist* was written in 1972—at the same time in which a massive labor strike occurred in Namibia, which brought the region to a standstill. Namibia was also South Africa's first disputed territory; *The Conservationist* explicitly mentions both the labor strike and the territorial dispute. 1974, an officers' coup in Portugal brought down the Caetano government, which precipitated the Portuguese withdrawal from Africa. Even though the Portuguese withdrawal from Mozambique occurs after the publication of the novel, many understood that Mozambique would be next to fall after Rhodesia. The fall or dispute of territories within or in close proximity to the "heart" of South Africa is the historical threat that seems to motivate much of Gordimer's

deployment of the gothic in *The Conservationist*. Published just months before the 1976 Soweto riots, Coetzee's novel seems a threatening portent of the racial tension that was boiling just beneath the surface. Black labor and dispossession from the land were only made visible and open in the farm novel when the authors made their farm narratives *gothic* narratives. In other words, there is something about the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British gothic mode of representation and its uncanny tropes of representation that are particularly conducive to the representation of racial and economic inequality on the contemporary South African farm. Gordimer and Coetzee only selectively deploy gothic elements in their work, but, nevertheless, their selective use of the gothic begs the question: What does the gothic achieve for each and how? This is not to say that each work uses the gothic in the same way and for similar political ends. To the contrary, Gordimer finds the gothic a useful way to address the forced displacement of indigenous Africans from the rural hinterland. The gothic trope of repression and return—vis-a-vis a dead African body, uncanny repetition, and doubling, allow Gordimer to address that historical displacement. In *The Conservationist*, the displaced, unknown black inhabitants of the land will return to take rightful possession of the white farm and land. The black, haunting body of the past effectively scares away the white man from his farm and possibly even South Africa. Insofar as the farm serves as a microcosm of Boer nationalist ideology, Gordimer's gothicization of the *plaasroman* allows her to imagine a resolution to the question of apartheid and the rightful place of all white people in South Africa.

Coetzee finds Gordimer's gothicization of the *plaasroman* compelling, but he ultimately disagrees with her politics and, consequently, her deployment of gothic tropes. "Without wishing to minimize the achievement of *The Conservationist*, which is in every way a worthy follower of *The Story of an African Farm* in the antipastoral tradition, I would ask whether it is

in the nature of the ghost of the pastoral ever to be finally laid” (White Writing 81). Not surprisingly, Coetzee’s is a different type of gothic story than Gordimer’s. *Country* uncovers how all relationships—even those between two Boers—are mediated by racial and gendered dynamics and the threat of miscegenation. In Coetzee’s framework, race is not the only concealed historical factor. Rather, the intersection of race, gender, and economics on the farm produce uncanny relations of power that complicate the notion that South Africa’s problems are solely those of race and that a viable solution may be found in the expulsion of the white man from the country and the reinstatement of blacks to their pastoral lands.

3.2 LAYING THE GHOSTS OF THE *PLAASROMAN* TO REST: NADINE

GORDIMER’S *THE CONSERVATIONIST*

The *unheimlich* is a useful term with which to discuss the ways in which certain historical narratives and perspectives are repressed, or hidden from open historical knowledge or acknowledgement, and then uncannily return in distorted or strange form. Coetzee deploys the *unheimlich* insofar as it is capable of representing *both* the homely and unhomely, as well as foreign and familiar, the concealed and the readily visible. *Country* works both axes of the *unheimlich*—it veils some historical narratives while unveiling others, silences some forms of speech while authorizing others, and articulates some desires while making a mystery of others. As such, Coetzee’s text asks for a particular form of reading that pays attention to the silent and distorted signifiers of the historical repressed. In *The Conservationist*, the dispossession of the indigenous African pastoralists from the land is the repressed *unheimlich* element that

boomerangs from the past into the present and pushes the narrative to resolve the tension between possession of the land and the historical displacement of Africans. From the time of the wealthy urbanite Mehring's purchase of the 400-acre South African farm, it is clear that he is a usurper, and not the "rightful" owner of the place. Mehring is neither African pastoralist nor Boer farmer, but a "city slicker" who buys a country farm as a retreat from the rigors of a high-stakes corporate job and fast-paced urban lifestyle. He claims:

Many well-off city men buy themselves farms at a certain stage in their careers—the losses are deductible from income tax and this fact coincides with something less tangible it's understood they can now afford to indulge: a hankering to make contact with the land. It seems to be bred of making money in industry . . . a sign of having remained fully human and capable of enjoying the simple things of life that poorer men can no longer afford. . . . He himself was not a sucker for city romanticism and he made sure the rot was cleaned up, the place cleaned up. A farm is not beautiful unless it is productive. Reasonable productivity prevailed.¹⁹⁰

On the surface of things, the farm still *seems* to be associated with the intrepid idealism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *trekboers*, such as the preservation of humanity in the face of capitalist competition, nurturing the land, and valuing the simple things in life that do not come with a price tag.

Despite Mehring's confessed "hankering to make contact with the land," the farm is just another extension of the capitalist domain of the urban, colonialist, corporate sphere. Once the domain of indigenous pastoralists, the sprawling African farms of today are only affordable by the very rich, who treat them as weekend getaways instead of noncapitalist agrarian communities. Regardless of the nostalgic draw of the farm and the fact that "Mehring went to his

farm almost every weekend” (22), he abjures the “city romanticism” of the farm’s appeal, finding the “reasonable productivity” more compelling. Critics have noted that Mehring allegorically corresponds to a particular moment in the development of South African capitalism and apartheid. Stephen Clingman writes that “Mehring is a structural pillar of the South African political economy, recognizably South Africa’s ‘new man’ of the early 1970s.”¹⁹¹ The early 1970s, the era of Prime Minister Balthazar Johannes Vorster, was considered a “lost oasis” when whites “never had it so good.”¹⁹² In Vorster era South Africa, 88 percent of Afrikaners were urban, 70 percent of whom held white-collar jobs.¹⁹³ In Vorster’s era, whites and white power thrived, but that financial and political access was enabled only through an “accelerated pace of urban and industrial development.”¹⁹⁴ Thompson writes that “[p]rosperous professionals, businesspeople, and absentee landowners had replaced the old rural and cultural elites in control of the National party”,¹⁹⁵ indicating the extent to which urbanization increased the class rift between city and country and, in most cases, diminished the economic feasibility of farming life altogether. Taken together, these characterizations of the early 1970s were such that white power and economic prosperity were possible, in part, by trading the dreams of farm life for those of the sophisticated city. As a wealthy director of an investment fund that sells “pig iron” to other “first world” markets in Japan and Australia, Mehring signifies both this historic moment of economic prosperity and urban development and the yearning to “return” to the simpler life that many had to leave behind.

On a larger scale, Mehring signifies not just the “new man” of the 1970s, but the larger claims of whites on black South African soil. In this regard, Mehring can be read as an allegorical figure for *all* South African whites. Stephen Clingman argues:

Mehring has the energy and intelligence of a ruling class that means to continue

its dominance. . . . In Mehring, Gordimer has condensed the ultimate resources, both material and mental, of a white South Africa about to enter the era of historical contest that the early 1970s, on a regional level, signalled. It is therefore all the more significant that he is, in the novel, prophetically overthrown.¹⁹⁶

Clingman's reading of the novel is reinforced in the structure of the its first chapter. After an initial description of Mehring enjoying a weekend on the farm, he is met by the running figure of Jacobus, the farm's hired foreman, who has come to tell him the news that the body of an unknown African man has been found on his third pasture. The discovery of the corpse makes plain the narrative's trajectory: the displaced and unknown body "returns" to the land in order to claim it as its rightful home, which necessitates that the white usurper must be "overthrown," bringing about the return of the land to its original inhabitants.

The discovery of the body of an unknown black man establishes a narrative mystery concerning who the man is, why he was murdered, and what the proper course of action should be for dealing with his remains (15).¹⁹⁷ Jacobus instantly disowns any connection between this black man and the other black workers on Mehring's farm: "Nobody can know this man. Nothing for this man. This is people from there—there—He points that same accusing finger in the direction of the farm's southern boundary" (16). At this point in the novel, Jacobus and the other farm workers do not claim the corpse on the basis of color alone. They deny any kinship with the body. By the novel's conclusion, however, they claim the body as one of their own when they give it a proper burial with traditional funeral rites. For the moment, Jacobus disowns the man because he comes from beyond the farm's southern boundary, a densely populated location.¹⁹⁸

It is significant that the body is from the location and is not one of Mehring's employees. The farm itself is tightly nestled in between the city and the location, but has just enough expansiveness to mask a proximity to either: "No one would believe the city was only twenty-five miles away, and that vast location just behind you. Peace" (24). The "peacefulness" and leisurely relaxation of the farm, in effect, repress their dependence on and proximity to the location with its "high wire fence[s]" (24). Locations are the result of a governmental policy of displacement and forced removal of Africans from the land. The appearance of an unknown location inhabitant on Mehring's third pasture reinforces that the two localities, despite their diametric differences, are irrevocably linked. Just as Mehring allegorically signifies all of white South African occupation of the land, the black corpse signifies all of black South Africa's dispossession and longing for return to the land. Mehring possesses the farm because the unknown black man and many others like him are contained within locations. The "spilling over" of the location manifest in the body's mysterious recovery presages the "overthrow" of white ownership of the farm and Mehring's eventual evacuation from the land.

Even though the authorities promise to remove the body and bury it someplace else, it is hastily buried on Mehring's third pasture by the police, who view the murdered body of yet another African from the location as a nuisance and not worth criminal investigation. The knowledge that a corpse lies just beneath the surface of the soil haunts Mehring and the black laborers. Mehring is the murdered man's *unheimlich* double; as such, the fate of the corpse is linked prophetically to his own. The corpse threatens him and portends his own eventual annihilation. There are many instances in which Mehring views himself as the murdered black man. For example, a leisurely nap in the fields ceases to be a luxurious reconnection with the land and becomes a reminder of his impending doom. Dozing off face-down in the fields is too

similar to the position in which the deceased was found: “He suddenly . . . is aware of breathing intimately into the earth. . . . For a moment he does not know where he is—or rather who he is; but this situation in which he finds himself, staring into the eye of the earth with earth at his mouth, is *strongly familiar* to him. It seems to be something *already inhabited* in imagination” (41, my italics). Lying face-down in the pasture is *heimlich*, “strongly familiar,” or “already inhabited” to Mehring because it is the same position in which the deceased body was found. But because that familiar association is linked to a black man from the location, the moment is also unfamiliar, terrifying, and *unheimlich* in its suggestion that the two men may share similar fates. This realization explains why the calm, familiar feeling quickly changes to intense fear: “his whole body gives one of those violent jerks, every muscle gathering together every limb in paroxysm, one of those great leaps of terror . . . *The abyss is no deeper than a doorstep; the landing, home*” (41, my italics). Sigmund Freud’s formulation of the *unheimlich* emphasizes the connection between the familiar sphere of the home and the “species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.”¹⁹⁹ In its familiarity, home has the ability to screen the frightening from view. The corpse defamiliarizes the farm, causing Mehring to view it in a new perspective. All of a sudden, the landing of the house is not a welcoming portal to a home but an “abyss” on the way to the fulfillment of a terrifying historical fate.

The uncanny link between the two men is reinforced again when, after a heavy rain, Mehring’s boots becomes stuck in the mud. He views the experience as just “suction” and that removing himself from the mire is “simply a matter of getting enough leverage” (228), but a certain part of him is mortally panicked by the thought that he is sinking into the mud because the ghost of a dead black man is pulling him down to his eventual fate:

It [mud] has already seeped in over the top of the boot and through the sole and holds him in a cold thick hand round the ankle. A soft cold black hand. . . . [T]he mud holds him, holds on, hangs on, has him by the leg and won't let him go, down there. Now it's just as if someone has both arms tightly round the leg. (228)

In this scene, a silent but present figure of Africa literally grabs the white man and threatens to bury him beneath the surface of the soil, extinguishing him forever. After he extracts himself from the mud, he cannot shake the feeling that “part of him is still buried” (228). This does not happen, it seems, because Gordimer obviously desires Mehring to *banish himself* from the farm, instead of the blacks obtaining a violent retribution, which is Gordimer's ideological intervention into the normative Boer ideology of the *plaasroman*.

Readers of the novel begin to realize that Africa is not a vast emptiness, absent of people, but instead a place densely populated by its own narratives, peoples, and histories that will eventually erupt from the earth and make themselves visible. This eruption, allegorized in the corpse, forces white South Africans to view the homeliness of their nation vis-à-vis the idea of an African farm, as a fragile one that constantly treads over the buried and *unheimlich* historical narratives, or bodies, of the indigenous past. He muses:

Come to think of it all the earth is a graveyard, you never know when you're walking over heads—particularly this continent, cradle of man. . . . Their ancestors. No one knows who they were, either. No way of making known: the mouth stopped with mud. Doesn't exist unless one happens to know—always knows, down here, that it's there, all right. (148)

Gordimer's use of the gothic idiom of the corpse as Mehring's uncanny double enables the development of a historical consciousness that was previously blocked from conscious

realization in the *plaasroman*. Gordimer picks up where Schreiner left off by making visible and concealing the buried giant from view. Metaphors of burial and concealment of the historical past, on the one hand, and exhumation and open acknowledgement of the past on the other, encode the possibility of social change through the *unheimlich*.

Gothic works such as Walter Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* demonstrate the uncanny repetition of the past into the present through the transgenerational inheritance of the "sins of the father," which family members are compelled to repeat until an old curse is banished or social justice is attained. Transgenerational inheritance reinforces the bonds of kinship and birthright and, in its own way, manifests a gothic sort of lineal consciousness that is doomed to end. The *plaasroman* genre is not only concerned with who will inherit the family farm but is predicated on the anxieties of Boer justification for its ownership and occupation of the land. The *plaasroman* resolves these anxieties by reinforcing Boer lineal consciousness, which justifies Boer ownership of the land through generations of family labor on the farm, at the same time as it must repress the integral role of black labor on the same land. In *The Conservationist*, there is a noticeable break in the politics of one generation from the next, which puts the legacy of lineal consciousness in danger. For Mehring, the narrative of the dead man whose "mouth [is] stopped with mud" is a silent and inscrutable one; there is "no way of making known" (148) to the white man the black man's secrets. In contrast, Mehring's son Terry "guilt[ily] yearn[s] for the artifacts of the culture we've destroyed" (157), goes around barefoot like the impoverished Africans, refuses to serve his tenure in the South African army, and joins the struggle for a free Namibia. Terry refuses to inherit his father's political views, which are manifest in his adamant refusal to visit Mehring on his farm. Despite Terry's refusals, Mehring insists that he will eventually come

around and replicate the ideology of the father: “You go to school. You will learn everything. You will have everything. A car. A house. A farm to come to on Sundays. Everything I have. . . . Poor devil, give you a year or two. It may not be pig-iron. You’ll be in—something” (143, 159). These sentiments prove the false assurances of a very desperate man, for Terry wants nothing to do with expensive African farms and, in fact, wants to leave South Africa altogether. Mehring comes to the conclusion that there will be no inheritance or continuity to his legacy: “That four hundred acres isn’t going to be handed down to your kids, and your children’s children” (177). Coetzee reminds us that the loss of a farm was, for Boers, analogous to the fall of a noble house or the end of a great ancestral line (*White Writing* 83). Likewise, Gordimer modifies the *plaasroman* by showing how a generational shift in politics will result in the breaking of those ancestral lines, leaving Mehring the last in a line of occupiers who must one day soon share the fate of the unknown dead man, for whom nobody claims or cares: “No one’ll remember where you’re buried” (177). The thought of losing his farm and becoming one of the buried and “forgotten ones of history”²⁰⁰ invokes fear and dread in Mehring, but the novel seems to say that this dread is the natural historical trajectory and fate of both the *plaasroman* and the white farmer. In this case, gothic elements function similarly to *Otranto* and *Lammermoor*, as they reveal evil usurpers and reinstate the misaligned back to their rightful inheritance and historical legacies.

The novel contrasts Mehring’s broken chain of inheritance and his anxieties concerning the anonymity of death with the “thick” historical inheritance of the black population. Gordimer’s narrative intersperses chapters about Mehring’s farm with excerpts from the Reverend Henry Callaway’s *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (hereafter *Amazulu*), excerpting bits on the Amazulu, or Xhosa, tradition of creation, ancestor worship, and

divination.²⁰¹ Readers may be tempted to skip over these excerpts and view them as irrelevant since there is no context for them. Indeed, the references to the *Amazulu* seem at first misplaced and at odds with the contemporary setting of the novel. Gordimer's deployment of the *unheimlich*, however, allows us to view the references to the *Amazulu* as the atavistic return of a repressed and forgotten indigenous culture that the whites have left buried and forgotten in the soil. Michael Thorpe concurs:

Gordimer supplies no such contextual gloss, the effect is to introduce suddenly a sharply contrasting glimpse of another world, of ordered customary ritual, of a relation between the human and a supernatural spirit world utterly apart from that of the novel.²⁰²

Readers slowly realize that even though the events of each epigraph derive from a clearly different world in which the cult of the ancestor plays a primary role, events from the narrative are reflected (or perhaps predicted in) the *Amazulu* epigraph to each section. For example, in a novel clearly concerned with the crisis of white inheritance, the *Amazulu* epigraphs establish a "thick" history of black inheritance and labor on the land, thus positing a parallel lineal consciousness on the farm. Unlike Mehring, who produces no viable heir to his farm, the Africans not only succeed in producing willing heirs, but they are able to trace their ancestral genealogies back a great many generations. An epigraph from the *Amazulu* reads:

Uthlanga begat Unsondo: Unsondo begat the ancestors; the ancestors begat the great grandfathers; the great grandfathers begat the grandfathers; and the grandfathers begat our fathers; and our fathers begat us.' – 'Are there any who are called Uthlanga now?' – 'Yes.' – 'Are you married?' – 'Yes.' – 'And have children?' – 'Yêbo. *U mina e ngi uthlanga.*' (Yes. It is I myself who am an

uthlanga.). (247)

The speaker in this excerpt is able to trace his ancestry back to Uthlanga, the originator of the land. Furthermore, through his own paternity, he too becomes an “uthlanga,” which suggests that historical continuity is traced through ancestors in the Amazulu tradition, yet it is not a linear chain of grandfather-father-son that may be interrupted or broken from generation to generation. Instead, historical continuity consists of the repetitive circularity of patrilineal inheritance and reproduction.

In *African Farm*, *The Conservationist*, and *Country*, white farmers are unsuccessful at reproducing white heirs who will continue the Boer legacy of farming the African soil. The inability to reproduce suggests the barrenness of white occupation of the African soil. In *The Conservationist*, whites do reproduce, but their children reject the colonial inheritance of their parents. In contrast, black families claim the ability to reproduce and their children embrace their cultural legacy as rightful inheritors of land of which they have been dispossessed.

Antjie Krog documents this Xhosa practice in her memoir of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. When she asks a Xhosa Chief why he begins his testimony with the names of his nineteen forebears, he responds: “Their names organize the flow of time. . . . Their names give my story a shadow. Their names put what has happened to me in perspective. Their names say I am a chief with many colors. Their names say we have the ability to endure the past . . . and the present.”²⁰³ For this Xhosa chief, the names of past ancestors literally return from the past in order to form the historical “shadow” of his contemporary narrative of apartheid-era injustice before the Truth Commission. The return of ancestors from the past into the present is no *unheimlich* experience for this man, but an affirmation that genealogy is not linear, but horizontal, circular, and repetitive, and that it gives a much-needed *historical depth* to his own

existence and suffering. Likewise, in *The Conservationist*, historical depth is literally beneath the ground. The unknown black man is but one of many African ancestors that historicize the narrative of the land. An epigraph from the *Amazulu* states: “The Amatongo, they who are beneath. Some natives say, so called, because they have been buried beneath the earth” (161). Unlike the fearful hauntings of the deceased that we find in the British and American gothic tradition, or the complete repression of black existence and labor in many earlier *plaasromans*, in the *Amazulu* example and for Krog, people from the past not only lurk just beneath the surface of the present, but this form of lurking defines a deep historicity and a literal connection with the land. Eleni Coundouriotis comments that Gordimer’s juxtaposition of the *Amazulu* with the rest of the novel produces a “horizontal” view of history. She notes:

History as a kind of verticality is not complete without an engagement across the horizontal. In apartheid South Africa, where fragmentation reflected a deliberate program of historical distortion, Gordimer insisted on reading horizontally across fragmented space. But history always also demands a verticality into the past.²⁰⁴

Gordimer’s thematization of the *unheimlich* return of the repressed allows her to represent history as both horizontal and vertical. History literally “from below”²⁰⁵ grants verticality and at the same time the horizontally of overlapping historical narratives of the land, manifest in the *Amazulu* epigraphs. Gordimer’s use of the *unheimlich* allows for this back and forward movement in history without the mystery or surprise of the gothic. The lack of mystery in *The Conservationist* indicates a profound formal and political difference between Gordimer’s and Coetzee’s novels, in which the narrative form and the power relations they describe are fundamentally mysterious, ambiguous, and unknowable.

In many gothic novels, the banishment of the uncanny, fearful thing corresponds to a sense of historical, familial, or social justice. There is a sense of social justice when, for example, the real inheritor to the line of Otranto, a peasant, is reinstated into his true aristocratic legacy. In *The Conservationist*, there exists a similar relationship between the uncanny and social justice for racial wrongs. Mehring realizes that after a lengthy and despotic rule, “it’s come [back] to us” (46), and that it is “our turn to starve and suffer” (47) and the blacks’ turn to reclaim the land that was taken from them. The return of the repressed in *The Conservationist* brings about historical justice, but it is arbitrated by an “ecological” model predicated on the laws of nature. Black Africans are clearly aligned with the forces of nature in the novel; their reclamation of the land is described as part of the “natural” cycle of destruction and renewal. Mehring states that for “everything in nature there is the right antidote, the action that answers” (245). The flood counteracts the damage of the brush fire, but it also causes the dead body to resurface, bringing about an undeniable confrontation with the mysterious historical past of the *plaasroman*. The land cannot accept these bodies until their ancestral status is rightfully recognized and properly buried; until this is done, the land will repeatedly “abort” any furtive attempts to bury the history that they signify. Just as a summer drought causes the hippos “to abort...their foetuses in dried-up pools” (40) in order to conserve the natural resources of nature and the surviving female hippo, the flood rains cause nature to perform a necessary abortion producing once more the black body that emerges as “a clot, a black coagulation aborted out of the mud” (246).

Likewise, the earth allegorically rejects the European agricultural invasion and colonization of its soil. Mehring’s attempt to plant an exotic, European tree in the farm soil emphasizes his unnatural presence on the farm and allegorizes nature’s rejection of all foreign elements in its soil:

The clump of roots and earth (this earth has come all the way from Europe) has dried out a bit despite all precautions. Some frail capillary roots look like wisps of fibre from an old mattress. He tests them between finger and thumb; both limp and brittle...*indigenous trees would be better in such a definitive position . . . as a general rule one should plant indigenous trees wherever possible*, not even ordinary exotics like eucalyptus and poplar. (225, my italics)

The Conservationist encodes the politicized struggle between indigenous authenticity and foreign invasion as an organic and ecological struggle to cleanse the earth of its impurities, to conserve nature's resources, and to restore its ecological balance. Allegorically speaking, Mehring is the exotic tree, and believes that plenty of cash and a deed of sale is all it takes for a successful transplant into the rural soil. In reality, the soil and climate cannot sustain the growth of foreign ecology for very long, and both Mehring and the tree will die while the Africans and indigenous plants will thrive. In these examples, the novel constructs nature as closely aligned with a historical memory that eventually rejects acts of historical repression and forgetting as well as foreign attempts to change the nature of the landscape. Nature makes the forgotten, repressed elements of the past known and visible, which, despite its romanticized representation, underscores the *unnaturalness* of farm life in the *plaasroman*.

In the discussion of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and al-Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (hereafter *Season*) in the previous chapter, I argued that both *Dracula* and Mustafa Sa'eed allegorized repressed colonial narratives from the past that uncannily returned in the present to exact a violent revenge. Historical narrative for both *Dracula* and *Season*, repressed and forgotten as it was, *had to* return in distorted form in order to exact some sort of historical justice for past wrongs because the logic of *heimlich* repression demands an *unheimlich* return.

Even though Gordimer seems to be employing the same historical logic, her reliance on the tropes of nature turns her historical argument in a potentially dangerous political direction. Irene Gorak argues that *The Conservationist* “associates blacks with natural rhythms and pregnant silences, reserving both control and conflagration of expression for the linguistically dominant whites.”²⁰⁶ Because historical justice is determined by the rules of nature, characters in the novel seem not to act independently, but are guided by historical forces outside of their control. According to Gorak, “[t]he effect is of a kind of reverse primitivism in which rural characters (even the dead ones) assume a monumental solidity while the urban exploiter mysteriously disappears into the wings.”²⁰⁷ For these reasons, Gorak contends:

The ecological model of social change is a conservative one because it suggests that retarding forces contain the seeds of their own destruction; either a natural cycle will bring these seeds to fruition; or the repressive features will fail to take root and wither away.²⁰⁸

Gorak does not elaborate on what she means by “conservative,” but I infer that her main quibble with the ideology of Gordimer’s narrative form has much to do with the fact that Gordimer’s politics result, in a form of Orientalism that denies free will and complex characterization to black characters. Gordimer’s “radical” racial politics seem to come at the expense of a peculiar form of racism that grants Africans strength from precisely their position as primitive, simple, and aboriginal. The novel’s conclusion best exemplifies this difficult interpretive question, and gestures towards Coetzee’s political intervention into both the contemporary *plaasroman* and Gordimer’s usage of the gothic idiom of the return of the repressed.

It is interesting that some critics have widely varying interpretations of the final events of the novel. Some critics²⁰⁹ read Mehring’s encounter with the prostitute in the novel’s conclusion

as ending in a fatal attack, in which Mehring becomes the next dead body in the third pasture, rather than Mehring's fantasy of his historical fate. Despite the fact that, in the next chapter, Mehring seems to be alive and in charge of the farm from a remote location, the novel's conclusion is ambiguous. Mehring certainly expresses a desire to sell his farm and leave the country in a desperate act to escape his own violent end: "he's going to make a dash for it, a leap, sell the place to the first offer. . . . They can have it, the whole four hundred acres. . . . He was leaving for one of those countries white people go to, the whole world is theirs" (264, 266). But the text is quite ambiguous on these points. Does Mehring sell the farm? Does he leave South Africa? The final chapter mentions that "Jacobus had phoned the farmer in town at his office" (266) but this does not necessarily mean that "the farmer" is Mehring. Indeed, the ambiguity of the phrase "the farmer" indicates that it could be just about any wealthy, urban white male who is just another in a long line of white farmers who have owned the farm.

The novel takes a clear ideological position on white occupation of South African land and solves that problem with the argument that whites should just up and leave the country so that the original inhabitants may have it for themselves. It is therefore strange that such a clear political position should not be plainly expressed in the novel's conclusion. Instead of particulars about whether or not Mehring stays on the farm, flees to the city, or flees South Africa altogether, the novel seems to insist that the more salient fact is that Mehring has met his historical fate, and that the reburial of the black body marks a historical shift in the ownership of the land from white to black. Stephen Clingman claims that, regardless of the indeterminacy of the novel's conclusion, "one thing is certain; the historical scandal of Mehring's existence has come home to roost. . . . Prophetically, he has lived out a class fate, which is to surrender the land to the black body, which in the end is the figure to claim it."²¹⁰ The burial of the unknown

black man signifies that Africa has indeed “come back” to claim what rightly belongs to it. After a period on denial, the African laborers of the farm have expanded their notions of kinship to include him as their ancestor, “one of them.” In giving the man a proper burial, they consolidate their historical claim to the land:

The one whom the farm received had no name. He had no family but their women wept a little for him. There was no child of his present but their children were there to live after him. They had put him away to rest, at last; *he had come back*.

He took possession of this earth, theirs; *one of them*. (267, my italics)

As the final passage in the novel, the burial and mourning of the unknown body by a community of Africans who have no blood kinship with him seems to suggest a communal strength.

Furthermore, it suggests that once the repressed, concealed, and silent narratives of the South African farm are brought to light, *they can be buried*. The ghosts of the African farm can be put to rest and the uncanniness of the farm will dissipate once attitudes resembling Mehring’s calculatingly conservationism are ejected from the farm and country. Unlike Coetzee’s *Country*, *The Conservationist* gives readers a satisfying form of closure—both narrative and political to the problem of the South African pastoral. Gordimer suggest that the haunting of Mehring’s farm can be dissolved once he recognizes that he is not its rightful “heir” and proprietor.

3.3 LIFE WITH FATHER: COETZEE'S IN THE HEART OF THE COUNTRY

Coetzee's *Country* is clearly a textual interlocutor with other *plaasromans*, particularly Schreiner's *African Farm* and Gordimer's *The Conservationist*. Like *The Conservationist*, *Country* continues to make visible the repressed, silent, and mysterious aspects of farm life that Schreiner metaphorized as the "giant" buried beneath the *kopje*, but there are great departures between the way in which each uses gothic idioms to represent farm life. In response to Schreiner and Gordimer, Coetzee engages with the gothic idiom of the buried body of the past that threatens to erupt uncannily in the present, but again he does so with significant modifications to Schreiner's and Gordimer's usage of the gothic idiom and its historical and political signifying potential. Broadly speaking, this section will explore the ways in which *Country*'s modification of the gothic alters the way in which we interpret the novel's historical and political stakes, in comparison to Schreiner and Gordimer's *plaasromans*. Coetzee, unlike Gordimer, contests the notion that the pastoral past may ever be buried, which results in a much bleaker political view.

Unlike *African Farm* and *The Conservationist*, *Country* is so formally experimental that a brief summary of the novel will be useful before proceeding further. *Country* tells a story of a Boer family consisting of a father and his daughter, Magda who live on a "lonely" (12) farm "in the heart of nowhere" (4) with several African servants who work on the farm and in the house. It is difficult to determine exactly what happens in the novel, for its experimental style interferes with a straightforward sequence of events. In the beginning, Magda kills her father after he remarries a white woman. We soon learn that not only did the patricide never happen, but also that the father "has not [even] brought home a new wife" (16). The remarriage and murder seem

merely the daughter's fantasy. Later, the father engages in a sexual affair with the black servant Anna, much to the chagrin of Anna's husband and fellow farm laborer Hendrik. Jealous of Anna and deeply anxious about losing her station as mistress of the house, her inheritance, and threatened by the possibility of miscegenation, Magda kills her father *again*. Readers are unclear as to whether or not this patricide actually happened, or if it too was just the Boer daughter's revenge fantasy. Nevertheless, the narrative proceeds as if the second murder actually did occur, so readers must suspend their doubts and go along with things. Magda's attempts to bury the father's body prove unsuccessful; after each attempt to bury the father, his body resurfaces and is rejected by the soil. In his death, the father's absence creates a vacuum of power on the farm and soon enough the servants begin to take advantage of Magda, which culminates in Hendrik raping Magda in order to get revenge against the father for his affair with Anna. Like the murder, there are two scenarios of rape in the novel; in one scenario, Magda desires the rape and in the other, she is clearly a victim of an unwanted sexual assault. Once Hendrik and Anna realize that Magda has no access to the deceased father's financial resources and cannot pay their wages, they leave the farm, leaving Magda alone, where she slowly goes mad. By the novel's conclusion, she is all alone on the isolated farm, clearly insane, nursing the skeleton of her deceased father, and communicating messages with large rocks in Esperanto²¹¹ to planes that fly above the farm on their weekly flights to the city.

Country is as much about *how* fictional events are narrated as it is about *what* happens. The first thing that readers will notice is that each paragraph or cluster of paragraphs of the novel is consecutively numbered. The second thing is that Magda is an unreliable narrator; she frequently narrates dual, conflicting versions of events, and gives little indication as to which version is the correct one. The experimental narrative creates mystery and textual inscrutability

that cause readers to wonder: Does Magda kill her father? If so, is the murder motivated by hatred for the father's deeds, a desperate act to be like him, or both? Does she desire the rape, is she repulsed by the thought of racial contamination, or both? Why does she simultaneously seem to wish for the father's return and take on the father's role, and in other instances, desire to create a new social order on the farm that challenges the racist, patriarchal colonial order her father signifies? Unlike *The Conservationist*, *Country* explores and embraces all of the contradictions and ambiguities of race relations between black and white. The aesthetic upshot of this political exploration seems to be the sacrifice of narrative coherence.

Critics have much to debate concerning the extent to which *Country* is modernist, postmodern, or something else altogether. *Country* seems thoroughly postmodern to Paul Cantor as it “constantly struggl[es] with prior texts, call[s] their view of reality into question and sometimes actively rewrit[es] them.”²¹² For Cantor, these postmodern elements offer “no way for us to decide which account of Magda's murder of her father is true. If anything, the juxtaposition of the two accounts suggests the fictionality of both.”²¹³ Derek Attridge reads the same narrative elements in Coetzee's work not as postmodernist but as a modernism after modernism that is “allied to a new apprehension of the claims of otherness, of that which cannot be expressed in the discourse available to us—not because of an essential ineffability but because of the constraints imposed by that discourse.”²¹⁴ I am less interested in labeling Coetzee's work as either modernist or postmodernist, but do believe that certain elements of his experimental style are closely related to his politics.²¹⁵ Like Attridge, I believe that Coetzee's style is an attempt to reach beyond the limits of the existing political and aesthetic modes of discourse made available in South Africa. Specifically, however, the indeterminacy caused by multiple and conflicting versions of events is a deliberate attempt to create secrecy and mystery at the order of

individual narrative events, and in so doing, explore the secretive underbelly of the *plaasroman* genre for what it cannot say or does not know. This mystery is not so much self-reflexively directed back at the fictionality of narrative itself, but plays an important political role as it prevents a coherent and cohesive representation of white desire, which reinforces the gothic idiom of the father as the return of the repressed that can never be adequately resolved. Fractured by the multiple versions of events that suggest widely different readings of similar events, the experimental form allows us to view Boer desire as always already contradictory, conflicted, and at odds with itself.

Coetzee's novel is formally very different from Gordimer's. Even though *The Conservationist* may jump back and forth between Mehring's inner world and the practical affairs of the farm, in the end, we are able to piece together *a likely version* of events that actually transpired in the narrative. In *Country*, readers are unable to say definitively what happened and why because the narrative gives *too many possible versions* of events, none of which seem more plausible than any other. Unlike *The Conservationist*, which clearly signals its setting as a racially divided contemporary South Africa, *Country* lacks historical, temporal, or geographical markers that place it in a distinct time, place, and historical context. Whereas *Life and Times of Michael K*, *Age of Iron*, and *Disgrace* clearly situate themselves in a contemporary South African political milieu, *Country* seems obsessed with place (the rural farm) but refuses to signal that location in any particular place or time.²¹⁶ Readers know that the novel is situated on an isolated farm somewhere in "the colonies" (1), for the novel makes repeated allusions to a colonial history, but never overtly situates itself in apartheid South Africa on the eve of the Soweto riots. The absence of such historical, geographical, and temporal markers emphasizes the allegorical potential of the novel to capture the essence of certain kinds of relationships that are

created out of certain historical circumstances, such as rural colonial settlement and the isolation of rural colonial settlement. Rita Barnard writes that: “What is at stake for him [Coetzee] is not place or landscape as an object of mimesis, but the discursive and generic and political codes that inform our understanding and knowledge of place.”²¹⁷ Fidelity to geographic place, not to mention the strict rules of realist representation, does not constitute Coetzee’s aesthetic or political agenda here. Instead, he desires to represent certain relations or “political codes” that are enabled by certain historical circumstances, namely those that mark South Africa, the American South during the era of slavery, and other localities throughout the globe.

To a great extent, Barnard’s assessment of Coetzee’s experimental mode is correct. For Coetzee, a representation of power relations is either more important than a mimetic representation of place, or *it is itself a representation of place*. The subtle nuances of power that are exerted between master and servant, or male and female are more important to Coetzee than the details of farm life that the typical *plaasroman* took pains to represent. And yet these highly racialized and gendered relations of power are not depicted in the coherent fashion as they are in American or South African texts such as Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Wright’s *Native Son*, Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Brink’s *A Dry White Season*, or Gordimer’s *July’s People*. Instead, racial and gendered power relations are encoded with gothic idioms of haunting, anxieties concerning inheritance, purity, and contamination, uncanny doubling from one generation to the next, transgressive desire, mysterious family secrets, and excessive violence. The mystery that results from an unreliable narrator’s multiple and even contradictory versions of events demonstrates formally what the novel’s deployment of gothic idioms attempts on the level of content: a representation of place that is, above all, uncanny, unspeakable, unknowable, and mysterious.

Coetzee expresses a concern about the tidiness of Gordimer's usage of the gothic logic of haunting repression and *unheimlich* return, wondering "whether it is in the nature of the ghost of the pastoral ever to be finally laid" (*White Writing* 81). Given this statement and the similarities and disparities that exist between the two contemporary *plaasromans*, I read *Country* as a narrative corrective to *The Conservationist* on the level of both politics and form. *Country* deploys gothic conventions on the level of content and politics (the return of the Boer farmer as both corpse and its uncanny reincarnation in the daughter) and form (a mysterious mood created through narrative instability and inscrutability) in order to simultaneously engage with and critique the original pastoral and the contemporary ironic revisions. For Gordimer, the gothic trope of the return of the repressed provided the perfect metaphor by which she could address "a vague, repressed unease that the land had been taken away from its original inhabitants" as the uncanny return of "a suppressed history of colonial conquest and occupation."²¹⁸ As a critique of and interlocutor with the *plaasroman*, a genre marked by what it cannot say or represent historically, *Country* is "finely attuned to modes of silence" on the African farm (*White Writing*, 81). Gordimer is correct in locating the absence of African displacement on the farm as an instance of what the *plaasroman* "dare not say for the sake of its own safety" (*Ibid.*, 81), yet Coetzee finds white desire even more secretive, mysterious, and a problematic "secret historical precondition" of farm life than the fact of African displacement.

In many respects, the purpose of *The Conservationist* is the revelation of African displacement in response to the total historical denial of displacement found in the *plaasroman*. Unlike *The Conservationist*, *Country* openly acknowledges the historical displacement of indigenous Africans and the irony of their servitude on white farms. Magda states that the presence of this colonial settler family on the rural African farm is achieved by the displacement

of the native population. In fact, Magda is quite versed in colonial history, and makes several bold declarations concerning what must be lost or covered up in order for her family to exist and prosper on the African farm. While there were plenty of indigenous African pastoralists in the time before and during colonial conquest, the colonial settler farms bred their own form of European pastoralism, complete with imported merino sheep from the Europe, which allowed for the transplantation of the European pastoral to Africa. It is Hendrik, the family's hired black laborer, who signifies the original pastoralist, not Magda's father. Magda notes:

Hendrik's forebears in the olden days crisscrossed the desert with their flocks and their chattels, heading from A to B or from X to Y. . . . Then one day fences began to go up. . . [M]en on horseback rode up and from shadowed faces issued invitations to stop and settle that might have also been orders and might have been threats, one does not know, and so one became a herdsman, and one's children after one, and one's women took in washing. (18-19)

Unlike Schreiner's *African Farm*, which could not portray the existence of black labor or their historical dispossession from the land, Magda details the lengthy process of displacement by which mobile and indigenous African pastoralists became domestic servants and hard laborers on the farms of the Boer settlers. She acknowledges how this colonial history directly relates to Hendrik by naming him personally as part of the ancestral chain that was affected by the settlement of the colonial frontier.

Magda understands that the economic underpinnings of the colonial endeavor were likewise subject to repressive forces that obscured their "true" origins, such as the economic means of production. In Magda's previous quote, she mentions the fact that "Hendrik's forebears in the olden days crisscrossed the desert with their flocks" (18), which denotes that the

precolonial period already had sheep, and that they were indigenous to southern Africa. Magda notes that part of the colonial settler project necessitated the creation of a distinct *European* form of pastoralism, which included the importation of European sheep to Africa. In recounting this “great moment in colonial history,” (19) Magda demystifies the fetishism of the sheep for the Boer pastoralist:

There is another great moment in colonial history: the first merino [sheep] is lifted from shipboard, with block and tackle, in a canvas waistband, bleating with terror, unaware that this is the promised land where it will browse generation after generation on the nutritious scrub and provide the economic base for the presence of my father and myself in this lonely house where we kick our heels waiting for the wool to grow and gather about ourselves the remnants of the lost tribes of the Hottentots to be hewers of wood and drawers of water and shepherds and body-servants in perpetuity. (19)

Just as she reveals the way in which the “lost tribes of the Hottentots,”²¹⁹ or original African pastoralists were made into “body-servants in perpetuity” to the European colonizers and subsequent generations of Boer settlers, Magda uncovers the hidden and mysterious means of their economic base and its mode of production. Like the Boer family, the merino sheep, that which provides the economic base for the settler colonial family, is not native to the African “stone desert.” It too must be imported from abroad to partake of the colonial narrative of a promised idyll.

Unlike Mehring who, until the novel’s conclusion, refuses to accept any responsibility for the historical dispossession of the blacks from the land, Magda begins her narrative by acknowledging her family’s complicity in the process, and openly recognizes the links between

the national colonial project and the more individualized, depoliticized workings of a family. Margot Gayle Backus notes that “the constitution of families as ‘private’ spaces, in which nothing of public or historical consequence occurs, has enabled certain forms of forgetting.”²²⁰ In reading for “certain forms of forgetting” in Anglo-Irish fiction, Backus, like Coetzee and Gordimer, “places considerable emphasis” in her reading on “tropes of visibility and invisibility, along with Eve Sedgwick’s preferred unspeakability, to develop allegorical readings of opaque, baroque gothic textual elements.”²²¹ Backus’s form of reading looks for the unspoken and silent things that lurk at the margins of the family narrative, the things that must be repressed or forgotten in order for a coherent and properly nationalistic family narrative to be told. Yet *Country* already possesses a painful awareness of the things that many white settler families have forgotten, as well as the “forms of forgetting,” a blindness to the economics of colonialism, an unwillingness to admit complicity in the colonial process, and the inability to admit guilt. In Magda’s musings, labor is *already* politicized, and its intersections with the political and historical spheres are made visible. The invisible and inscrutable elements on the Boer farm do not consist of the dispossession of Africans, but instead concern relationships and language that are overdetermined by racial and gender politics, and forbidden desires that transgress rigid boundaries of race.

Rather than focusing on the question of black belonging and white usurpation, Coetzee focuses on the unspoken and concealed mechanisms of the Boer family that prohibit it from ever unhinging itself from the farm. For Coetzee, gothic tropes such as the return of the repressed (metaphorized in the buried body of the Boer farmer instead of the unknown African), anxiety concerning racial purity and contamination, family secrets, and references to haunted houses all allow for the exploration into the Boer woman’s contradictory desires to uphold and demolish

racial hierarchies and nationalistic claims of land ownership. Gothic tropes allow for the bifurcation of racial and gendered hierarchies from one another, which allows Coetzee to investigate the ways in which race and gender are important but unstable signifiers, even at the height of racial conflict such as apartheid. *Country* hones in on those moments in which the instabilities of race of gender allow for the development or failure of certain political possibilities, namely the possibility of women forging cross-racial alliances on the grounds of gender. The logic of the return of the repressed overpowers any political possibility for radical political change. The dead body of the father refuses to stay buried, but more importantly, the Boer daughter cannot survive her political experiment without the metaphorical resurrection of his body and the patriarchal and colonial authority that it grants her.

In *Country*, the farm is no welcoming, lush pastoral landscape. Magda describes the Boer family and their farmhouse with dark, gothic tropes of unknown pasts and haunting secrets, which are amplified by the isolated existence on the farm that distorts all “natural” human relationships on the farm. The farm is located in the “heart of nowhere” (4), in the “stone desert” (12) and supposed colonial “promised land” (10) that promises nothing but a reduction of humans to “elementary states, to pure anger” (12). Something about the “bare land” of the farm encourages the repression and uncanny return of strong, but stifled emotions. On Magda’s farm, Boers are angry people who keep their feelings bottled inside until a blinding rage bursts out, usually in displaced form towards an innocent bystander: “Our resentment for each other, though buried in our breasts, sometimes rises to choke us. . . . It is only by whelming our secrets in ourselves that we can keep them. If we are tight lipped it is because there is much in us that wants to burst out. We search for objects for our anger and, when we find them, rage immoderately” (32-33). Like Mustafa Sa’eed’s secret library, the house is described as a

“mausoleum” (138) that is “shaped by destiny” (3), full of “shadowy hallways[s],” “dark footfalls in empty passageways,” (3) and mysterious cries in the night that come from behind closed doors (25). The farmhouse is a dark, shadowy place haunted by family secrets, which are described with Freudian idioms of the uncanny,²²² such as waters that “flow [in] underground rivers, through dark caverns dripping with crystalline water, graves, if only they could be reached” (13). The house has a dark chamber that, always locked, may contain the keys to the family’s mysterious and unknown past. Another dark chamber, the wagonhouse, contains “yards of providential chain, hitherto invisible, [that] now suddenly leap into sight” (16). Unlike other gothic texts in which the mysterious familial past is hidden and only comes to light in the conclusion such as *Otranto*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *Bleak House*, or *The House of the Seven Gables*, we know from the beginning that the mysterious nature of the Boer family in *Country* is bound up with the father’s transgressive desire for the servant, yet the mystery of this transgressive desire is never resolved, expelled from the house, or properly buried.

Like *The Conservationist*, a hastily buried body returns in order to exert its *unheimlich* sway over the living residents of the farm in *Country*, but *Country* features the murdered body of the Boer farmer, not the unknown African, as its “ghost of the pastoral.” *Country* changes the uncanny signifier from the black African to the Boer farmer, which locates the *unheimlich* object of repression and return not only within the Boer family, but in the Boer father, the iconic nexus of patriarchal and colonial authority. Earlier *plaasromans* represented Boer farmers as noble patriarchs who were heads of household, breadwinners, competent farmers, environmental and financial conservationists, bastions of conservative values, and the progenitors of many children who would inherit the land and perpetuate the traditions of farming life.²²³ Unlike *The Conservationist*, which is structured according to a racial dualism between black and white and

revolves around the mystery of black labor and dispossession on the farm, *Country* complicates its investigation into the historical roots of repression and return by splitting the racial dialectic between black and white into various, competing and interlocking subcategories that foreground the intersections between race and gender, access to financial resources, and language. For Coetzee, race is the most important organizing factor in his political milieu, but it never operates alone. There are instances in which gender mitigates the logic of white superiority, or when a white woman's lack of financial access levels the power relations between herself and her black servant. For example, when Hendrik demands his wages for work done after the death of the father, Magda realizes that she cannot pay them because as a woman, she is kept ignorant of where her father's money is located: "What do I know about money? Not in all my life have I had to touch a coin larger than a sixpence. Where am I going to lay my hands on money? Where did my father keep it?" (94). *Country* argues that these fractures between race and gender are best mediated through the father, who is the locus of power, and ostensibly the greatest obstacle to radical political change. The novel argues against the logic that the simple reinstatement of blacks into visibility on the farm constitutes foundational change, and manifests the mysterious underbelly of white power that must be subject to political debate and examination.

Both the father's seduction of Anna and Magda's violent response to it are described with gothic idioms because, together, they manifest the mysterious, ambiguous, and contradictory forms of desire that define the Boer's relationship to the land and the historical fact of dispossession and racial oppression during the years of apartheid. The father's desire for Anna changes the entire tone of the farmhouse. The house resounds with cries "of desire and sorrow and disgust and anguish" that "swoop and glide and tremble through this house" (25). Magda experiences the father's sinister and taboo desire as the *unheimlich* return of something long

repressed or asleep: “a chill in the wind tells me that disaster is coming. I hear dark footfalls in the empty passages of our house. I hunch my shoulders and wait. After decades of sleep something is going to befall us” (27). The “disaster,” “dark footfalls,” and foreboding “something” that mysteriously stalks the house are not only the rupture of racial taboos in the father’s sexual relationship with Anna, but also the violent torrent of racially motivated revenge on behalf of the Boer daughter. Upon her father’s sexual transgression, it is *she* who becomes the defender of the most extreme of South African racial hierarchies of separation.

Magda is clearly subordinate to her father’s wishes and is intimidated by his “masterful” (3) presence, foul moods, and lengthy silences. Despite this, Magda unwaveringly desires his recognition and requires his presence. “Enthralled by my need to be needed, I circle him like a moon” (5), she confesses. It is clear that Magda requires her father’s masterful presence, in part, as a means by which she can identify herself in relation to those who serve *her*. As the father is master over Magda, Hendrik, and Anna, Magda is mistress over the black laborers on the farm. This hierarchy is enabled by the colonial order that the father signifies on the grounds of race, and is enacted through the inflexible linguistic and behavioral codes of the Afrikaans language²²⁴: “We have our places, Hendrik and I, in an old old code. With fluid ease we move through the paces of our dance” (25). Despite the rigidity of the “old old code,” Magda acknowledges similarities between herself and Klein Anna on the grounds of gender. Both women, regardless of race, must put the needs of men first or else risk violent retribution from some universal male wrath. Magda remarks that as a new bride, Anna has not yet been inducted into her servile role with respect to her husband: “Then the girl, from fairy visitor grown to wife, will learn to get up first, and no doubt soon be shouted at and beaten too” (27). Anna’s servile position to Hendrik and the master is mirrored in Magda’s service to her father: “In my own

room I am already dressing, for I must have his [the father's] coffee ready when, stern and drawn, he stamps into the kitchen" (27). However, when the father takes Klein Anna as his mistress, Magda experiences a disruption of the "old old code," and feels her tenuous position as mistress of the house and inheritor of her father's rural estate is threatened by jealousy, then miscegenation. Magda quickly forgets all bonds forged on the grounds of gender and takes on the most conservative of racial ideologies that locate racial contamination as the supreme threat to Boer inheritance and the continuation of the Boer pastoral life.

Magda supposedly kills her father for the first time when he remarries a white woman because she realizes she must play second fiddle to the new wife. Regardless of whether or not this first murder actually occurred, we notice that Magda ostensibly kills her father the second time for very similar reasons, however in the second scenario, neglect and abjection are amplified because his chosen lover is African, causing her anxiety to have strong political undertones. Magda perceives her father's affair with Anna as a step towards losing her position as mistress of the house, and even one day, the entire farm: "[P]erhaps my rage at my father is simply rage at the violations of the old language, the correct language, that take place when he exchanges kisses and the pronouns of intimacy with a girl who yesterday scrubbed the floors and today ought to be cleaning the windows" (43).²²⁵ Magda is terrified of the thought of miscegenation because it threatens to undo the Boer's lineal consciousness. Lineal consciousness is racially exclusive and can only function as long as the bloodlines are kept pure and untainted by African blood. Magda anxiously perceives the long-term effects of her father's sexual indiscretions as a possible affront to lineal consciousness, and the uncanny harbinger of the loss of the farm and its transfer from white to black ownership:

In a month's time, I can see it, I will be bringing my father and my maid breakfast

in bed while Hendrik lounges in the kitchen eating biscuits, flicking his claspknife into the tabletop, pinching my bottom as I pass. My father will buy new dresses for her while I wash out her soiled underwear. He and she will lie abed all day sunk in sensual sloth while Hendrik tipples, jackals devour the sheep, and the work of generations falls to ruins. She will bear him olive-skinned children who will pee on the carpets and run up and down the passages. . . . They will send for their relatives, brothers and sisters and distant cousins, and settle them on the farm. (49)

In *Country*, there is no obvious external transfer of power from white to black with respect to ownership and inheritance of the farm as there is in *The Conservationist*. Instead, the novel focuses on the ways in which Boer ownership slowly diminishes due to *internal* contamination and degeneration.

Magda's fantasy that *she* will become her servant's servant, and that the blacks will slowly contaminate the family *from the inside out*, speaks to one of the most popular gothic anxieties: the usurpation of a house and the end of a great ancestral line. Since the farm signified the "seat of their [Boer] lineages" (*White Writing*, 83) and the expression of "the very soul of the Afrikaner's being",²²⁶ the loss of the farm was mourned as the loss of personal and national identity. It is not surprising that since "the loss of a farm assumes the scale of the fall of an ancient house, [or] the end of a dynasty" (*White Writing*, 83), it should be represented through gothic idioms that heighten the sense of anxiety and loss, and frame the father's sexual affair as an act that has the potential to undo the entire family's legacy and jeopardize their ownership of the farm. In this scenario, Magda acts as an "avenger, eyes flashing and sword on high, [a defender] of the old ways" (43). As an avenger of the old ways, Magda's murderous acts, like

Henry Sutpen's murder of Charles Bon in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, allow her to become her father, enact his racially circumscribed view of the universe, and to inhabit his position of authority. In other words, his death enables his *unheimlich* repetition in Magda. The ironic difference between these two examples is, of course, that Magda had to kill the authoritative figure in order for her to signify and conserve that order.

The novel's experimental style interferes with any sort of logical narration of either patricide. Each murder is described with such patchy description that one is never really sure if a murder actually occurred. Out of each ambiguous patricide emerges a common theme, however, that engages with the gothic trope of the return of the repressed and the *plaasroman's unheimlich* legacy: the problem of bodies that refuse to stay buried. The first murder presents Magda with a peculiar problem that will carry through to the novel's conclusion: What does one do with the corpse of the Boer farmer? Having murdered him, Magda cannot figure out a way to rid herself of the father once and for all. In this instance, Coetzee is in obvious dialogic engagement with the corpse of the unknown African in *The Conservationist*:

What of the bodies? They can be burned or submerged. If buried or submerged they will have to leave the house. If buried they can be buried only where the earth is soft, in the riverbed. But if buried in the riverbed they will be washed out in the next spate, or in the one after that, and return to the world lolling in each other's rotten arms. . . . If weighted and sunk in the dam, they will contaminate the water and reappear as chained skeletons grinning to the sky. (15)

Country departs from *The Conservationist* in its insistence that, whatever Magda may do, the body of the father and master will *never* be properly buried. He will always return to haunt the living because Magda herself is not able to relinquish the authority, or "the law" of the father

(84) that she taps into each time she exerts authority over Hendrik and Anna. Because she continues to exercise this authority, the father's body will never be peacefully buried in the soil, but will remain an uneasy and uncanny specter that prevents the narrative from achieving resolution and historical closure.

In *The Conservationist*, the burial of the body allowed for a tidy narrative resolution to the displacement of Africans from the land; after a time of displacement and denial, the burial signified the respectful return of the rightful inheritor to the land he had long been denied. Whites disappear; Africans rule in *Country*. Not only is the body of the father unburied by the time the novel reaches conclusion, but Magda carts the rotten corpse of her father about the farm as a companion in her isolation and madness: "Sometimes . . . I carry my father out of his room and seat him on the stoep . . . I pick him up without difficulty, a mannikin of dry bones held together by cobwebs, so neat that I could fold him up and pack him away in a suitcase" (135-36). Dick Penner notes that: "By her patricide, Magda has destroyed the old order, but she is powerless to put a new order in its place,"²²⁷ because she cannot detach herself from the lure of his authority and because that authority is tied absolutely to the only language in which she can speak, Afrikaans. As a result of this vacuum of power, Penner argues, Magda is "directionless."²²⁸ To the contrary, it seems that Magda is not only very much under the sway of the father's authority, but that she willingly enacts his authority in her manipulation of Anna.²²⁹ Before, Magda looked after her father but resented her treatment as servile, but now, there is a newfound tenderness in Magda's care for her father. "I feed my father his broth and weak tea. Then I press my lips to his forehead and fold him away for the night" (137). This is no mere instance of a colonial daughter "need[ing] to be needed" (5).

Indeed, the narrative has surpassed even the point of desperation; Magda's tender efforts are no longer those of a desperate colonial daughter trying to resuscitate and nurse back to life the lifeless corpse of colonial patriarchy of which the Boer farmer is an icon. Instead, the *unheimlich* presence of the father's corpse on the farm has become a historical fact of the farm itself: "Once upon a time I used to think that I would be the last one to die. But now I think that for some days after my death he will still lie here breathing" (137). The father will still "lie here breathing" because the Boer daughter could not detach herself from the promises of the pastoral and the privileges of patriarchal and colonial authority in order for a new order to be born. In the end, a strong wave of nostalgia for both the father and the pastoral promise dominate the novel's open-ended conclusion:

What have I been doing on this barbarous frontier? . . . There are poems, I am sure, about the heart that aches for Verlore Vlakte, about the melancholy of the sunset over the koppies, the sheep beginning to huddle against the first evening chill, the faraway boom of the windmill, the first chirrup of the first cricket, the last twitterings of the birds in the thorn-trees, the stones of the farmhouse wall still holding the sun's warmth, the kitchen lamp glowing steady. They are poems that I could write myself. It takes generations of life in the cities to drive that nostalgia for country ways from the heart. I will never live it down, nor do I want to. I am corrupted to the bone with the beauty of this forsaken world. (138-39)

Magda's form of pastoralism is yet another exploration of contradiction. It admits a certain guilt over enjoying a land that she knows was stolen from the Africans by her ancestors, but refuses to give up the melancholic pleasures of the land. In the push and pull between fealty to her father and the desire to forge new, nonhierarchical relations, Magda has obviously chosen fealty to the

father and the colonial order he signifies, yet the justifications for that choice are no longer couched as anxieties concerning racial contamination, but as the sentimental draw of the landscape. I read this shift as the text's own form of uncanny masking: sentimentality for the "Verlore Vlakte" screens *unheimlich* fears of miscegenation and the potential disintegration of Boer lineal consciousness. Just as her father's affair with Anna threatened to corrupt the purity of the family bloodlines, Magda admits to being corrupted by the romantic logic of the Boer pastoral, which explains why she had to murder the father in order to preserve the pastoral vision. In doing so, she uncannily becomes her father in her actions towards those whom she can still dominate, particularly Anna.

The notion that Magda acts as an avenger of conservative Boer nationalist ideology quickly gives way to a contradictory desire to abolish patriarchal and colonialist ideology, which the novel metaphorizes through language. Afrikaans, Magda's "father tongue," and the language that Magda speaks to her black servants, is itself a language of secret meanings, unspoken nuances, and hidden hierarchies that are simultaneously comforting (social positions are enacted in a highly codified system of manners and speech) and oppressive (Magda desires at times to break the "old old code" and to speak with a new, nonhierarchical language with the servants).²³⁰ In many instances, Magda despises the fact that she is trapped in the father's authoritative language and attempts to forge new, nonhierarchical relationships with her servants:

I am exhausted by obedience to this law, I try to say. . . . The law has gripped my throat, I say and do not say, it invades my larynx, its one hand on my tongue, its other hand on my lips. How can I say, I say, that these are not the eyes of the law that stare from behind my eyes, or that the mind of the law does not occupy my skull? (84)

Magda wants to disobey the law, and to manifest that disobedience to the black servants on the farm. She seems to believe that if she makes this disobedience known to Hendrik and Anna, they will perceive her as one of them, take her into their trust, and speak to her in the unequivocal “language of the heart” (133) that, unlike Afrikaans, is not structured according to a lengthy history of African suppression. Magda does not seem to realize that since her “stony monologue” (12) is determined by the *plaasroman*, there are many things that the form *prohibits* her from saying. Hence, her speech is as much about what she *wants* to say as it is about what she *cannot* or *does not* say. Neither the *plaasroman* nor Afrikaans permits Magda to speak in a language outside of “the law” because it is a form that historically supports and screens the law from visibility. Magda’s desire to make the law visible and to “speak the language of the heart” that undoes the differences between master and slave or parent and child, are always already destined to fail in large part because she is unable to relinquish her nostalgic claim to the farm land itself. This is no ideological fault of Coetzee’s, but rather an instance in which he critiques Gordimer’s simpler mode of conflict resolution. Whites packing up their bags and evacuating themselves from the landscape cannot merely solve the problem of Boer sentimentality for the land, Coetzee seems to say. The novel takes pains to show that the contradictory nature of desire, in particular, the seductive allure of the patriarchal and colonial order, must be resolved before any lasting resolution to the historical problem of possession, occupation, and its sentimentalization will even be possible. Magda may be “exhausted by obedience to this law” and vehemently deny the she inhabits this law, but the uncanny logic of repetition and return (allegorized in the haunting specter of the Boer farmer) interrupt this moment of possibility, and reinstate the law as the thing necessary to ensure stability, order, and productivity on the farm.

Magda's many fantasies about forbidden sex, rape, and murder envision various scenarios in which the daughter crushes the figure of colonial power, the masterful Boer farmer, or is violated by the figure who is subordinated to the master, the black servant. Just as Magda envisions two scenarios in which she murders her father, she entertains two equally divergent fantasies of being raped by Hendrik. In one scenario, Magda desires the rape and in the other, she is the unwilling victim of a sexual assault. The overall narrative effect of Magda's many and divergent fantasies is ambivalence. It wishes for and feels horror about both scenarios. These ambivalent desires make visible the overlapping power struggles with which she, as colonial daughter, finds herself involved. In imagining different scenarios in which she may murder her father, Magda allows us to see how race and gender are unstable signifiers of domination. Likewise, the various stagings of rape in the novel reveal how rape is tied to shifting and unstable structures of power that balance race, gender, and economic access. Magda is raped after the Master is killed, when Hendrik understands Magda is completely ignorant of where the Master keeps his money and that she cannot pay him his rightful salary, which ties the forceful sexual act to commodity consumption and revenge against the Master. Even though the colonial daughter can wax poetically about the economics of colonial history, she is ignorant to the most basic of economic exchanges between master and servant—that of monetary exchange for services rendered. Caroline Roday (1994) notes that Magda's "power evaporates . . . when the servants realize that it all stems from her relationship to the white man and the money. . . . *The dead father's hand still controls the gold*" (174, my italics). Magda and Anna are the ciphers of both the erotic and the commodity between Hendrik and the master. The Master takes Hendrik's wife in a sexual affair, and Hendrik is unable to refuse because he is economically dependent on the Master for his wages. Yet even from beyond the grave, the Master continues to control the

inhabitants of the farm, because only he claims access to the farm's financial resources. Rape revenges the servant upon the master for stealing his property—his wife—but cannot compensate him for unpaid wages for labor on the farm. It is only a matter of time before he and Anna must leave the farm in order to seek paid employment elsewhere. The master's affair with the servant is uncannily repeated in the servant's rape of the mistress. Magda's "humiliation" (112) during the repeated instances of rape are Hendrik's revenge against the father. In both instances, Anna and Magda are ciphers in a larger power struggle between men,²³¹ which suggests that the two women occupy similar positions with respect to the Master.

But not so fast, the novel seems to say. Magda's rape arguably makes visible a popular *misnomer* of racial and gender politics, which is the commonality between black and white women due to their equal oppression by colonial fathers and masters.²³² Through the triangular structure of desire that we see in the master's sexual affair and the servant's rape, *Country* enables us to examine the problematic ways in which both black and white women are allegorized as victims of colonial patriarchy. Black women's victimization, however, is precisely that which the *plaasroman* and its contemporary revision cannot speak or give voice. Nowhere is this illustrated better than in Magda's domination of Anna. Magda believes that both she and Anna share a similar fate for they are confined to the domestic sphere where they serve out never-ending sentences of domestic labor to their fathers, husbands, and masters. Despite these moments of sympathetic recognition, Magda becomes more and more like her father: "I find her head and press my lips against her forehead. For a moment she struggles, then stiffens and endures me. We lie together, at odds, I waiting for her to fall asleep, she waiting for me to go" (103). I do not read Magda's desire for Anna as an expression of homosexual desire, but instead as an instance in which she uncannily "becomes" her father and in so doing, is governed by the

desire to possess both land and the people who populate it fully. Even though she refutes the possibility that the law inhabits her body, her sexual coercion of Anna tells us otherwise. Her desire for Anna must be read as the Boer desire to possess and own the land.

The father's seduction of Anna is uncannily mirrored in Magda's own distorted and unsuccessful seduction. Just as the father tempted Anna to speak the language of the taboo intimate "we," (35) Magda's attempt to get Anna to say her first name, as opposed to her title "Miss," is a failure. The black woman cannot say the white woman's name, and is only able to articulate what she signifies with the racial economy of apartheid: Magda's hierarchical position as her mistress. Magda tempts her: "'Come, Anna, there is nothing to be afraid of. Do you know who I am?' She looks straight into my eyes. Her mouth is trembling. . . . 'Well, who am I?' 'Miss is the miss'" (30). The tautology "Miss is the miss" says both nothing and everything. In its refusal to speak, it creates a space of silence around everything that the *plaasroman* is forbidden from saying or knowing about itself. That moment of direct eye contact and trembling has the potential for Anna to make some sort of claim about *who* Magda is, but more importantly, *who* this enigmatic Anna is, or what this mysterious land is, for whom everybody speaks.²³³ Even though Hendrik and Jacobus speak boldly to their masters and mistresses in *Country* and *The Conservationist* respectively, there remains something essentially unknowable and silent about Africans and their intertwined histories with the land. In *The Conservationist*, this is allegorized in the unknown African corpse, but in *Country*, it is figured in the living body of the female servant who, we notice, is asked and seduced to speak on multiple occasions, but never does or can. The father's attempt to get Anna to say "we" in Afrikaans and Magda's attempt to get Anna to say her name and not her formal title are clearly instances in which a nonhierarchical language between white and black may be forged, yet the means by which this

language is summoned is clearly coercive. In its stead, the tautology “Miss is the miss” resounds as an uneasy reminder of everything that *Country* as a *plaasroman* cannot say or think.

The Conservationist suggests that the lengthy colonial history of African displacement and white usurpation of the farm land may be remedied by whites acknowledging their complicity and fleeing the country for the city or relocating to “one of those countries white people go to” (266) and abandoning South Africa altogether. Coetzee is obviously unsatisfied with this political solution and the way in which Gordimer dispels the gothic metaphors of the past by staging a nostalgic, African burial of the unknown black corpse. For Coetzee, merely dispelling whites from the rural hinterland or the country cannot be the solution to the problem of Boer nationalism and its nostalgic yearning for the farm. Rather, Coetzee locates the thorniest, most stubborn elements of colonialist Boer ideology in the contradictory and triangulated relations a Boer farmwoman, Magda, has between her masterful father and male and female servants. Magda simultaneously possesses and acts upon two contradictory desires: she desires the father and the racial superiority he grants her over her servants and she wishes to atone for the “sins of the father” by eradicating racial hierarchies between herself and the servants by allowing them into her house and speaking the “language of the heart” (133) with them. Because she is a woman who is also oppressed by a tyrannical master of a father, Magda believes that she can forge alliances with the black servants on the grounds of her gendered oppression. However, her inability to let go of her father demonstrates that, even though she may view gender as an equalizing mechanism, she can neither relinquish her sense of racial superiority nor her nostalgia for the land.

On the level of politics, *Country* is more politically complex and much bleaker than *The Conservationist*. Boers may acknowledge their complicity in the forced removal of Africans

from the land, but there is no indication as to how they may sever their nostalgic connection to the land. These contradictory and sentimental feelings of desire for the land are themselves the “ghosts of the pastoral” that, according to Coetzee, will not be laid to rest so easily. In *Country*, the gothic endures; ghosts of the pastoral past continue to haunt the present and stand as uncanny threats to any future changes. Written on the eve of the Soweto riots, *Country* stands on the brink of a historical period of racial confrontation that might have inspired hopefulness instead of the deep despair articulated in the novel’s dark conclusion. The inability to banish the ghosts of the pastoral and the lure of the colonial forefathers in order to reinstate rationality and domesticity serves as a cautionary reminder that white South Africans must first resolve its romanticized historical legacy of colonial sentimentality and nostalgia for *a return to the land* before meaningful political conversations about *a return of the land* can transpire.

4.0 HAUNTED HOUSES OF HISTORY: ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (hereafter *Small Things*) is the most self-consciously gothic of all the novels considered as exemplars of the postcolonial gothic herein. The gothic in *Small Things* is reminiscent of the gothic of Dickens's *Bleak House*, Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and J.M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (hereafter *Country*).²³⁴ All frame their narratives within ancestral family homes. In each, the gothic is located in the familial house and the everyday interactions amongst family members. The uncanny sense of dread in each house has everything to do with the unresolved "sins of the father" (or mother) and the haunting legacy of patriarchal inheritance. All are saturated with the peculiar historical, social, and political history of a distinct geographical locality. *Small Things* launches big political questions specifically through the erotic and transgressive dimensions of intimate life, not through the public sphere of politics, the Communist party, or national historical narratives.²³⁵ The novel demonstrates that the private sphere of intimate relations and the family saga it relates, rather than the public sphere of communal or state politics, is the only site where the things that the Small God can tell are buried and discovered, examined and accounted for, and preserved as a *different sort of historical memory*. Indeed, the historical memory of *Small Things* is based on a portrayal of Kerala in all of

its “quotidian actuality.”²³⁶ The history whispered by the Small God may resemble most closely theories of radical history such as E.P. Thompson’s “history from below” and Ranajit Guha’s “small voice of history” and not the grand historical narratives of nations or their powerful rulers.²³⁷

In *Small Things*, gothic is the narrative vehicle that enables that different sort of historical memory. Because the gothic has a distinct historical sensibility and has the ability to portray the uncanny nature of canny things, it becomes an appropriate narrative mode by which the novel may illustrate that the violence of the intimate sphere is a product of large political problems, such as the vestiges of the colonial era in the postcolonial, and the failure of Communism to resolve fully the question of caste and gender. Gothic elements in the novel seem to appear when the public sphere fails to answer adequately those questions. Hence, Pappachi’s inability to gain the public accolades of the British administration is metaphorized in his moth, which is then cast into the intimate sphere to bring about destruction to Rahel and Estha. Pappachi’s moth becomes a *family curse* that visits itself upon each subsequent generation of the family. Likewise, *Small Things* argues that the Communist party’s focus on class excludes other forms of oppression, such as caste and gender. Excluded from any serious debate in the novel, caste and gender uncannily “return” in the form of Ammu’s and Velutha’s romantic love affair, which undermines the logic of caste superiority as well as sensibilities of propriety for the bourgeois Christian Indian woman. The romantic affair between a dalit servant²³⁸ and a bourgeois single mother with no *locus standi* combines the two biggest threats to national and political stability, in part because it reveals that the supposed cohesion of the family structure is just male authority over women, and the wealthy over the poor. Like Coetzee’s *Country*, transgressive erotic desire and romantic love in *Small Things* have dual roles; erotic desire and romantic love have the potential

to reconcile social, political, and historical conflicts on the private level but also reflect the political reality by which a resolution to a conflict is unsolvable and impossible.

Small Things follows a dual narrative thread: the love story of Ammu and Velutha and the tragic story of the twins. The narrative of Ammu's and Velutha's forbidden romance follows somewhat the trajectory of what Doris Sommer calls the national romance in which a romantic love and marriage functions as the allegorical trope for the reconciliation of parts of a nation or region internally divided by class, caste, race, or ethnicity. Nineteenth-century Latin American romances camouflaged *actual* racial and class assimilation as the inevitable and undeniable erotic seduction and marriage of previously forbidden lovers. Erotic seduction serves a dual purpose that is simultaneously idealist and hegemonic. It allegorically signals a larger political or national assimilation project in which differences are literally married together to form harmonious heterosexual couples within a patriarchal hierarchy. Erotic passion, however desirable to the lovers themselves, conceals a darker, coercive side, in which complicated political issues based on identity politics, democratic representation, or colonial nation formation, are too easily erased through the trope of assimilation and romance. Sommer's argument illustrates how romantic love is not just an escape from the political realm, but is itself a scene in which complex national or communal politics are played out in allegorical fashion. Desire may consolidate various divergent groups of people and may be seen as a form of rebellion that defies the social and political separation of people according to gender, caste, and religion. The erotic may actually make visible the hidden construction of social inequality; the secret, coercive natures of liberatory political ideologies; and the privileging of certain narratives and experiences as politically legitimate.

Though self-consciously gothic, *Small Things* is written according to the logic of the realist novel. The novel's realist project is manifest in its painstaking representation of the daily events of family life and the complexity of family dynamics; a fidelity to children's experience, language, and perspective; detailed descriptions of setting that gives narrative representation to the little-represented Keralan community of Syrian Christians; and an overall focus on the "small" people (children, women, and dalits) and the seemingly insignificant moments of everyday life. For example, the novel's use of childhood language unmasks some of the most nuanced aspects of daily reality that are absolutely related to the political realm. Alex Tickell writes that the twins' childish descriptions of their everyday surroundings provide "a way of speaking about human exploitation, familial guilt, and political violence which carries an ethical charge rare in cosmopolitan fiction."²³⁹ Despite all this, it is clear that Roy's form of realism is different from the realism of her contemporaries. The realism of Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, and Jumpha Lahiri's *The Namesake* is less experimental, more accessible, and straightforward. *Small Things*' realism is infused with gothic metaphors and structures. It contains several haunted houses, plenty of family secrets and transgenerational curses, and it follows a gothic historical sensibility. Roy deploys the gothic trope of the *unheimlich* in order to juxtapose the public and private, the big and the small. The *unheimlich* reveals that the central structures of the private sphere—the home and family—are fundamentally unhomely, secretive, ambiguous, strange, and alienating. The novel suggests that we view the "big" historical narrative of colonial alienation on par with "smaller" narratives of personal trauma, sentimental attachments, and the loss of love. Personal tragedy and loss estrange Rahel and Estha from their home, and unmasks the private sphere as one in which the nuances of class, caste, and gender struggle are literally struggles between life and death. In

doing so, *Small Things* allows for a reevaluation of realism to include the gothic, the sentimental, and the erotic, as they prove instrumental to the novel's depiction of everyday life.

In *Realism in Our Time*, Georg Lukàcs discusses the aesthetic and political distinctions between realism and modernism. In good realism, argues Lukàcs, characters are not isolated individuals floating free of their historical contexts, but embody the historical and political contradictions of their day. Lukàcs contends that good realism:

Displays the contradictions within society and within the individual in the context of a dialectical unity. Here, individuals embodying *violent and extraordinary passions* are still within the range of a socially normal typology. For, in this literature, the average man is simply a dimmer reflection of the contradictions always existing in man and society; *eccentricity is a socially-conditioned distortion.*²⁴⁰

A character in a realist novel may be “eccentric,” or have “violent and extraordinary passions” that make him seem more animated or emotionally amplified than an real person in actual life. These qualities do not discount the text from the purview of good realism. Rather, that character's eccentricity or passions, in the context of the novel's social and historical sphere, becomes an effective representation of the inner contradictions within that sphere.

Small Things nearly overflows with individuals whose “violent and extraordinary passions” reflect and comment on the social and historical contradictions of their time and locality. For example, Pappachi's anger results from colonial alienation; Baby Kochamma's resentment stems from her fears that the Communists will unseat her bourgeois, land-owning status; Estha's and Rahel's guilt has much to do with the fact that there exists no space in which to memorialize the brutal death of Velutha, a dalit; and Ammu's and Velutha's romantic

passion originates in the very “love laws” that forbid inter-caste love affairs. *Small Things* bubbles over with strong emotions, yet more often than not, those emotions are unspoken, beneath the surface, and displaced.²⁴¹ For instance, Pappachi cannot rebuke the colonial administration for failing to recognize his moth, so instead he beats his wife; Baby Kochamma never admits that she is afraid that the Naxalites will steal her land, but she plays an instrumental role in persecuting Velutha. Likewise, Ammu and Velutha are unable to speak of the big political things that separate them, so instead they focus on their erotic desire and only discuss the small things. Estha and Rahel can neither admit their role in Velutha’s death, nor can they mourn him publicly, but their incest can attempt to assuage the unspoken, emotional pain. The novel’s displacement of its affective excessiveness contributes to its gothic qualities, which in turn enables the novel to deepen the reach of its gothicized form of realism.

The novel’s displacements of the political onto the affective and erotic are examples of “socially-conditioned distortions,” and do not as Aijaz Ahmad argues, sidestep the big political questions at hand. Ahmad argues: “[T]he erotic is very rarely a sufficient mode for overcoming real social oppressions”²⁴² because it lacks the complexity of a more straightforwardly realist representation of caste relationships and their political fallout. Ahmad’s claim that the erotic is “insufficient” to overcoming *real* social oppression tells us either that Roy’s mode of representing the political through the private sphere of erotic desire is too allegorical or that his notion of realism is incapable of framing the erotic as a legitimate sphere of political engagement. In “Narrate or Describe?,” Lukács argues:

Without the revelation of important traits and without an interaction of the characters with world events, objects, the forces of nature and social institutions, even the most extra-ordinary adventures would be empty and meaningless. Yet

one must not overlook the fact that even when not revealing significant and typical human qualities, all action still offers the abstract pattern, *no matter how distorted and tenuous*, for exploring human practice.²⁴³

Roy's deployment of the transgressive love story is more complex than just a thoroughly "conventional"²⁴⁴ romantic tragedy that has no bearing on its historical and political reality. Just as British gothic literature displaced its thoroughly contemporary, political content onto foreign geographies and opted for a highly codified and conventional form in which to narrate its politicized commentary on home, Roy's "distorted and tenuous" displacements cast the political onto the affective and erotic. *Small Things* is too experimental to call realist in its form,²⁴⁵ but in its fidelity to representing the inner machinations of class, caste, colonialism, and gender, it explores "the forces of nature and social institutions," and fulfills the function of what Lukàcs would call good realism. This exploration is made possible through Roy's deployment of the gothic thematic of the haunted house and the gothic logic of displacement and *unheimlich* return. The novel's lean towards the gothic and romantic sphere of ghostly moths, grandfatherly specters, childhood traumas, and erotic desire allow Roy to work within the framework of *another* idealist category, that of the otherworldly, and the sentimental, as opposed to what Roy obviously views as the deeply flawed idealist framework of Indian Communism. Ahmad's unforgiving reading of *Small Things* needs to be corrected; the mixture of realism with gothic forms of narrative clearly signal the search for other modes of resolving political and social tension on both the national and familial levels.

4.1 HAUNTED HOUSES OF HISTORY

Small Things, like many gothic novels, utilizes the gothic figure of the house as a way to engage with a haunting and *unheimlich* concept of history that insists there is no escape from the past and that secrets will out themselves and exact a high price upon the present.²⁴⁶ For example, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* focus mostly on the *unheimlich* mysteriousness of a single house, while Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Dickens's *Bleak House*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* figure the *unheimlich* as a dialectic between two distinct houses or localities with intertwined fates. *Small Things* contains not one or two houses, but five houses of varying degrees of *unheimlich* dread and foreboding: the Ayemenem house, Chacko's metaphoric house of history, Velutha's small house, Comrade Pillai's house, and Kari Saipu's house, which the twins call the History House and later becomes the Heritage Hotel. Roy deploys the gothic idiom of the haunted house most prominently in three instances: Chacko's metaphoric "history house," the Ayemenem house, and the Kari Saipu house. The multitude of haunted houses allows the novel to develop different and overlapping definitions of the *unheimlich*, and to advance the idea of the homely and unhomely as relational categories that are continuously negotiated between the different houses. For instance, in Chacko's discourse of the haunted history house, he furthers the notion that the colonial era produced a generation of Indians who are estranged and alienated from their authentic, pre-colonial histories and identities. For Chacko, postcoloniality is a state of *unheimlich* estrangement and alienation. The Ayemenem house figures the *unheimlich* on a much smaller, intimate scale. Pappachi's moth is the signifier for uncanny repetition throughout the

generations; the moth represents Pappachi's disappointment, jealousy, and insecurity that get displaced onto other members of the family and manifest themselves as intimate forms of domestic violence. This violence is inherited transgenerationally and is passed down through the generations from Pappachi to Ammu and her children. Kari Saipu's house has multiple functions: it is the twins' escape hideout, Ammu's and Velutha's romantic retreat, the site of Velutha's beating, and later, the renovated and sanitized Heritage Hotel. In its position as the mysterious and foreign house across the river from the Ayemenem house, the History House suggests the typical gothic displacement of the *unheimlich* onto a house in which many of the significant elements of the narrative revolve, but is *not home*.

This displacement separates the *unheimlich* discourse of *Small Things* into two distinct categories. The novel initially defines the *unheimlich* as colonial alienation, which is manifested by a historical form of haunting that contests that the "post" in postcolonial is truly in the past. Chacko's metaphoric history house represents this form of postcolonial *unheimlich* best. David Punter argues in *Postcolonial Imaginings* that the "very structure of the term 'postcolonial' itself, its apparent insistence on a time 'after,' on an 'aftermath,' exposes itself precisely to the threat of a return, falls under the sign of repetition, . . . [which makes a gothic] history written according to . . . [the] logic of the phantom, the revenant, . . . [and] haunting" particularly appropriate.²⁴⁷ Punter reads the trope of the haunted house in *Small Things* as an example of this form of postcolonial gothic haunting. His reading is convincing as a grand statement on the ways in which the colonial experience resulted in a temporal and historical fissure from which many societies are still contending. Yet this grand-sounding thesis on the postcolonial *unheimlich* does not account for the disjuncture between the public and the private experiences of that historical narrative. A distinction must be made between Chacko's authoritative discourse on history and

Velutha and Estha's silent and unspoken experience of history according to the logic of the *unheimlich*.

As the novel progresses and the plot takes a sentimental and erotic turn towards Ammu's and Velutha's love story and the twins' tragedy, a revised definition of the *unheimlich* is developed. This second type of *unheimlich* is more intimate and less tangible; it is neither contained within the discursive house of the (post)colonial *unheimlich* nor the ancestral Ayemenem house. Rather, it is continuously pushed out and away from home, but is always the silent, small thing that defines home. Chacko's metaphorical history house and Pappachi's moth frame the *unheimlich* through the family structure, which seems to align itself with the novel's larger discourse on the Small God and small things, when in reality this discourse of the private sphere locks out the private narratives of children, unmarried women, longtime family servants, and those of lower caste and class. These smaller private narratives are, like the very shifting history of the History House itself, buried and papered over by larger, more authoritative or tangible *private* narratives. Roy's project is obviously an investigation into the intimate private sphere, yet she seems less interested in the dialectic between public and private than the smaller, more insidious dialectics of power of men over women, masters over servants, and upper caste over lower caste *within* the private sphere.

The recovery and retelling of those buried private narratives compels Roy to combine a "straightforward" realist mode with the sentimental love story and gothicized childhood tragedy; this combination of modes seems best able to narrate those "smaller" versions of reality. While my investigation into Roy's deployment of romance, realism, and the gothic will focus mostly on the function of erotic desire in the History House, a brief exploration into Chacko's metaphorical history house and the Ayemenem house will not only help to illustrate the novel's other

definitions of the *unheimlich* and how the History House's erotics of politics and space functions as a corrective to it, but also will illustrate how the novel's circular narrative form initially "tricks" the reader into believing the former is more legitimate than the latter. When the novel finally divulges the secrets it has been keeping regarding Ammu's and Velutha's love affair, the twins' role in Velutha's death and its subsequent traumatic role upon their adult lives, readers are able to see that the erotic and intimate elements of the novel define the *unheimlich* differently than a historical concept through which the grand narrative of colonial alienation manifests itself.

Like many gothic novels, *Small Things* is constructed on the logic that the sins of the father are inherited and haunt subsequent generations of the family until a resolution brings about a revelation of truth. The sins of the father are inherited, but they are not always easily visible or acknowledged by the affected family members because the father's deeds are usually kept secret. In "The Uncanny," Freud identifies the *unheimlich* as something "that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open . . . [and is] in some way a species of the familiar."²⁴⁸ Pappachi definitely leaves an *unheimlich* mark upon the Ayemenem house. His moth, the novel belabors to emphasize, is symbolic not just of the deceased grandfather's Anglophilism, but of his failure to get the British to return his love by bestowing upon him acknowledgement of his discovery. Julie Mullaney notes that Pappachi's "job of collecting, preserving, and indexing India's fauna for the colonial archive, puts him at the heart of the colonial enterprise."²⁴⁹ According to Freud's logic of repression, Pappachi's sorrowful loss of respect and admiration are driven beneath the surface and resurface in distorted form as aggression, violence, and hatred toward women: "Pappachi's moth was held responsible for his black moods and sudden bouts of temper. *Its pernicious ghost*—gray, furry and with unusually dense dorsal tufts—*haunted every house that he ever lived in. It tormented him and his children*

and his children's children.”²⁵⁰ While many characters are able to acknowledge the haunting presence of Pappachi’s moth, most are unable to locate the moth’s presence in their daily lives. Chacko’s philandering, Ammu’s righteous sense of injustice, and Baby Kochamma’s resentment and betrayal of Ammu and the twins, for example, are all experienced as detached from the specter of the toxic moth, but are instances of its uncanny repetition.

The *unheimlich* is usually attributed to the things hidden that have come out into the open. Freud’s reading of E.T.A. Hoffman’s gothic story “The Sandman” in “The Uncanny” posits a distinctly sexual origin for the *unheimlich*. Even though it is plain to see that the repressed elements in “The Sandman” derive from the protagonist’s servants, Freud pays no attention to this element of the plot and instead insists that the *unheimlich* is nothing but the return of the protagonist’s repressed Oedipal complex. Brian McCuskey notes that “Freud skips quickly past the nurse’s tales that circulate deep down in the dark [in “The Sandman”] and returns instead holding the Oedipus complex triumphantly aloft, diverting attention from the servant.”²⁵¹ McCuskey reads Freud’s inability to see the obvious role of servants in the *unheimlich* as indicative of a larger inability to acknowledge the mitigating role of class within the formation of the Freudian subject. In ignoring servants in “The Sandman” and markers of class in other anecdotes in “The Uncanny,” McCuskey argues that “Freud conspicuously fails to acknowledge a social and political origin for the uncanny, which according to his logic and evidence belongs exclusively to the propertied classes, whose servants, lurking in the dark corners of the home and mind, make the flesh creep.”²⁵² Gothic texts such as “The Sandman,” *The Castle of Otranto*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and *Country* link uncanny repression to servants and others who may live with but are deemed family outcasts. The class dimension of the uncanny may not be admitted by Freud, but it is something that his work makes

evident in relief. Writes McCuskey: “the sociopolitical dimension of the uncanny is perceptible only because Freud throws it into relief through a highly theatrical act of repression, avoiding a premise so consistently and clumsily that it gradually takes shape.”²⁵³ The “power of the repressed” exceeds the bounds of Freud’s own discourse, and speaks things about servants, class, and the *unheimlich* that, at some level, the text understands, but is unable to admit.

This class-based form of repression and *unheimlich* that attunes itself to the role servants plays out in the dialectic between internal and external that *Small Things* establishes with Velutha’s peculiar status regarding Ammu and the twins. In the case of Pappachi’s moth haunting the Ayemenem house, the “power of the repressed” has more to do with colonialism, gender, and male privilege than class. As McCuskey reminds us, the repressed thing *and* its psychoanalytic interpretation should never be viewed in a straightforward manner. *Small Things* does illustrate how India’s colonial period continues to haunt its present, yet perhaps more than this, the novel is highly attuned to various forms of desire. Pappachi’s unrecognized moth is, within the novel’s politicized hermeneutic of desire, a loss of love, esteem, and respect. As such, it invests the *unheimlich* with the social and political context of colonization and frames “loving the conqueror” as a professional goal and not a romantic love story of the likes of Ammu’s affair with Velutha. However, if the colonial idiom in Pappachi’s story functions in a manner akin to the Oedipus complex in Freud’s reading of “The Sandman,” then that politicized colonial idiom masks the *unheimlich* nature of its own gender and class dynamics. In other words, the novel deploys the colonial idiom as a legitimate historical form of postcolonial *unheimlich*, yet it simultaneously veils another, more intimate and private form of uncanniness.

The slipperiness of the concept of the *unheimlich* is made strikingly apparent in Pappachi’s nightly brass vase beatings of Mammachi and Chacko’s intervention on his mother’s

behalf. Pappachi displaces his anger or sadness about the loss of “love” onto his wife, which manifests itself in a manner of overtly and passive aggressive ways. The brass vase beatings are the most obvious form of violence, yet he finds less obvious modes of abuse and disparagement:

Late at night he went into his study and brought out his favorite mahogany rocking chair. He put it down in the middle of the driveway and smashed it into little bits with a plumber’s monkey wrench. . . . He never touched Mammachi again. But he never spoke to her either as long as he lived. . . . In the evenings, when he knew visitors were expected, he would sit on the verandah and sew buttons that weren’t missing onto his shirts, to create the impression that Mammachi neglected him. To some small degree he did succeed in further corroding Ayemenem’s view of working wives. (47)

The physical violence of the nightly beatings shifts to a more subtle and less obvious form of intimate violence that also has a dual political agenda of keeping wives unemployed and as economically and emotionally dependent on their husbands as possible, even as those husbands were themselves unemployed and physically decrepit. The gendered subjugation of Pappachi’s passive aggressive “revenge” is quite obvious; what lurks just beneath the surface is a highly gendered and classed definition of women’s rightful place. Because he is unemployed and because his career ended without “proper” acknowledgement of his achievements, he is jealous of his wife whose business is thriving. Hence, Mammachi’s greater success becomes the thing that enables a larger hatred and fear of women and a conservative backlash against improper class behavior.

The relationship between Mammachi and Pappachi is conducted as a complicated exchange between east and west as well as class, gender, and caste. While many readers might

expect an aspiring Anglophile such as Pappachi to adopt so-called “modern” or western ways, the extent of Pappachi’s reforms were mostly limited to outer forms, such as his preference for western attire and his beloved Plymouth. The fundamental structures of his home life, particularly his manorial rule over his wife and children, did not change. When these intimate structures were found threatening to Pappachi on the grounds that they violated proper modes of gendered, class, or caste behavior, the problem was solved through the deployment of traditional gender roles. Traditional gender roles are deployed as the salve for egos bruised by a lifetime’s work that has gone unrecognized by the proper British authorities. For example, the deployment of traditional gender roles allows Pappachi to refuse Mammachi to explore her potentially concert class violin skills in Europe but enables her to be an entrepreneur who owns and manages her own business in Kerala. Entrepreneurship and independent business ventures seem a more typically masculine activity insofar as they require a more substantial dealing with the economic sphere of commerce; Pappachi likely tolerates Mammachi’s entrepreneurship because it had to do with the cooking and preparation of traditional Indian foods and condiments. Mammachi’s business venture allows her access to the public sphere of economic exchange, which eventually morphs her home into a factory and Pappachi’s coveted Plymouth into an advertisement on wheels, all of which make the homely domestic sphere an unhomely one through its overt commercialization. The fact that this venture engages with the traditional feminine role of woman as nurturer and guardian of authentic tradition through traditional foods mitigates any threat to her femininity. Still, Pappachi views the business venture as some sort of threat, for it expands the bounds of their home, but not in ways that result in the increase of maternal or wifely attention towards children and a dejected, lonely husband. Pappachi may weave “sullen circles around the mounds of red chilies and freshly powdered yellow turmeric”

(46-47), but he never engages in an act of violence against the business as he does against her budding musical talent when he snaps Mammachi's violin in two. The sexual politics of this complicated balance between Pappachi's rage and a tolerance that barely masks the resentment just below the surface tell us that Pappachi's alienation has to do with Anglophilism and the failure to gain recognition by the British and the failure to dominate completely the emotional lives of his wife and children.

Both the Ayemenem house and Chacko's metaphoric house of history are familial structures that are overtly politicized by colonialism. Pappachi's moth is merely a screen for a highly gendered and classed form of the *unheimlich*. Yet in relation to the History House, both the Ayemenem house and Chacko's metaphoric house of history tell larger, more accessible narratives *amongst* other narratives of the private sphere. Domestic violence conducted within marriage is a "larger" narrative of private oppression; others in the novel are able to witness and eventually intervene and stop it. It makes itself known as a visible and readily acknowledged form of oppression. Chacko and Ammu speak of its existence openly and the twins are fully aware of their grandfather's abusiveness. In contrast to these very obvious, speakable sort of private secret, events such as Estha's sexual abuse or the twins' observation of the beating of Velutha are events within the private sphere that are not acknowledged or spoken. These are the more secretive events that the novel wishes to divulge; telling readers about Pappachi's abuse first, however, puts the "big" and "small" *within private life* into context, and illustrates how some secrets are always *unheimlich* ones that haunt the borders of family life and threaten to return to extract their due price.

Before a fuller discussion of the History House, let us briefly attend to how Chacko's house of history defines its version of the *unheimlich*. In one of his "Oxford Moods," Chacko

lectures the twins in a highly metaphoric discourse on the problems of history and the significance of recovering lost historical narratives. He uses the metaphor of the house to describe what history is. Chacko tells the twins that: “history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside” (51). Chacko’s description of this metaphoric house of history plays upon the novel’s gothic description of the Ayemenem house as an ancient and decrepit structure full of family secrets:

The old house on the hill wore its steep, gabled roof pulled over its ears like a low hat. The walls, streaked with moss, had grown soft, and bulged a little with dampness that seeped up from the ground. The wild, overgrown garden was full of the whisper and scurry of small lives. . . . The house looked empty. The doors and windows were locked. The front verandah bare. Unfurnished. . . . [A]nd inside, Baby Kochamma was still alive. (4)

The first chapter of the novel establishes the Ayemenem house as a fairly gothic structure, so readers may automatically assume that this metaphoric old house in the night is likewise creepy and even haunted. Yet Chacko’s history house is no gothic fright. Unlike the Ayemenem house that is shrouded in a damp and mossy darkness, the house of history has *all of the lights on*, which makes it seem a welcoming beacon in high relief against a background of impenetrable darkness of historical ignorance. Whispering ancestors, furthermore, pose no immediate threat in Chacko’s theory. Only later, when we discover the vile portrait of Pappachi in the Ayemenem house (50) and the “still alive” Baby Kochamma (4), do we begin to see that “ancestors whispering inside” may signify the ghostly and haunting presence of one’s own menacing ancestry. Chacko envisions history as familial ancestors who linger spirit-like in old homes, but does not necessarily associate the haunting nature of history with his own, living ancestors.

The story of a family *is* a historical narrative, Chacko seems to say, and the house is an integral structure in the composition of that historical narrative. Chacko instructs the twins: “To understand history . . . we have to go inside and *listen* to what they’re saying. And *look* at the books and the pictures on the wall. And *smell* the smells” (51, my italics). Benedict Anderson notes that the museumization of native culture by colonial administrations was a “profoundly political . . . totalizing classificatory grid.”²⁵⁴ In reproducing the native past for mass consumption, the museum artifact had to elicit “instant recognizability via a history of colonial-era logoization”²⁵⁵ that effaced much, if not all, of the actual historicity of the piece, and reduced the multiplicity of historical references of a piece to a single, instantly recognizable signifier. Yet Chacko’s house of history seems to ask if there are other ways of reading history. He implores the twins to employ *other senses* by which to perceive history (listening, looking, and smelling). Implicitly, this seems to be a mode of reading history for what is repressed, unspoken, and not readily visible.

The metaphor “history was like an old house at night” is a theory of historical uncanniness, but it is one that defines the *unheimlich* primarily as intellectual uncertainty caused by the British colonial rule of India. Freud writes that if one defines the *unheimlich* as intellectual uncertainty, then “the uncanny would always be an area in which a person was unsure of his way around: the better oriented he was in the world around him, the less likely he would be able to find the objects and occurrences in it uncanny.”²⁵⁶ Chacko’s metaphoric history house finds familial ancestors and their artifacts uncanny because the colonial process has alienated knowledge of them from the present generation. Once one skims off the layers of alienation to reveal the authenticity of the unadulterated or precolonial past, one may penetrate the ancestral house and the *unheimlich* intellectual uncertainty about the familial past will be

clarified with some form of historically pure and untainted knowledge. A definition of the *unheimlich* as intellectual uncertainty is not sufficient for *Small Things*, for there is a big difference between *not knowing* something about one's personal history and knowing, but being *unable to speak* of it. As the first chapter shows, the novel clearly knows its own personal history, yet it is unable to come out with it. The novel feels largely like a large dance around the unspeakable small things at the center.

By identifying Anglophilism as the main historical problem of concern, Chacko allows his seemingly objective rhetoric to be infiltrated by personal experience of his own family. The peculiar way in which Chacko expresses these theses on history is worth closer investigation:

“But we can't go in,” Chacko explained, “because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. A war that captures dreams and re-dreams them. A war that has *made us adore our conquerors* and despise ourselves.” . . . “We're prisoners of War,” Chacko said. “Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere.” (52, my italics)

The metaphor of the house allows Chacko to explore a form of cultural alienation that is caused by the colonial era, which he frames as a “war,” but is bound up in the politically hegemonic role of love in coercive national or colonial agendas. That the war “made us adore our conquerors” suggests that loving one's conquerors is not natural or willing, but as coercive as the forced labor of a camp for prisoners of war.

Listening in to Chacko's lecture to the twins, Ammu follows Chacko's comment that the war made them adore their conquerors with the retort and subtle corrective: “ ‘*Marry* our

conquerors, is more like it,' Ammu said dryly, referring to Margaret Kochamma" (52). Ammu's rejoinder is a welcome acknowledgement of the prominence of prohibitory desire in the novel. Virtually all characters in *Small Things* harbor or have harbored a desire for the prohibited other, however each instance differs greatly from the next: Pappachi for British recognition of his moth, Mammachi for Chacko, Chacko for both Margaret Kochamma and his factory girls, Ammu for both a Bengali Hindu man and Velutha, Baby Kochamma for Father Mulligan, Kari Saipu for the young boy, Rahel for Larry McCaslin, and Rahel for Estha. Marrying the person who has conquered you, or falling in love with precisely the person who is your political enemy is essentially Sommer's notion of the national romance, and presents a "feminized" mode of conflict resolution from that of states and their wars. And yet, *Small Things* demonstrates that love for the other is rarely only coercive. None of these attempts to love the conqueror ever succeeds; a successful marriage or romance is, as far as the novel is concerned, impossible. In *Small Things*, love is *always* loss and to a certain extent, it is always unspeakable. The political fallout of these many failed attempts to love the conqueror is demonstrated in the twins' incest, which is the epitome of unspeakable desire and is unrepresentable by the narrative itself.

The History House is the central figure of the novel's deployment of the gothic thematic of the haunted house. A cursory reading of *Small Things* might lead readers to believe that the notion of history as a haunted house came from Chacko. It *is* Chacko who pontificates about history and associates history with a house, yet it is the twins who interpret his discourse about history and houses to be about a specific and quite *gothic* structure, the haunted and mysterious house of Kari Saipu, Ayemenem's own "heart of darkness." While Chacko uses various metaphors to explain what history is, the twins associate this abstract house with a specific

domain that is *not* their own house:

Estha and Rahel had no doubt that the house Chacko meant was the house on the other side of the river, in the middle of the abandoned rubber estate where they had never been. Kari Saipu's house. The Black Sahib. The Englishman who had "gone native." Who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz. Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness. . . . The house had lain empty for years. Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it. . . . With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. Plump, translucent lizards lived behind old pictures, and waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers. (51-52)

In the twins' History House, whispering ancestors have transformed themselves into a comical subversion of Chacko's discourse with their "waxy crumbling" features, "tough toe-nails," and bad breath. Yet the History House demands one important distinction from the two: it provides the architectural site for cultural estrangement and a political commentary on civilization and the colonial endeavor that is launched through forbidden erotic desire. Just as Conrad located the forbidden desires of Kurtz in a space other than home, Roy relies on "a similar erotics of space . . . [in creating Ayemenem and the History House] as the site of sexual transgressions and devastating physical betrayals."²⁵⁷ The History House stages a thoroughly erotic and sexualized notion of colonial history. The emphasis that *Small Things* places on erotic desire not only has the ability to invest personal passions with political or national significance, but it allows for a different political imaginary by which to envision closure to historical problems. The image of Ammu and Velutha making love, for example, hauntingly hangs over the History House and its alternative historical narratives of colonialism and Communism. In doing so, it suggests that the

problem of caste (and its resolution by way of the erotic union between the two lovers) uncannily supplants that of class and colonialism. As these historical problems are firmly rooted in the intimate world of emotive affect and romantic love, historical and narrative closure is postured first by the transgressive romance and, upon its failure, sibling incest.

The History House transforms itself from the site of an Englishman's sexual perversion to the twin's site of comfort from loss, to Ammu and Velutha's romantic sanctuary, to the site of Velutha's beating, and finally, to a luxury hotel. Yet no amount of renovation and air conditioning can drive away the haunting remnants of the past, which remain buried but determine the hotel's odd character of forbidden sexuality, loss, and history. After the tragic events with Sophie Mol and Velutha pass, the Saipu house and its adjacent domiciles become museum-like playing grounds for the ultra-rich. Guests may stay in the home of renowned Indian Communist E.M.S. Namboodiripad (120) decorated with authentic traditional Kerala artifacts. Benedict Anderson writes that "[m]onumental archaeology, increasingly linked to tourism, allowed the state to appear as the guardian of a generalized, but also local, Tradition."²⁵⁸ This guardianship, according to Anderson "always placed the builders of the monuments and the colonial natives in a certain hierarchy"²⁵⁹ that reinforced native dependence and inferiority. In *Small Things*, local tradition including the state's radical Marxist roots, are not necessarily substantiated by the exactness of reality. The hotel chain did not obtain the actual home of Namboodiripad, but rather bought the ancestral home of *any* Indian family and transported it to the site of the new hotel:

The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses—ancestral homes—that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. . . . [They] liked to tell their

guests that the older of the wooden houses . . . had been the ancestral home of Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad. (120)

Ahmad comes down hard on Roy for her inaccurate depiction of Namboodiripad, stating: “*It is simply not true* that his ancestral home exists anywhere near Kottayam; or that it has been turned into a tourist hotel.”²⁶⁰ Because of this, Ahmad insinuates that *Small Things* is not “good realist literature:” “[T]he virtue of good Realist literature is that it strives to portray the world realistically.”²⁶¹ *Small Things* does not claim that Namboodiripad’s *actual* house has been relocated to the grounds of a posh hotel; it is clear that the “hotel people” are lying and that they are merely claiming the modest house to be Namboodiripad’s because it increases the exotic appeal of the hotel as readily consumable history, which translates into increased profits: “So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat” (120). In this scene, the commodification of Kerala’s Communist history is on par with the “truncated kathakali performances” that “amputate” ancient stories for the hotel’s wealthy guests (121).

Ahmad *does* have a point regarding the text’s representation of Marxist leadership in the repugnant figure of Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. Pillai does not allegorize Namboodiripad—the text makes references to actual or fictional events with respect to Namboodiripad’s administration of the CPI (Marxist)—but he is a reflection on the sad state of Marxism according to Roy. Pillai is one of the first to abandon Velutha to the mercy of the police, whom he knows are waiting for an opportunity to punish him violently. Instead of standing up for a fellow Communist party member, Pillai chooses not to disturb the caste status quo. Comrade Pillai

omitted to mention that Velutha as a member of the Communist Party, or that Velutha had knocked on his door late the previous night, which made Comrade Pillai the last

person to have seen Velutha before he disappeared. Nor, though he knew it to be untrue, did Comrade Pillai refute the allegation of attempted rape. (248)

Because Pillai's duplicity seems directly related with Velutha's caste status, the novel insinuates that Marxism in Kerala does not truly represent the oppressed.²⁶² Indeed, the novel accuses Keralan Marxism of being only a "reformist" movement that never challenges the status quo: "As a reformist movement that never overtly questioned the traditional values of a caste-ridden, extremely traditional community . . . [t]he Marxists worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to. They offered a cocktail revolution" (64). Indeed, the novel's condemnation of Marxism is, as Cynthia Vanden Driesen notes, part of its larger project to reject the "master narratives of Christianity, of Communism or Nationalism . . . [because they have not] provided adequate answers to the dilemmas of the dispossessed."²⁶³ The narrative's hostility to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is juxtaposed to its rather romantic portrayal of the Naxalites, with whom Velutha is affiliated. If the Marxists in the novel are merely "reformists," then the Naxalites are represented as the true carriers of the Marxist torch: "The Naxalite movement spread across the country and struck terror in every bourgeois heart" (66). Historically speaking, the Naxalite uprising in 1967 was conducted in direct opposition to the official CPI (Marxist) leadership.²⁶⁴ Naxalites attacked their local landowners and claimed to represent the most oppressed peoples of India—people for whom even the CPI (Marxist) party disregarded. Given Comrade Pillai's willingness to jettison Velutha at the first sign of a political problem, the novel seems to understand the relationship between the Marxism of Namboodiripad and the Naxalites through the dialectic between large and small. In *Small Things*, "big" Marxism is for bourgeois landowners such as Pillai and Chacko, while "small" Naxalite Marxism is for those whom "big" Marxism does not protect. The relationship between

big and small forms of Marxist politics is yet another instance of the novel's critique of historical narrative and the way in which even radical politics buries the "smaller" things.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, the novel's misrepresentation of Namboodiripad makes evident that the novel is masking its gothicized representation of Keralan politics as a realist one. Ahmad's disappointment with the novel should not be viewed as an instance upon which her realism is attacked. Rather, Roy's misrepresentation of Namboodiripad provides us with an instance in which the hidden gothic elements of the text seep out of their realist containers.

The transformation from Saipu estate to History House to Heritage Hotel marks the degeneration from the colonial era to multinational capitalist one, and yet each stage of transformation of the house is marked by erotic desire. This is demonstrated best in the truncated kathakali performances staged by the Heritage Hotel's swimming pool: "While Kunti revealed her secret to Karna on the riverbank, courting couples rubbed suntan oil on each other. While fathers played sublimated sexual games with their nubile teenaged daughters, Poothana suckled young Krishna at her poisoned breast" (121). The classical dances of the kathakali that tell stories of epic familial estrangement, betrayal, and violence are juxtaposed with frolicking families on vacation, but also echo the savage not so distant past of the History House. Watching a full-length kathakali performance of Kunti and Karna many years later, Estha and Rahel "recognized it. They had seen its work before. Another morning. Another stage. Another kind of frenzy" (224). This layering of kathakali tales of family bonds forged and estranged, alienated and betrayed with the "sublimated sexual games" of ordinary families emphasizes that while some family relationships may express their sexual desire openly, many of them disguise their sexual content through displacement or other forms of masking that may return uncannily as distorted forms of desire, estrangement, betrayal, and alienation.

The displacement of erotic desire within the family produces dynamics is ambiguous and confusing, for the desire that motivates a person's deeds is not transparent or known. Just as the sexual poolside games of the hotel guests disrupt and are disrupted by the erotic kathakali dances, the not-so-distant secretive past of the History House disrupts the museumized Heritage Hotel: "Something lay buried in the ground. Under grass. Under twenty-three years of June rain. A small forgotten thing. Nothing that the world would miss. A child's plastic wristwatch with the time painted on it" (121). Rahel's buried plastic watch is a secret reminder to the tragedy of Velutha's murder, but like the secretive games that tourist fathers play with adolescent daughters, Rahel's sentiment of loss about the past cannot be expressed in direct fashion. This inability to reveal finally the secretive thing that has so altered the course of the twins' personal history runs contrary to the narrative closure of many a gothic novel. The deed to the land that expiates the origins of the house in Hawthorne's *Seven Gables* clears the house of its mysterious origins and propels the plot towards narrative closure. The cumulative effect of the overlapping tales of Sutpen's personal history in Haiti and the real relationship of Charles Bon to the family brings narrative conflict to a tragic closure in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*. For the Ayemenem community in *Small Things*, the thing that lies beneath the surface of the History House can *never* come to light; consequently, the "truth" about the history of the family and the land can never be properly told and the mystery of its origins can never be dissipated by narrative closure. Readers of *Small Things* experience some of this refusal to tell, yet the narrative departs from the story it tells when, in the final few chapters, it divulges the traumatic and transgressive story of what happened in the History House.

The History that the twins learn about on that fateful day in the History House revolves around someone who is a lifelong servant to the family but who cannot be properly called

family. While Velutha is known and familiar to the family and develops a loving and even father-like relationship with the youngsters, because he is a dalit servant, he is assigned “outsider” status to the house and the family designation. The twins take Chacko’s *unheimlich* intellectual uncertainty and notion that history derives from one’s own family and house and gothicize it by displacing it away from the familiar Ayemenem house to the unknown haunted house across the river, which they christen the History House. In doing so, they conjoin history with secrets, mysteries, and the unknown. On the one hand, this move replicates the typical gothic mode of displacing the fearful *unheimlich* elements onto a geography elsewhere from the home, region, or nation as seen in gothic works like *Otranto*, *The Italian*, *The Monk*, and “Carmilla.” But on the other hand, the narrative *already* describes the Ayemenem house as a haunted, gothic house full of secrets, so the twins’ displacement of history identifies history as *not family* and as occurring *not at home*. While the haunting remnants of a colonial past are also captured in the Kari Saipu house and mimic aspects of Chacko’s theories on colonial alienation, to the twins, history is a gothic fright, but it is one that incorporates that the authoritative familial structure refuses to acknowledge as its own, such as servants, transgressive desire, or sexual abuse.

To speak of History is to engage automatically with erotic desire and the romantic, sentimental, and tragic loss of love. Saipu is neither a murderous thug like Montoni (from Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*) nor the sexual predator abbot Ambrosio (from Lewis’s *The Monk*), but rather a love-sick homosexual with a predisposition toward pedophilia who takes his own life in a sentimental sort of romantic tragedy. It is no coincidence that Estha flees from his own home because he fears the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man may find him only to relocate to a house in which such transgressive acts took place *willingly* and were narrated in a

sentimental, not horrifying, style. The twins' association of an *unheimlich* history with the History House signifies that the recovery of the twins' "small" history is the recovery of desire and romance. The hidden romances of history are *always* transgressive, unthinkable, unspeakable, and are manifested through the distorting prism of erotic desire. This overlap between the gothic trope of the haunted house and the sentimentality and eroticism of transgressive desire and loss creates an illusion that the *unheimlich* is somewhere other than at home, with the family, but in reality, the History House reveals that the very distinction between family and not family, home and not home, or insider and outsider is a politically charged one that always already politicizes the family structure and defines what constitutes normative desire.

The recovery of "small" histories may mean the recovery of desire and the erotic, but in contrast to the richness of Roy's representation of the Ayemenem house dynamics, Ammu's love affair with Velutha has very little interiority, which makes it appear to have abandoned its realist sensibilities. In their affair, the political injunction of the Love Laws that forbids members from unequal castes from romantically associating with each other forces the novel away from interiority. Their relationship seems tender, yet a purely erotic encounter that is described with all of the sentimentality of a popular romance novel. While the events of the plot certainly revolve around the love affair between Ammu and Velutha, there are few actual representations of the two interacting. Those rare moments in which they do interact are charged with much emotion and passion, but most forms of "communication" are silent:

The man [Velutha] glanced up and caught Ammu's gaze. Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment. History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin. Its marks, its scars, its wounds from old wars and the walking-backward days all fell away. In its absence it left an aura, a palpable shimmering that was as plain

to see as the water in a river or the sun in the sky. . . . So obvious that no one noticed. . . . Ammu saw that he saw. She looked away. He did too. History's fiends return to claim them. To re-wrap them in its old, scarred pelt and drag them back to where they really lived. Where the Love Laws lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much. (167-68).

Here begins the famous moment of recognition in which Ammu and Velutha seem to see each other for the first time and to see the other as a desiring and desirous sexual body. The initial recognition is told in a detached third-person narrative, which frames the moment of recognition as something otherworldly, dangerous, and world changing to the course of history, but does not give readers an entry into the interiority of either of the two potential lovers. From this point on, there is little to no interior description of either Ammu or Velutha, which gives the novel an almost fable-like quality.²⁶⁶

In *Small Things*, libidinal drive signifies the drive towards communal and sectarian reconciliation on the grounds of caste, yet that reconciliation never occurs. Ammu's and Velutha's romance—as well as *every* romantic endeavor in the novel—results in an immense failure that permeates through the generations. Roy concludes one narrative sequence—the Velutha and Ammu love story—with the idealistic vision of the romance still intact. That is, instead of concluding with the fatal outcome of the romance between Ammu and Velutha and the image of the bloodied pulp of Velutha's body that vanishes all hopes that romance can succeed, the novel concludes with the representation of the two making love for its final image. This produces a mixture of emotional affect and narrative results. Roy maintains allegiance to realism when she quite realistically depicts Velutha's credible violent end, and the overwhelming revulsion towards the inter-caste affair felt by the family, community, and Communist party. The

destruction of Velutha's body suggests that such romances are impossible. Hopes for communal reconciliation between classes and castes facilitated by both Communism and romantic love are dashed. Yet Roy stubbornly remains attached to the hopes that erotic desire imbues, even as the lovers themselves acknowledge the political and romantic limitations of their own affair:

Only one thing mattered now. They [Ammu and Velutha] knew that it was all they could ask of each other. . . . Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one, instinctively they stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things. (320)

The "small things," as we know by now, are not insignificant, but are the important unspoken or unacknowledged foundations upon which the "big things" may claim visibility. In this case, the hope imbued in the concluding image of *Small Things* stands in direct contrast to the bleakness of *Country*'s lonely and mad Magda.

To be sure, Ammu's and Velutha's affair is the big thing thing that causes the "cost of living to climb . . . to unaffordable heights" (318) even though neither can afford to pay its necessary due. Deepika Bahri views the central erotic encounter in the novel as contrasting with the larger sphere of commodity exchange:

The human rate of exchange contrasts sharply with that which prevails in the world of commodities. In re-presenting the events, the narrator chooses to leave us in an uncomfortable zone of libidinal desire, a rejected arena [by Marxist critics and]. . . a realm of sensuousness that has historically invited the venom of critics.²⁶⁷

Ammu's and Velutha's affair is not *escape* from the "administered world of exchange."²⁶⁸ In its very taboo nature, the affair defies the social regimentation of every day life: who you can love,

who you can associate with in public, and where and how you live. The defiance of these everyday strictures unmasks the *unheimlich* nature of everyday life as Baby Kochamma and Comrade Pillai betray Velutha to the authorities who are only too happy to violently avenge the honor of a bourgeois Hindu woman. Roy may have spent much time nurturing complexity in her characters, but at this moment, textual discursiveness and lengthy discussions between the two lovers are not necessary because their romantic affair constitutes the biggest political thing they can possibly do and, consequently, asks them to pay the ultimate price. Brinda Bose argues that “to read her novel politically one may need to accept that there are certain kinds of politics that have more to do with interpersonal relations than with grand revolutions, that the most personal dilemmas can also become public causes, that erotics can also be a politics.”²⁶⁹ For Roy, erotics become politics because the private realm is itself a “dimension . . . of history rather than . . . political leadership and nation-states.”²⁷⁰ In the language of big and small that the novel employs, the small things (erotic desire, acknowledgement, and friendship) are political acts that challenge the social status quo of caste, gender, and class.²⁷¹

Recognition and the politics of recognition form the basis not only of the love affair, but also the twins’ love and spectatorship of Velutha. Ammu’s and Velutha’s recognition of each other is presaged by Ammu’s recognition that her children share a special bond with Velutha that rivals her own maternal bond of blood kinship. She recognizes that this man already plays a loving, paternal role for her children even though he is not of their blood. Rahel’s boisterous recognition of Velutha during the Naxalite rally gives Baby Kochamma a convenient target for all of her class and caste resentment as well as her sexual frustrations, which eventually precipitate Velutha’s downfall and murder. Ammu’s silent recognition of Velutha at the rally summons a slew of familiar and comforting childhood memories of Velutha while remaking the

adult man uncannily as a once-familiar man with unknown secrets harbored deep within him: “She hoped that under his careful cloak of cheerfulness he housed a living, breathing anger against the smug, ordered world that she so raged against” (167). Her recognition, in other words, “telescopes” or frames their romantic affair through the dialectic between what things appear to be externally (Velutha as a devoted and loving servant) and the secretive truth about what they are internally (Velutha as disobedient servant, political radical, and desiring subject), which is mirrored in the twins’ own formulation of the History House as a place in which all of the secretive internal things of a house may be uncannily relocated and reenacted.

The crux of the argument concerning realism and the politics of form of *Small Things* centers on how one reads Roy’s deployment of conventional and sentimental forms of fiction such as the gothic, and particularly how one reads Roy’s peculiar treatment of the romantic love story between Ammu and Velutha. The gothic is written according to the logic of destiny and repetition, and yet it is invested, by virtue of its allegorical dimensions, with a great historical and political potential. Given the tragic and sentimental tone of the novel established in the first chapter, readers are not only able to anticipate an affair between Ammu and Velutha will take place, but also how it will end. The nonlinear narrative structure that continuously circles around the romance plays a mitigating factor in the novel’s deployment of the overly sentimental and romantic love story. In its circling, *Small Things* wishes to preserve some secrets from the readers, and at least for some time, to keep *some* element of the love story a mystery. We may know that a transgressive love affair happened, but we find out only at the end *how* it happened. This is quite significant, for the *how* is a rather surprising moment of pure erotic excess of their sexual encounter but it is delayed until the very end. Given the ripples of trauma that the love affair causes in the twins, we cannot read the final scene of Ammu and Velutha making love

similarly to a conventional romance or gothic romance's narrative closure of a romantic union or marriage. As such, it is almost refreshing that Roy does not stage Ammu's and Velutha's affair as a series of political conversations or a sexually restrained but socially sanctioned marital union, but allows the tightly controlled sphere of desire, emotion, and sentimentality to erupt and overflow its realist boundaries in single glances or nighttime encounters.

Do we interpret this contradictory deployment of the romantic love story as a total disillusionment with all forms of imaginary reconciliation, including Communism and the gothic romance? Or, in her stubborn clinging to romance, no matter how impossible, does Roy use the form to draw our attention to our own readerly longings for romantic bliss, the narrative closure of two lovers riding off into the sunset, and communal reconciliation of caste and class differences? Roy seems to do a bit of both: her frustration with Communism is on the surface, and the limits of romantic love are exposed as even more ineffectual and politically impotent in the act of incest that is featured in the novel's second ending. Yet we cannot dismiss the way in which the narrative, in privileging the romance over the incest, enacts a willful flaunting of reality and a desire to satisfy the reader's own urges for a romantic narrative resolution. This speaks to power of the romantic scene to elicit a strong emotional affect of desire, sympathy, and hope in the reader. If Coetzee's fiction is written about emotionally charged subjects but with the greatest emotional distancing possible to a writer, Roy's rushes ahead to embrace and exploit the political potential of emotional affect. *Small Things* has already demonstrated the importance of right sensibility as it concerns proper gender, class, and caste behavior. Readers of the novel's last conclusion are made to desire a breaking of the old sensibilities and a formation of new ones that occur on account of transgressing the old. Here is where Roy harnesses the romance for her

“moral” or polemical aim; she educates her readers in a certain sentiment that we intrinsically know is impossible for the novel, yet feel motivated to desire as a future reality.

This sensibility is nurtured on the level of form as well. The nineteenth-century Latin American romances that Sommer studies are more linear narratives. The steady progression of events in these love stories allows for a build up of emotional affect and sentimentality, which Sommer argues:

produces a surplus of energy . . . that can hope to overcome the political interference between the lovers. . . . As the story progresses, the pitch of sentiment rises along with the cry of commitment, so that the din makes it ever more difficult to distinguish between our erotic and political fantasies for an ideal ending.²⁷²

Despite Ahmad’s criticism of the novel for its reliance on the erotic, the novel spends very little time on the actual erotic encounters. If the novel is guilty of indulging in things sentimental or erotic, then it is guiltier of pandering to creating a narrative trajectory dependent on the seduction or mystery of the erotic more than the erotic itself. The circular, nonlinear structure of *Small Things* delays most representations of the erotic until the concluding two chapters. On the one hand, this creates as Sommer describes, a “surplus of energy” that propels the narrative forward until it satisfies its realist duty to describe the erotic encounter in detail. Yet on the other hand, the extent of the delay and the sordid events that must transpire before the erotic description can take place diffuses the erotic energy so that fairly realist accounts of everyday family dynamics are infused with erotic elements.

In “Emily Brontë In and Out of Her Time,” Nancy Armstrong notes that *Wuthering Heights* begins in one narrative mode and ends with another. This insight into the malleability of narrative form is instructive for my reading of *Small Things*, for the deployment of a mixture of

seemingly contradictory narrative forms of realism, gothic, and the sentimental love story is a narrative tactic that often leaves the critics confused and unable to value that the “failure” or abandonment of a narrative form may signify a useful critique or amendment of that form for its particular moment and context. Armstrong contends:

This failure of Romantic conventions to represent adequately the relationships comprising her narrative is Brontë’s way of acknowledging the fact that fiction could no longer be written from a Romantic viewpoint and still be considered a novel. So it is that in the second half of the novel, the conventions of earlier literature, thus dismantled, *become the subject matter of a new kind of fiction*. . . . Brontë’s novel . . . appears to fall into their world from another of necessity, as the idealist categories of Romantic discourse break down [,] . . . [a] new kind of narrative art where value no longer resides in the claims of the individual but rather in the reconstitution of the family. The result is that problems are posed and questions asked in one set of literary conventions that cannot be answered by *the other*, which is to say what most critical readings strive to deny, that this is an essentially disjunctive novel.²⁷³

Instead of faulting the novel for its failed romanticism and awkward second half, Armstrong reads the disjunctiveness of *Wuthering Heights* as a fictional enactment of the limitations of romantic discourse, and a narrative case for another narrative form, Victorian realism, in order to represent faithfully the content of the novel’s second half, such as Heathcliff’s “middle-class hegemony” and the problems of class in the “new social order.”²⁷⁴ The narrative precondition for the emergence of realism in *Wuthering Heights*, Armstrong argues, is the way in which the novel deploys gothic conventions, instead of romance, in order to move towards realism.

Small Things seems to enact a reversal of the movement that Armstrong charts in *Wuthering Heights*. Instead of moving from romantic discourse to that of realism, or the individual to the larger family unit, *Small Things* begins with an introductory chapter that introduces the desire for a realist description of family tragedy, but then playfully abandons them in the second chapter with the gothic. Likewise, the novel commences by framing its inquiry of the tension between public and private passions, and large and small tragedies as the tension between family politics, the exigencies of fate, transgenerational mandates, and its willful individuals, as exemplified in the tension between Big and Small Gods, but goes on to narrate a largely private tale of erotic desire. The question that remains is a result of Roy's mixture of narrative modes. If realism allowed Brontë to address the politics of middle-class family life, then what does a mixture of realism with the more sentimental forms of the gothic allow Roy to say that a stricter form of realism would prohibit?

Behind the novel's realist facade lurks something much more allegorical, mysterious, uncanny, and gothic. What happens in the meantime, while we wait for the narrative to lay bare its secrets and erotic mysteries, is every bit as important as the deferment of the erotic and its representation in the novel's conclusion. That meantime, as I have shown in my discussion of the various houses in the novel, is a complex political dynamic that is defined by patriarchal, caste, class, and religious imperatives, but is enacted through the small private sphere of the family *in a combination* of narrative modes and styles. Roy's contemporary deployment of the gothic affects the way we read her usage of the romantic and the real. Ammu's and Velutha's love affair and the brutal beating of Velutha take place in the History House, but they redirect the *unheimlich* away from the History House and onto the dark and sinister nature of the Ayemenem house family, as evidenced in Ammu's betrayal by both Chacko and Baby Kochamma. The *unheimlich*

nature of the Ayemenem house is revealed in the emotional build up of those “in the meantime” moments in which erotic desire is diffused throughout the narrative. The final juxtaposition of the couple’s lovemaking with the sordid and decrepit image of the Ayemenem house drives home the point that one’s home is the real source of the *unheimlich*, and that efforts to displace it elsewhere may be predictable elements of gothic convention, but in this case they function as the only idealist mode of escape in which one may do or think differently. That they are blatantly sexual modes of escape is not surprising given the fact that this is a family narrative in which, following Foucault, the family is the main structure that “anchor[s] sexuality . . . [and] ensures the production of a sexuality” that is always for the other.²⁷⁵

The novel’s dual ending juxtaposes a scene of Ammu and Velutha making love with the twins’ incest. The psychoanalytic hermeneutic tends to impose an apolitical and monolithic interpretive frame on incest in which the childhood failure to surpass the incestuous urges of the Oedipus complex results in adult neurosis. For Freud, the Oedipus complex is inescapable for both individuals and civilizations; the surmounting of the incest taboo is a necessary step in the civilizing process. Incest and the incest prohibition stand at the heart of the family structure and function as the foundation upon which all civilizations are built.²⁷⁶ In the Freudian hermeneutic, incestuous desire for one’s parent or sibling is always already present within an individual’s sexuality and constitutes the sexual nexus of every family structure that must be repressed in order for “normal” development to proceed. Otto Rank notes in *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* that brother-sister incest is always a “‘second edition,’ less intense but unchanged in content, of the etiologically earlier relationship with one’s parents.”²⁷⁷ Brother-sister incest is commonly read in the Freudian framework as a displacement for the brother’s desire for the mother. Despite the fixity of the Freudian hermeneutic on incest, recent critics have been able to

appropriate aspects of the Freudian model and to politicize Freud's universal subject, resulting in a wide set of meanings to literary representations of incest. Gothic representations of incest are almost always abhorrent and dreadful, yet Ruth Perry notes that father-daughter incest in the gothic "provided a critique of the new [kinship] system that invested a sinister degree of power in individual men over their immediate conjugal families, by displaying hyperbolically the dangers of that power."²⁷⁸ Conversely, eighteenth-century British literature is full of incestuous relations that often function as tropes of resistance against patriarchal or emergent Enlightenment orders.²⁷⁹ Likewise, some nineteenth-century British Romantic poets²⁸⁰ featured sibling incest as a trope of liberation or social subversion. Peter L. Thorslev notes that in romantic literature parent-child incest is universally condemned, but "sibling incest, on the other hand, is invariably made sympathetic, is sometimes exonerated, and, in Byron and Shelley's works, is definitely idealized."²⁸¹ While father-daughter incest represented the tyranny of the *ancien régime*, brother-sister incest metaphorically articulated the new egalitarian social order that the French and American Revolutions were struggling to articulate.²⁸²

In *Small Things*, the twins' incest is neither an exemplar of Freudian repressed taboo desire nor is it an act of liberation or social subversion. Roy does not understand or deploy incest in the same way as Freud or the British Romantic poets. There seems to be no incestuous desire (or repressed desire) present between the twins and the incestuous act certainly does not challenge the social order. Rather, incest seems to be deployed as a way of emphasizing and reworking the interpenetration of the public into the private sphere. In other words, incest becomes a way the novel thematizes the ways in which the "big" political things of life are inseparable from the "small" things of family life.²⁸³ The twins are constructed as a single, unified being very early on in the novel: "Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as

Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities” (4-5). The way that their “joint identities” manifest themselves is through the uncanny commingling of one twin’s memories and experiences with another: “Rahel has a memory of waking up one night giggling at Estha’s funny dream. She has other memories too that she has no right to have. She remembers, for instance (though she hadn’t been there) what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man did to Estha in Abhilash Talkies” (5). That unity is broken by the unspeakable tragedy involving Velutha’s murder and Estha’s betrayal of Velutha, which resulted in the physical and emotional separation of the twins from one another:

[S]he thinks of Estha and Rahel as Them, because, separately, the two of them are no longer what They were or ever thought They’d be. Ever. Their lives have a size and a shape now. Estha has his and Rahel hers. *Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits have appeared* like a team of trolls on their separate horizons. (5, my italics)

The physical separation of the twins from each other results in Rahel’s migration away from home to the United States, where she ostensibly “moves on” with her life and marries an American (an outsider), while Estha remains traumatized, frozen in time, and at home in India. Rahel’s return home from abroad signals the *unheimlich* return of repressed memories of tragedy and betrayal, or the flooding of the political and public back into the private sphere, which Estha had tried to seal off with his emotional and psychic detachment and silence. The incestuous act between the twins goes to show just how permeable the “borders” and other “boundaries” are that separate big from small, and public from private. The twins’ incest manifests in distorted form that the secrets, mysteries, and losses of the past live on into the future.

The twins' incest is the novel's second to last form of narrative closure. As such, it attempts to resolve the traumas and ghosts of the past, from sexual abuse to guilt about Velutha's death, but does so by returning the scene of the *unheimlich* to the familial home and roots it squarely within the sibling kinship structure amongst two dizygotic twins who purportedly share "joint identities" and each other's memories (5).

Ammu's transgression and the twins' guilt and trauma surrounding Velutha's murder, combined with Estha's secret experience of sexual abuse, propel *Small Things* towards incest as a form of narrative closure. Unlike the gothic's horrific and dreadful representations of incest and the Freudian prohibition of incest through the Oedipus complex, incest in *Small Things* is an attempt to heal. Be that as it may, the healing function of incest is not like the liberatory representations of brother-sister incest in the poetry of Shelley and Byron; rather it is an act of desperation, last resort, and survival to heal the festering wounds of the past. It is assumed that incest attempts to repair the transgression of the Love Laws by Ammu and Velutha as well as Estha's traumatic encounter with the Orangedrink Lemondrink man: "what they shared that night was not happiness, but hideous grief" (311). Put into context of the novel's dialectic between external and internal, incest is the direction of erotic energy internally within the family structure, and is invoked to counterbalance the damage caused by Ammu's act of caste miscegenation, the direction of erotic desire externally, towards endogamy outside of the family. While it may at first seem that the twins' incest is the repressed *unheimlich* thing that comes back to haunt the Ayemenem house after many years of displacement, in reality the novel has made a failure of all desire that is externally directed, hence the disturbing realization that the incestuous act is the only *heimlich* element of the narrative. Incest is no liberatory or idealist solution the political and personal problems of the novel, but the "natural" result of the betrayal

of Baby Kochamma on the grounds of caste and gender propriety and the hypocrisy of the Marxist party on the grounds of caste.

What if *Small Things* ended not with the romance but with the twins' incest? How would this change the way in which we read the overall meaning of the novel? The novel is an overwhelming tragedy, but deletion of the romantic ending would signify an end to all hope for reconciliation of caste divisions. This idealism or hopefulness is also made manifest in the narrative's representation of the sexual act in the two concluding scenes. The incestuous act is not illustrated by the narrative, whereas the narrative's representation of Ammu and Velutha making love is described in detail. Unlike the more detailed description of their mother's sexual transgression, the incest scene is terse and lacking in description or detail. Only the bare minimum of details are given in order to convey that something transgressive occurred with the twins. Some may even read the section and not even realize that incest even occurred. This shadowy representation of incest certainly makes the novel seem unsure of its own plot development. After the short scene is over, the narrative lapses into the more familiar territory: a memory of a family dinner spent together with Sophie Mol before the tragedy, which concludes with two divergent narrative movements. Rahel tells her mother, "We be of one blood, Thou and I" (312, italics removed), which claims the mother as her own and grants power to the internal structure of the family. While this comment elicits no response from Ammu, it does cause her to realize her disgust towards her extended family on account of their own frustrated desires, petty differences, and "undercurrent[s] of sexual jealousy" (312). She rejects this by directing her own erotic energies external to the family, and to go to Velutha: "Ammu longed for him. Ached for him with the whole of her biology" (312). Short though it is, the novel's second to last incest ending is hardly an ending at all, but an inadvertent thrust towards an externally directed

romantic desire. It cannot contain the love story in the last ending; it insists on spilling over into the novel's earlier incestuous ending.

To be sure, the incest lacks the prohibitory attraction of the adults' affair. Instead incest is described as the balm that soothes years of guilt, and attempts to amend the transgressive wrongs of the past. Incest is framed as the thing that can help the twins surmount the public and private trauma of the past, but it is clear from the above description that the incest is not done in the same celebratory transgressive manner as the adult love affair. Instead, incest is the stark reality, a reality-as-gothic-horror that is caused by and contrasts to the idealism of romance and the caste-based reconciliation that it imagines. The erotic desire of each member of the Ayemenem house suggests that desire is always for the other; the incest indicates that *political* reality dictates that desire can never be for the other, but can only be for the same. Given the political context of the novel, we understand the redirection of desire from other to self as a mode in which desire is trained in service of the status quo of caste, class, and gender normativity. Yet given the framework of the novel and its focus on the private, small things of everyday life, which is a tenet of realist methodology, the political framework is not forsaken but manifested most poignantly in the private sphere. Thus, it is not completely accurate to claim that the twins' incest solves or attempts to solve any public or political dilemma. Incest in its hideous, grotesque manner does manifest in microcosmic form the same distortions and monstrosities of the political.

In conclusion, realism asks questions about the positioning of the family with regards to the political, and the sentimental romantic love story attempts to answer them by offering up Ammu and Velutha's affair. Yet the political content of the novel's geography—its history of conquest by foreign powers and ideologies, its peculiar caste hierarchies, the historical

dominance of Communism, the tension between men and women—intervene to make romantic love an impossible solution to the questions asked. The gothic with its eerie haunted houses of history, its desire present only in uncanny reversals, doubles, and absences, its insistence that history and tragedy redound throughout the generations of a single family, and its fascination with transgressive desire all suggest a mode of understanding the geography of the novel as intensely personal and insular, yet doomed by supposedly external political factors. *Small Things* offers the gothic as the necessary postcolonial expansion of realism, however the shifting nature of the narrative and its dual ending suggests that it is unsure of its own narrative and ideological decisions. In truth, the sentimentality of the novel and the circularity of fated tragedies doomed to repeat themselves *ad infinitum* offer limited political hope for the postcolonial future, yet this cautiousness should not be interpreted as a shortcoming on behalf of the novel's craft or ideology, but rather a reflection of an actual political impasse. The insecurity of the novel's own narrative discourse and the guarded resolution to its own inquiries suggest a new shape for a postcolonial gothic to come.

5.0 GIVING UP THE GHOST OF HOME: *SHALIMAR THE CLOWN* AND THE GOTHIC

In many respects Salman Rushdie's latest novel *Shalimar the Clown* (hereafter *Shalimar*) seems very familiar. Like *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, and *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Shalimar* is concerned with Indian nationalism and sectarian conflict; the politics of religious extremism; the oppression of women; nostalgia for one's homeland; and popular culture. What distinguishes *Shalimar* immediately from his previous works, though, is an almost excessive textual quality—the novel combines realism, magical realism, satire, and gothic, all the while making liberal use of the mythical and folkloric. The novel starts off in the realist mode, but then quickly shifts to satire, the magical real, the gothic, the folkloric, and the mythical. Despite the hodgepodge of narrative modes that give the novel a discordant feel, the novel is held together by the national allegorical romance, which is cast on a global stage that features different couples in various times and localities, and juxtaposes the liminal regions of World War II-era Alsace with that of a more modern-day Kashmir. Max's and Peggy's romance allegorizes the victory of anti-parochialism in post World War II-era Europe, and Shalimar's and Boonyi's marriage signifies Kashmiri sectarian tolerance between Muslim and Hindu. Infidelity is a sign that the project of national or regional cohesiveness has failed. This political failure is also reflected in the allegory, which shifts and strains to accommodate the multiplicity of national signifiers that infidelity

releases. The affair between Max and Boonyi is indicative of a larger allegory between Kashmir, India, and the United States, but as the allegory shifts and strains, it is no longer clear who signifies Kashmir, India, or the United States. Critics have proclaimed *Shalimar* to be a dismal failure and a sign that Rushdie's narrative craft is waning.²⁸⁴ What becomes clear is that this is a novel that thematizes and enacts failure on many levels. All attempts at romantic love fail abysmally as do the reconciliatory nationalist projects they allegorize. When the allegory begins to break down, the novel seems to unravel completely, giving readers and critics the impression that it too is a failed narrative experiment.

The novel's gothic elements manifest themselves at precisely the point in which the national allegorical romance breaks down. The gothic manifests itself in many forms in *Shalimar*. As a monstrous figure of maternity, Boonyi invokes the creature of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; her return to Pachigam as a living specter (a *mritak*) gothicizes the fate of the "fallen woman." In his persecution of Boonyi, Max, and Kashmira, Shalimar invokes the legacy of persecutory gothic in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.²⁸⁵ In her migration to her mother's homeland and her *unheimlich* revenge on Shalimar, Kashmira may be read as an analogous figure to Dracula and Mustafa Sa'eed, but one that makes personal the historical and political motivations of the *unheimlich*. Ultimately, *Shalimar* is a novel whose failures—its formal failures and its thematization of political and romantic failure—enable another narrative mode, the gothic, to thrive and thus, imagine a political solution to the nationalist problems the novel belabors. Gothic seems to be a way of reconciling the political realities of nationalist failure, growing sectarianism and extremism, with Rushdie's nostalgia for *Kashmiriyat* in the face of everything that deems it politically impossible. These moments in which the allegorical dimensions break down engender a distinct *gothic historical sensibility*, a sense of historical

depth achieved by the overlapping or uncanny returns of pasts onto presents in the form of monstrous figures of pregnancy and motherhood, the displacement of indigenous forms of creative expression (bhand pather²⁸⁶) onto Islamic militancy, and strange repetitions and doublings between mothers and daughters, and wrongs that demand to be righted in the next generation. I posit that a gothic historical sensibility allows *Shalimar* to inhabit the idealism of the national allegorical romance (a desire for political reconciliation and coexistence) and to critique it at the same time (readers cheer as an unsentimental Kashmira prepares to kill a rather demonic clown-turned-Islamic militant). Through the gothic, the novel is able to return again to its national allegorical venture, if only to sound its death knell in the form of the vigilante Kashmira.

The gothic from *Otranto* to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to *Bleak House* is concerned with origins, and questions of inheritance and legitimacy. Both *Shalimar* and *Frankenstein* frame this concern through the figure of the mother; in other words, both view the quest for origins as the quest to resolve something that is fundamentally mysterious with respect to the maternal. *Shalimar* allegorically conflates the feminine and maternal with nation and ideas of homeland; the exile's nostalgia for home is therefore expressed as a longing for a return to the mother (and motherland). Much of Rushdie's previous fiction expressed the sentiment that

exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back . . . which gives rise to profound uncertainties—that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost.²⁸⁷

Shalimar understands Kashmir and *Kashmiriyat*, the “things that were lost,” not only through feminine forms, but through distinctly gothic forms of the feminine. Because the gothic historical

sensibility compels the past to return in the present, there is the opportunity to gain the thing that has been lost. Gothic allows Rushdie to imagine a “return” to origins, all the while problematizing the very concept.

In the transgressive figures of Boonyi and Kashmira we find the familiar anxiety on Rushdie’s behalf to represent the narrative of history as something inherently gendered and sexualized. Perhaps Rushdie’s most notable attempt to write women into historical narrative is his feminization of Islam in *The Satanic Verses*. The Ayesha sections of the novel represent the modern-day prophet of Islam as a woman. Gayatri Spivak is quick to point out that despite this attempt, the novel revolves around nostalgia for both father and nation. Spivak argues:

One of the most interesting features about much of Rushdie’s work is his anxiety to write woman into the narrative of history. Here again we have to record an honorable failure. . . . *The Satanic Verses* must end with Salahuddin Chamchawalla’s reconciliation with *father* and nationality. . . . [T]he text is written on the register of male bonding and unbonding.²⁸⁸

Shalimar, like *The Satanic Verses*, features male bonding; Shalimar is caught up in the highly masculine structure of Islamic militancy. Yet make no mistake—*Shalimar* is no “honorable failed” attempt to write women into the narratives of history. *Shalimar* may thematize the failure of national projects and romantic endeavors, but it succeeds in locating the nexus of nationalism, extremism, and nostalgia in the figure of women. As the novel progresses, it becomes more and more clear that the central relationship worth reviving is that between mother and daughter. Unlike *The Satanic Verses*, which offers no critical, self-reflection with respect to the final scene between Chamcha, his dying father, and Zeeny Vakil’s fledgling secular nationalist movement, *Shalimar* is highly aware and critical of its own nostalgic compulsions. Kashmira may be

tempted to idealize both her lost mother and Kashmiri homeland, yet she is keen enough to recognize the dangers of such thinking.

Ambreen Hai writes that in Rushdie's work, "women have a distinctive oppositional creativity, often because of their marginality, and that this power can be a trope that he can appropriate for, or that can be comparable to, his own construction of postcolonial artistic identity."²⁸⁹ *Shalimar* ostracizes yet invests the morally or politically transgressive woman with the onus of creating a new racial and political understanding. Only the monstrous Boonyi, like the violent Hosna Bint Mahmoud, murderous Magda, or transgressive Ammu can give birth to a viable political solution to the problems of Kashmir, Muslim extremism and traditionalism, racial tensions in South Africa, or caste prejudice in India. In the figure of Kashmira, the gothic historical sensibility comes to fruition, and justice is sought for unresolved pasts. Yet the mode of resolution is decidedly divorced from the seductions of romantic love, emotional excess, and nostalgia. Kashmira is a trope that Rushdie appropriates, but as a documentary filmmaker who rejects emotional and imaginative excess, is a figure for "oppositional creativity," that is grounded in the harsh realities of material existence.

5.1 ALLEGORY, INTERRUPTED: *SHALIMAR* AND THE MATERNAL AS GOTHIC MONSTROSITY

Shalimar's deployment of the national allegorical romance begins simply enough with two tales of romantic love: that of Max and Peggy and Shalimar and Boonyi. Max and Peggy's marriage is described in a manner that fits Sommer's concept of nonviolent national consolidation through

romantic love. In World War II-era Alsace, Max and Peggy's romantic love has the political potential to fight the racist parochialism of Hitler's anti-Semitism:

“Ratty and Moley,” the golden couple whose New York kiss at the mighty battle's end had become for a generation an image, the iconic *image of love conquering all*, of the slaying of monsters and the blessings of fate, of the triumph of virtue over evil and the victory of the best in human nature over the worst.²⁹⁰

The marriage between Max and Peggy is described in terms of the triumph of good versus evil, in which the marriage “slays the monsters” of Nazi Europe and its fascist nationalist agenda based on racial and ethnic purity. *Shalimar* invokes a rather Burkean notion of monstrosity in its references to Nazi social formation. For Edmund Burke, massive political mobilizations of the populace such as the French Revolution are perceived as “the most astonishing [thing] that has hitherto happened in the world . . . [and a] monstrous fiction”²⁹¹ that aggravated class consciousness and class tensions. In the allegory of World War II era Alsace, parochialism is a “monster” that is vanquished through a romantic union of regional, ethnic, and religious difference; the marriage of Max and Peggy blends Christian and Jew, and links the liminal Franco-Germanic Alsace region to England. In comparison to *Season*, *Dracula*, *Country*, and *Small Things*, the racial, religious, and ethnic contamination allegorized in the unions of both Max and Peggy and Shalimar and Boonyi is no monstrous or threatening figure, but the thing that “slays the monsters” that demand sectarian purity.

The romance and marriage between Shalimar and Boonyi indicates a consolidation of Hindu and Muslim that is essential to *Kashmiriyat*,²⁹² or Kashmiriness, which is “the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all other differences” (110). The marriage between the two lovers is described as the epitome of idealism and a

defense of “what is finest in ourselves” (110). Like Doris Sommer’s Latin American romances in which racial and ethnic amalgamation signals a larger assimilation project, the marriage between Boonyi and Shalimar blurs the differences between Hindu and Muslim: “The words *Hindu* and *Muslim* had no place in their story. . . . In the valley these words were merely descriptions, not divisions. The frontiers between the words, their hard edges, had grown smudged and blurred. This was how things had to be. This was Kashmir” (57). In the place of actual warfare, Shalimar and Boonyi’s romance and marriage functions as Pachigam’s “futile last stand” (131) against the churning sectarianism within India and between India and neighboring Pakistan. For a time, their marital union successfully fends off political threats to the village of Pachigam, including Islamic and Hindu nationalism. Even though the marriage is destined to fail on account of Boonyi’s betrayal, the novel clearly views *Kashmiriyat* and the union between Shalimar and Boonyi with a fair degree of nostalgia for the manner in which cross-sectarian tolerance and understanding binds a diverse community as one.

Tropes of love, marriage, fidelity, and betrayal allegorize the relationships and political maneuvers between nation states. Political agreements and acts of national betrayal and alliance are described in terms of romantic commitment. Max’s departure from his political work in France for a better position in the United States is described not as a betrayal of political allegiance, but as a groom who cruelly leaves a hopeful bride stranded at the altar in favor for a better marriage to another:

He felt as if he had received, and accepted, a proposal of marriage from an unexpected but infinitely desirable suitor [the United States], and knew that France, the bride chosen for him by parentage and blood, France with whom a marriage had been arranged on the day of his birth, might never forgive him for leaving her at the altar. (173)

Max also describes the United States' relationship with Pakistan and Pakistan's growing intimacy with China as a marriage threatened by infidelity in which the United States is wife to husband India who flirts with mistress China: "A wife can understand a Saturday night fling by her husband, so long as she's the wife" (178). In other words, India's brief political betrayal or "flirtation" may be tolerated so long as India's allegiances remain firmly with the Americans and not the Chinese. The rise and fall of romantic unions between Shalimar and Boonyi, Max and Peggy, and Max and Boonyi, are framed by these larger, communal and national "romances," which thematize seduction and betrayal between individuals, geographies, and nations.

With its utopian love affairs from two disparate parts of the globe, *Shalimar* proceeds to layer the relationship of the Jews to Europe onto Kashmir's relationship to India and India's relationship to the United States. At first, this is a juxtaposition that seems interesting and productive for it asks the reader to think about the relationship between sectarian groups to the national "whole," the repetition of sectarian oppression in different times and places of the globe, and the loss of *Kashmiriyat* and the onset of sectarianism, religious extremism, and racist nationalism as a political event on par with the Jewish Holocaust. In actuality, this layering seems to strain and overload *Shalimar*'s allegory and causes the novel's politics to get lost amidst the overabundant allegory. The layering of these separate incidents occurs in their juxtaposition in the narrative, yet their allegorical histories collide when Boonyi leaves Shalimar in order to have an affair with Max, who is the American ambassador to India. In this allegorical relationship, it is never clear precisely who represents Kashmir, India, and the United States. Surprisingly, Boonyi finds herself missing her husband and encodes her longing for Shalimar as a political discourse on Kashmir:

Whenever she said "Kashmir" she secretly meant her husband, and this ruse allowed her

to declare her love for the man she had betrayed to the man with whom she had committed the act of treason. More and more often she spoke of her love for this encoded “Kashmir,” arousing no suspicion, even when her pronouns occasionally slipped, so that she referred to his mountains, his valleys, his gardens, his flowing streams, his flowers, his stags, his fish. (196-97)

In this example, the language of the national allegory allows Boonyi to make political the personal. So far, Boonyi encodes her personal longing and regret for Shalimar as a nostalgic encomium to an untainted Kashmir, of which he allegorically represents.

The allegory soon shifts, however, for in Boonyi’s sexual relationship with Max, she comes to signify both Kashmir and India. Boonyi allegorically signifies Kashmir to Max’s India and India to Max’s United States. The allegorical link between romantic love and national liberation shifts when Boonyi changes the allegorical identification of Kashmir from Shalimar to herself mid-conversation. Shalimar signifies Kashmir so long as the land is beautiful and uncontaminated; after it is raped, occupied, or otherwise violated, the referent changes from Shalimar to Boonyi. Boonyi’s discourse about Kashmir gives rise to diatribes about the Indian occupation of the valley that equates her affair with Max with the literal and figural rape and military occupation of Kashmir. At the moment in which the region is defiled by the foreigner, which is manifested in the trope of rape, the allegory shifts to a feminine signifier:

At that moment she decided that the term “Indian armed forces” would secretly refer to the ambassador himself, [so] she would use the Indian presence in the valley as a surrogate for the American occupation of her body, so, “Yes, that’s it,” she cried, “the Indian armed forces,” raping and pillaging. How can you not know it? How can you not comprehend the humiliation of it, the shame of having your boots march all over my

private fields?” (197)

All of a sudden, the allegory shifts by gender and it is Boonyi and not Shalimar, who signifies a passive and occupied Kashmir. In Boonyi’s logic, India and the United States are conflated in the figure of Max, who signifies a universal occupier of both women’s bodies and land. Just as India is perceived as the occupier of Kashmir, the United States is seen as a neocolonial hegemon with respect to India-Pakistan relations. This shift in the allegory positions Boonyi in the more conventional signifying role of the vulnerable feminine “body” of the nation that is sexually contaminated by a foreign menace. In this way, the narrative settles temporarily into a similar national and sexual allegory as *Season* and *Dracula*. The subtle shift of Kashmir as signifier from Shalimar to Boonyi suggests that when it comes to threats of foreign conquest and contamination, women are both the literal victims, manifested in the many instances of rape and murder in the novel, and the metaphorical signifiers of a defilement of the ideals of *Kashmiriyat*.

When the affair between Boonyi and Max ends, Boonyi displaces her sexual desires onto culinary ones. Her “subcontinental” appetite for pan-Indian food causes her body to expand its borders in order to take in each and every region of India’s vast culinary palate.²⁹³ Once the representation of a victimized Kashmir, Boonyi becomes a monstrous image of “mother India” who allegorically gives birth to Kashmir(a). Readers familiar with Rushdie’s earlier works will immediately recognize a certain repetition, and expect that this grotesquely pregnant Boonyi, like the deformed Saleem and Saladin Chamcha from *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses* respectively, will allegorically signal the diseased and deformed state of India itself as it teeters on the precipice of internal political chaos and dissolution, thereby yoking Burkean notions of a monstrous body politic with popular magical realist tropes of sexual desire and repression, and

the allegorical mother of the nation. Boonyi's excessive, "subcontinental" consumption of pan-Indian food results in the unhealthy expansion of her body:

[E]arly in the second year of her liberated captivity, she began, with great seriousness and a capacity for excess learned from the devil-city itself, to eat. If her world would not expand, her body could. She took to gluttony with the same bottomless enthusiasm she had once for sex, diverting the immense force of her erotic requirements from her bed to her table. . . . Her appetite had grown to subcontinental size. It crossed all frontiers of language and custom. She was vegetarian and nonvegetarian, fish- and meat-eating, Hindu, Christian, and Muslim, a democratic, secularist omnivore. (201-202)

Rushdie uses the familiar literary image of the expanding woman in such a way as to remake the familiar as unfamiliar and *unheimlich*. This is not the first time that Rushdie assigns women as allegories of the nation or conceptualizes India as a mother. Aurora paints a vision of Mother India in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and later meets the actress Nargis who starred in a film representation of Mother India;²⁹⁴ Ayesha is a female metaphor for the future of Islam in *The Satanic Verses*; and Bilqis is the mother of Pakistan in *Shame*. In *Midnight's Children*, Padma's procreative listening, in part, engenders the Indian nation. In figuring the nation as a feminine body, Rushdie "cast[s] . . . his female characters as eroticized bodies . . . [and] come[s] uncomfortably close to replicating the Orientalist stereotypes of Eastern women as erotic."²⁹⁵ Rushdie's depiction of Boonyi engages with Orientalist stereotypes of the erotic Eastern woman as well as the clichés of magical realism. The gothicization of this feminine figure, however, estranges the familiar discourse of Orientalism and magical realism. Boonyi's expanding body does allegorically signify Indian subcontinentalism, but unlike the more celebrated images of subcontinentalism and coexistence in *Midnight's Children* or *The Satanic Verses*, Boonyi's body

is no celebration or nostalgic image of untainted beauty, but instead the monstrous accumulation of the excesses of desire, racial and sectarian contamination, and a long fall from grace: “Her hair lost its luster, her skin coarsened, her teeth rotted, her body odor soured . . . [h]er head rattled with pills, [and] her lungs were full of poppies” (203). Max views Boonyi’s new body as a hideous, stinking, and revolting monster (203, 205, 207).

To be sure, Boonyi has lost her beauty. But ugliness is not the sole criteria for the monstrous. Boonyi’s monstrosity seems to derive from the fact that she is pregnant and that she has been able to conceal this very visual form of reproduction from plain sight. By the time Edgar and Max learn of her pregnancy, “she was many months pregnant. She had grown so obese that *her pregnancy had been invisible, it lay hidden somewhere inside her fat*, and it was too late to think about an abortion” (204, my italics). To Max, the “sight of her ballooning, cetacean body still had the power to shock him. What lay within it, what was growing daily in her womb, was even more of a shock” (204). The invisibility of Boonyi’s pregnancy emphasizes that this form of monstrosity is linked closely to fecundity and the female body, which is the object of uncanny dread in both *Shalimar* and *Frankenstein*.

Boonyi’s rebuke of Max resembles the creature’s rebuke of Frankenstein in Mary Shelley’s novel. This intertextuality with *Frankenstein* allows the allegorical image of Boonyi-as-India to function as a commentary on the sexual politics of the national allegory. The dialogic relationship with *Frankenstein* causes the allegory to shift further; Boonyi is not just a figure of India or a pregnant drug addict but a monstrous image of “mother India.” Like Boonyi’s expansive body, it is at this moment that the allegory seems too big; it feels excessive and burdened with too much allegorical signification. Allegorical referents shift from one thing to another, positing a revolving, multivalent political reading of national politics. This multivalency

is only possible through Rushdie's deployment of the gothic trope of monstrosity. It is through monstrosity that Boonyi can play the role of victim and victimizer, mother India and its female avenger:

Look at me, she was saying. I am your handiwork made flesh. You took beauty and created hideousness, and out of this monstrosity your child will be born. Look at me. I am the meaning of your deeds. I am the meaning of your so-called love, your destructive, selfish, wanton love. Look at me. Your love looks just like hatred. I never spoke of love, she was saying. I was honest and you have turned me into your lie. This is not me. This is not me. This is you. (205)

Rushdie seems to be directly referring to the creature's reproach of Victor Frankenstein. Shelley gives the creature a voice by which he articulates a most plaintive and fundamental desire to love and be loved, which counteracts his hideous physical appearance and violent deeds. The monster reproaches his creator: "Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."²⁹⁶ Both *Frankenstein* and *Shalimar* imply that monstrosity and destructive behavior is a direct result of a lack of love, parental abandonment, and neglect. Both Boonyi and Victor Frankenstein's creature respond to abandonment and neglect through revenge. The important difference between the two texts is that Boonyi does not do the revenging herself, but is the vessel that gives birth to the thing that will, many years later, settle old scores and right the wrongs of the past. In this capacity, the allegory revolves so that Boonyi plays the role of victimizer and victimized woman and wife whose child transgenerationally inherits the mother's conflicts. Gothic reveals Boonyi's complex duality, but defers a political solution until the next generation.

The failure of romantic love results in both a monstrous figure of the Indian nation and a radical shift in the allegory. Prior to this, it did not matter so much that Boonyi shifted between Kashmir and India because both were victims to a more dominant power. The gothic image of monstrosity allows the allegory to work at cross purposes and to represent seemingly conflicting representations in a single referent. Through the figure of monstrosity, Boonyi serves a dual function. She is the monstrous agent of Max's political destruction and a victim of abandonment and failed romantic love. In her capacity as mother India, Boonyi gives birth to a child named Kashmiri Noman who ends up defending the father (Max) who caused her mother such pain, but avenging her mother's honor against her murderer, Shalimar.

Boonyi's monstrosity is a horrific allegory of maternity and maternal betrayal that functions on par with that expressed in *Frankenstein*. Feminist critics rightly note that *Frankenstein* was the first literary work in English written by a woman to treat the subject of birth and to express anxieties about pregnancy and reproduction.²⁹⁷ Tolstoy, Zola, and William Carlos Williams represented pregnancy and childbirth in their realist works, but Shelley was the first to bring "birth to fiction not as realism but as Gothic fantasy, and thus contributed to Romanticism a myth of genuine originality: the mad scientist who locks himself in his laboratory and secretly, guiltily works at creating human life, only to find that he has made a monster."²⁹⁸ The end product is, as Ellen Moers notes, a "horror story of maternity"²⁹⁹ that articulates "for the first time in Western literature . . . the most powerfully felt anxieties of pregnancy."³⁰⁰ These readings of *Frankenstein* rely much on Shelley's autobiography. Indeed, as Barbara Johnson notes, *Frankenstein* is "much more striking for its avoidance of the question of femininity than for its insights into it."³⁰¹ U.C. Knoepfelmacher likewise argues that "*Frankenstein* is a novel of omnipresent fathers and absent mothers."³⁰² The novel's avoidance of the feminine is made

obvious when the creature's request for a female companion is met with the ultimate revulsion and horror, a textual silence that Susan J. Wolfson reads as a fear of the feminine: "[F]eminine monstrosity is suppressed because it is too potent, [and] immune to all regulation and control."³⁰³ In *Shalimar*, and indeed much of postcolonial gothic, women are likewise the threat to the nation and nationness precisely because they are "too potent" and uncontrollable.

If the first part of *Frankenstein* deals with pregnancy, (Victor Frankenstein's creative process that is analogous to human gestation), birth (the moment at which the creature comes to life), and the ensuing horror felt by the creature's creator, then the second half of the novel, Moers argues, "deal[s] with the retribution visited upon monster and creator for deficient infant care."³⁰⁴ Like Boonyi, the newborn has a dual function. On the one hand, he is a monstrous agent of destruction and on the other, a piteous victim of parental abandonment.³⁰⁵ This dual function is made all the more poignant by the creature's plaintive statements of despair and rebuke. Chris Baldick notes that: "The decision to give the monster an articulate voice is Mary Shelley's most important subversion of the category of monstrosity . . . [since] the traditional idea of the monstrous was strongly associated with visual display, and monsters were understood primarily as exhibitions of moral vices: they were to be seen and not heard."³⁰⁶ The melancholic musings of the creature play upon the reader's sympathies, but they also conflict with the horrendous acts of violence. We understand why the creature is upset and desires revenge, yet the violence of his retribution makes it difficult to reconcile with his plaintive requests for companionship and understanding.

In this disjunction, I view Shelley as making personal the political questions posed by her father, William Godwin and his intellectual nemesis, Edmund Burke. *Frankenstein* seems to ask if the terrors of civilization are caused not by the injustices of government or the populace, as

differently intimated by Burke and Godwin, but by *the failure of love and affection*.³⁰⁷ In this capacity, the domestic sphere plays a key role in the development of monstrosity. Mary Poovey writes that Shelley “sees imagination as an appetite that can and must be regulated—specifically, by the give-and-take of domestic relationships. . . . As long as domestic relationships govern an individual’s affections, his or her desire will turn outward as love.”³⁰⁸ Frankenstein’s monster becomes the symbol of various terrors that uncannily reside beneath the surface of a rational civilization, but the novel frames these terrors as the outcomes of the personal, rather than the political sphere. For Shelley, it is the failure of affection that contributes to the social creation of monstrosity and, in so doing, “invites a reading in which Frankenstein can be seen, not as a dangerous radical philosopher, but as a pastiche, or even a parody, or paranoid Burkean fictions.”³⁰⁹ This parody of “paranoid Burkean fictions” is not just an opportunity to poke fun at one of her father’s intellectual interlocutors but is a textual intervention into other forms of social persecution, injustice, and mismanagement. Just as Sommer’s national romances made the national and political a tale of romantic love and desire, Shelley’s *Frankenstein* understands the uncanny underbelly of civilization—its subversive political potential—through the tropes of the betrayal or breakdown of parent-child love and affection. In *Frankenstein*, the very foundations of reproduction and maternity are dreadful, so the most fundamental component of the private sphere—the reproductive process, the familial unit, the relations between parent and child—are themselves the gothic elements that prevent recognition and reconciliation. Reconciliation is impossible in *Frankenstein* as long as the creator betrays—betrayal is figured as the denial of the maternal “instinct”—his creation.

Pregnancy is Boonyi’s revenge against Max. Once discovered, Boonyi’s pregnancy precipitates the downfall of Max’s diplomatic career in India. Similarly, adoption is Peggy’s

form of revenge against Max. While each instance offers its own horrible image of maternity, the actions of Boonyi constitute a direct form of revenge against Max while those of Peggy are displaced from Max onto his lover. Peggy “was in a position to, that one of these days by God she would, that any woman in her situation—and she had killed a man once!—had a right to, to. *To take her dashed revenge*” (184, italics in original). As we have seen, Boonyi directly reproaches Max, and even goes as far as to accuse him of making her into the monster that she has become. With Peggy, there is no such directness concerning Max. She represses her sexual feelings as well as her disappointment concerning her husband’s infidelities and the evident failure of her marriage. The result of this repression is that she cannot locate revenge at home, or with Max. Instead, she projects that violent desire toward India, a place that is not her home, and even goes as far as to name the product of that infidelity India, which makes her entire revenge scheme an enactment of the *unheimlich* that may be interpreted on both personal and political levels. Peggy may be read as a satirical allegory of the United States’ foreign aid and its dubious motivations. Peggy is not an American, yet insofar as she is the American ambassador’s wife who dreams of helping the people of India, she may be said to allegorize the questionable motives of American assistance abroad: “In India, she decided, she was going to have a great deal to do with orphans. Yes: the motherless children of India would discover that they had a good friend in her” (177). Peggy says she wants to help Boonyi, yet this aid ultimately does more harm than good because it forces Boonyi to choose between her nostalgia for Kashmir and her daughter.

Peggy’s revenge estranges and make *unhomely* Boonyi’s child by changing her name. Originally named “Kashmira Noman,” a literalization that feminizes Kashmir and gives it Shalimar’s family name, Kashmira’s surname either puns in English on “no one” or the future

portent that Kashmira, the female character, will have no man in her life. Peggy coercively imposes the name “India Ophuls,” which literally and metaphorically imposes India and the name of the father upon a feminized Kashmir and reasserts the patronymic of the foreign: “‘*Noman*, indeed!—That’s not her name. And what did you say? *Kashmira*? No, no, darling. That can’t be her future’ . . . ‘*Ophuls*,’ said Peggy-Mata. ‘That’s her father’s name. And *India*’s a nice name, a name containing, as it does, the truth. *India Ophuls* is an answer” (210). It is clear that this entire exchange functions allegorically, yet once again, the allegory strains to make its meaning clear in simple one-to-one allegorical relationships. If Boonyi’s selection of the name Kashmira signifies a nostalgic longing to return to Kashmir and is the product of the political “tryst” between Kashmir and the United States, then the name India redefines that relationship as between India and the United States only. In doing so, Peggy places Kashmir under the sign of India, which is a form of political and epistemic erasure that Kashmira must encounter and rectify by learning the truth of her biological mother’s story. Kashmira must “go home” to Kashmir in order to recuperate the history of her name and learn that her biological mother gave her daughter up for her own chance to return home.

Peggy’s displacement results in the deployment of gothic uncanniness, which manifests itself in the adoption and renaming of Kashmira, and is framed as an “unnatural” act and another perversion of the maternal instinct. Her allusions to Rumpelstiltskin displace the national allegory onto a fairytale and create another horrifying figure of the mother of the nation. Peggy does not place herself in the signification of the national allegory of Kashmir, but in the Grimm Brothers’ tale of Rumpelstiltskin.³¹⁰ This is not the first time that Rushdie employs the fairy tale in order to encode historical narrative; *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses* “cast [. . . their] ideological battles in terms of the stark and unambiguous characterization of

fairy tales”³¹¹ while *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* combines Indian storytelling with Western fairy tales. Peggy plays the role of Rumpelstiltskin, who will eventually steal Boonyi’s child, rename her, and take her away from her mother, but this time the narrative’s use of fairy tale is in service of plumbing the *ambiguity* of Peggy’s characterization and the links between mother and nation. The utopian impetus of the fairy tale is rooted in “an individual’s or a community’s unfulfilled needs and wants, as well as in their dissatisfaction with reality at a particular historical and political moment; a dissatisfaction that has to lead to a more satisfactory, spiritual and ideological homeland.”³¹² Fairy tales, according to Jack Zipes, “must reflect a process of struggle against all types of suppression and authoritarianism and posit various possibilities for the concrete realization of utopia.”³¹³ Rushdie’s version of Rumpelstiltskin is not in service of any utopian impulse—quite the opposite. Rumpelstiltskin becomes a gothic agent in *Shalimar* because she (as Peggy) enacts the *unheimlich* return of the repressed. Maria Tatar reminds us that in fairy tales, “old scores are settled and wrongs are redressed. The sufferings inflicted on the victim or intended for him are ultimately visited on the adversary.”³¹⁴ The role of Rumpelstiltskin allows Peggy a shift in roles from that of victim (of Max’s infidelities) to that of victimizer (of her husband’s lover). Peggy represses her sexuality in her relationship with Max. These repressed feelings uncannily return in distorted form in her manipulation of Boonyi and the adoption and renaming of Kashmira. Peggy displaces her sexual desire as well as her disappointment in Max initially into solitary activities such as reading or gardening:

[T]he fiction of undying romance was . . . a self-deceiving lie. The women’s names twisted in her like knives. . . . Yet she found it difficult to blame only Max. As the war retreated into the past so had her erotic urges. Her interest in such matters . . . seemed to wither on the vine. “Let the poor man get it elsewhere if he has to,” she told herself

grimly, “as long as he doesn’t rub my bally nose in it. Then I can get on with my reading and gardening and not be bothered with all that sticky palaver.” (176-77)

Both Peggy’s dismissal of her own sexual desires and her disappointment at Max’s affairs are indications of just how much she still cares but also how much she has repressed her own desire.

The analogy with Rumpelstiltskin underscores that Peggy is also a terrible figure of the maternal, albeit in a different manner than Boonyi. Conversely, with respect to Max, Peggy is like Boonyi, also a victim of a murderous husband. Seen in this light, the two women are both like the miller’s daughter in the fairytale: “Silly woman! To marry the man who would have killed her as easily as blinking. . . . Take me, for example. I married my whimsical prince as well, the murderer of my love.—But you know all about him, of course” (211). What Peggy probably does not know is that Boonyi’s husband, clown that he is, promised to kill her if she ever left him. The shift from national allegory to fairytale is successful in demonstrating that with respects to men, both women find themselves victimized. Whereas for Peggy, violence and murder are only metaphorical (“the murderer of my love”), Boonyi’s is completely literal, as Shalimar makes good on his threat and actually hunts down and murders Boonyi. The shift from national allegory to the fairytale makes the distinction between the metaphorical and literal violence towards women all the more striking because it is drawn along lines of ethnicity, national origin, and class, which allows the novel to observe that when it comes to making alliances amongst women on the grounds of gender, attention must be paid to those for whom violence and other matters of oppression are literal, not metaphoric, facts of reality.

In the manipulative persona of a Rumpelstiltskin-like Peggy, the novel presents another horrifying image of the mother of the nation. If Peggy allegorizes the beneficence of United States aid abroad, then the novel portrays those “maternal” urges towards others as

fundamentally vindictive and coercive. Peggy's repressed sexuality and her disappointment in her marriage uncannily "return" as vindictiveness towards Boonyi and a desire to become the adoptive mother of Kashmira. For Peggy, motherhood is both a misguided attempt at charity and a form of revenge. It appears that Peggy's adoption of Kashmira reverses *Frankenstein's* association of maternity with abandonment and neglect when she fulfills her longtime desire to be a mother: "[T]he night before I came to India I dreamed I would not leave without a child to call my own" (212). Unlike Boonyi, for whom motherhood and nostalgic longing for the nation were separate, for Peggy, maternity only comes with the "adopted" nation of India, and not her "home" of England. Maternity is again figured as monstrous in Peggy's manipulation of Boonyi and her adoption and renaming of Kashmira. As such, Peggy is also a gothic representation of the maternal as manipulative, abusive, and even violent. In this case, the deviation from the loving and selfless maternal instinct is what constitutes monstrosity. The gothic figure of the monstrous mother assists the novel in representing how love masks its own coercive intent to estrange, or make *unhomely*, a child from its national origins.

The breakdown of the simple allegorical relation in *Shalimar* is linked to the onset of the gothic. In the example of Boonyi, maternal gothic monstrosity seems to be Rushdie's way of expanding, both literally and figuratively, his national allegory to one of multivalent, shifting referents between different historical temporalities and geographic localities. She is both Kashmir and India, the timeless Anarkali, and the modern woman who leaves her husband for her chance at upward mobility. A straightforward reading of the novel's national allegorical romance suggests that Boonyi's and Shalimar's marriage allegorically represents a distinctive Kashmiri hybridity and a stance against sectarian parochialism. Romantic love, in this case, is the "glue" that holds the stable, simple allegory in place. In Sommer's version of the national

romance, there is a one to one allegorical correspondence between what each of the lovers signifies politically. There is no guesswork as to who signifies the Spanish, the Indians, or the lower classes; political allegory avails itself with little guesswork or mystery as to its allegorical signification.

Shalimar follows suit with a straightforward national romantic allegory until romantic love is betrayed. Betrayal in some instances breaks the allegory outright and in others, it merely adds more elements to the mix and unveils love—both romantic and parental—for its coercive and hegemonic intentions. If we return to the example of Boonyi's affair with Max, we see that Max comes to signify both India and the United States. Depending on Max's signification, Boonyi's referent shifts from either Kashmir to India. After the affair ends, Boonyi again shifts and becomes a monstrous representation of the Indian subcontinent who metaphorically gives birth to a feminized national figure in the form of Kashmira, only to give the girl up for a chance to return to Shalimar and a thoroughly masculinized Kashmir that will punish her for her betrayal. Rushdie expands, disseminates, and unsettles the simple one-to-one allegorical relations expostulated in Sommer's reading of the nineteenth-century Latin American national romance. Frederic Jameson reminds us that national allegory need not have to follow the simple, one-to-one ratio that we might expect. He writes:

Our traditional conception of allegory . . . is that of an elaborate set of figures and personifications to be read against some one-to-one table of equivalences: this is, so to speak, a one-dimensional view of this signifying process, which might only be set in motion and complexified were we willing to entertain the more alarming notion that such equivalences are themselves in constant change and transformation.³¹⁵

Jameson argues that in a complex allegorical representation of national politics, the national signifier(s) are bound to shift as the narrative progresses. To illustrate this point, Jameson notes that in Chinese author Lu Xun's work, the allegory shifts so that within a single narrative, both a victimized character *and* his persecutors can simultaneously signify the nation of China because allegory has the capacity "to generate a range of distinct meanings or messages, simultaneously, as the allegorical tenor and vehicle change places."³¹⁶ Hence, in *Shalimar* we notice that the allegorical position of India is occupied by Max "the occupier," Boonyi the dumped mistress and monstrous mother, and the adopted child of the tryst between a Kashmiri woman and the American ambassador.

Jameson's insight into the malleability of national allegorical signs helps us understand that the shifting and complex nature of *Shalimar*'s allegory need not be indicative of artistic failure but perhaps a more accurate illustration of the complex histories of sectarian oppression that overlap and repeat themselves globally, or the political wranglings between Kashmir, India, and the United States. This revolving, shifting allegory illustrates how victims become victimizers, and how the hurt and damaged go on to hurt and damage others as reparations for their own pain. In this way, the shifting nature of the allegory matches the novel's geographical and temporal layering of World War II Alsace with late twentieth-century Kashmir, as we follow how Max, once victim to Nazi anti-Semitism and underground fighter betrays his national roots and politics in order to become the spokesman for the world's most powerful nation's foreign policy of total domination. Likewise, the revolving allegory also represents Boonyi's shifting relationship between victim and victimizer. As a simple village girl, Boonyi feels victimized by a stifling traditionalism as she enters her circumscribed role of wife. When she decides to leave her husband for a chance at a better life, she becomes the victimizer, relegating Shalimar to the role

of cuckold and victim (who then attempts to reverse the situation through a murderous revenge plot). In her role as neglected mistress, monstrous mother, penitent fallen woman, and object of Shalimar's murderous revenge, Boonyi again returns to the position of victim.

Gothic is Rushdie's way of indulging in a "post-lapsarian" form of nostalgia for Kashmir and *Kashmiriyat* after the two have proven problematic, if not outright failures, given the pessimistic contemporary political realities. In this way *Shalimar* is a nostalgic ode to a failed political endeavor; as such, the theme of failure pervades the structure and the narrative's events. Like the nation, nostalgia in *Shalimar* is given feminine form. Even though she is the one to betray her husband and village, Boonyi is the central figure of nostalgia. Her return to Pachigam as a *mritak*, or ghostly, "fallen woman" enacts a profound nostalgia for a return home, despite political and personal realities that make such a glorious return impossible. Likewise, the adoption and renaming of Kashmira as India Ophuls allegorize an unhomely estrangement from one's national origins that is followed by a nostalgic longing for the mother, the homely, and a return to one's origins in Kashmir. The deployment of gothic thematics allows Rushdie to address or enact the anxieties about nationalism and simplistic allegorical representations of nationalist reconciliation such as we see in the national romance.

5.2 LOVERS, CLOWNS, AND MILITANTS: THE BHAND PATHER AND GOTHIC DISPLACEMENT

The bhand pather is an "old," indigenous performative mode that uncannily erupts in the most unlikely of places and disguises, such as an Islamic militant in Central and South Asia or a

servile chauffeur in Los Angeles. Balwant Gargi writes that the bhand pather “mirrors social evils” such as “the cunning money lender, the dowry system, the corrupt police, . . . [and] haughty officials. . . . Some plays are about legendary heroes and gallant lovers. But it is the incisive satire that characterizes” the form.³¹⁷ Clowns play the most important role in the bhand pather as they are “the preservers of this tradition.”³¹⁸ Clowns, also called jesters,

lampoon the king and the upper classes by exposing their corruption. The jester is the constant factor in the performance, the link of the various episodes. The elements of humour, be it *hazal* (mockery), *mazaak* (jokes), *tasan* (sarcasm) or even finding fault with the other characters is the forte of the *maskhara*. . . . Finally, the *maskhara* emerges the rebel, the character who does not cow down to the oppressor. The message that comes across through the performance [is] the message of the [contemporary] political and social scene.³¹⁹

Rushdie deploys the bhand pather, but he does so within a contemporary novel composed of competing narrative forms, which bends the form of bhand pather from its indigenous origins.

Dharwadker writes that contemporary plays that

employ folk narratives and performance conventions are texts and performance *events of a qualitatively different kind* from folk theater in its own agrarian setting. . . . [T]hose who draw on it [folk theater] for theatrical purposes are not recuperating an undifferentiated cultural essence but *using premodern cultural matter of various kinds to create a variety of distinctive stage vehicles in the present.*³²⁰

Just as Dracula and Mustafa Sa'eed were the atavistic figures that uncannily returned, the atavistic figure in *Shalimar* is the clown; he displaces his energies from the theater onto an intricate revenge plot in which his theatrical skills of dissimulation enable him to take on the

“masks” of militant Islamist assassin, servile chauffeur, and others. Taking Shalimar and his role as clown out of Kashmir and the Pachigam bhand pather troupe produces a “qualitatively different kind” of signification, which modifies the political yet lighthearted tone of the bhand pather by introducing various dark, gothic effects. This expands the political reach of the indigenous mode of performance, but does so at the expense of local specificity.

For example, the story of Anarkali is presented in the novel as a staple of the bhand pather troupe’s program. The most notable performance of Anarkali is before Max Ophuls; later, Shalimar attempts to orchestrate a retelling of Anarkali in which Anarkali allegorizes the United States’ war with Vietnam. For Shalimar, the legend of Anarkali is a malleable one in which he may encode his most personal loss of his wife’s infidelity as a political tale of betrayal and revenge that is conducted amongst two nations:³²¹

One day he proposed that the scene in the Anarkali play in which the dancing girl was grabbed by the soldiers who had come to take her to be bricked up in her wall might be sharpened if the soldiers came on in American army uniform and Anarkali donned the flattened straw cone of a Vietnamese peasant woman. The American seizure of Anarkali-as-Vietnam would, he argued, immediately be understood by their audience as a metaphor for the Indian army’s stifling presence in Kashmir, which *they were forbidden to depict. One army would stand in for another* and the moment would give their piece an added contemporary edge. (231, my italics)

The first thing that we notice about Shalimar’s modification of the bhand pather’s performance is that it seems to lack the satirical, humorous tone that marks the form. His revision of Anarkali may be too politically earnest for the troupe, which explains why they immediately reject it, but it is significant because it marks the first stage in the morphing of the political capabilities of the

bhand pather away from its lighthearted roots towards its darker, gothic employment. This darkness, of course, originates in Shalimar's growing gloominess in the wake of Boonyi's departure: "Everyone in the acting troupe noticed that his style of performance had changed. He was as dynamically physical a comedian as ever, but there was a new ferocity in him that could easily frighten people instead of making them laugh" (231). The story of Anarkali is already a rather gothic one. A dancing girl is bricked up alive in a wall; this grotesque ending could have come directly from the mind of Edgar Allan Poe.³²² Shalimar's brooding "ferocity" manipulates the story to convey a complex political message about American and Indian hegemony that shifts the allegorical referent from Kashmir onto Vietnam, thereby expanding the political critique of American and Indian hegemony, and deemphasizing Kashmir as the only locality of foreign occupation. Shalimar's romantic betrayal results in a personality shift that is "frightening" to all who know him, and yet this new ferocious, frightening self results in the creation of sympathy for Anarkali as a helpless victim of the larger geopolitical machine. In his version of Anarkali, romance is a screen for the festering political questions that lie beneath the surface.

Shalimar's belief that "one army could stand in for another" exemplifies the novel's own credo that "everywhere was now a part of everywhere else," (37) and that an "indirect" (309) form of historical investigation is necessary. The narrator claims that the destruction of Pachigam by the Indian army cannot be described with "straightforward" realistic description because "[t]here are things that must be looked at indirectly because they would blind you if you looked them in the face, like the fire of the sun" (309). On the one hand, Indian hegemony in Kashmir has prevented the Kashmiris from criticizing India openly, hence the need to displace India's atrocities onto the United States in allegorical narrative. Yet on the other hand, the entire novel endorses an "indirect" and displaced mode of representation so that it may weave a complex

global web of interlocking and repetitive oppressions. Hence the novel displaces, or diffuses Kashmir onto 1930s Alsace. The following passage is reminiscent of Dracula's historical narrative of Transylvania, where displacement is in service of understanding greater political commonalities between two different regions:

Max Ophuls went so far as to say . . . that it was because he came from Alsace that he hoped he might be able to understand India a little, since the part of the world where he was raised had also been defined and redefined for many centuries by shifting frontiers, upheavals and dislocations, flights and returns, conquests and reconquests. . . . Even before the year acquired four digits Strasbourg had belonged first to Lotharingia and then to Germania, had been smashed up by nameless Hungarians and reconstructed by Saxons called Otto. Reformation and revolution were in its citizens' blood, which counter-reformation and reaction spilled in its charming streets. (138-39)

Comparativism is Rushdie's form of gothic displacement in *Shalimar*, yet there are moments in which it is difficult to discern just what, in the Kashmir section, is the correlative object of comparison to the Alsace section. It is for this reason that it seems comparativism becomes an intellectual exercise of its own merit. The entire dictum that "everywhere was now a part of everywhere else" seems to push back the novel's overwhelming nostalgia for its first love, the "icy beauty" (217) of Kashmir.

Shalimar's revenge on Boonyi, Max, and Kashmira is enabled through militant Islam, from which he learns "the subtle arts of deception and deceit . . . [and] perfect[s] the art of death" (260). And yet, Shalimar is no ordinary "brainwashed . . . terrorist puppet" (385) who swallows the ideology of militant Islam whole. Rather, he deliberately takes what he needs from what militant Islam has to teach, which the novel tells us, is an assassin's training in murder, sabotage,

and deception, but keeps his own agenda concealed and intact beneath the surface. Even though Shalimar joins the Islamic militants to learn the “arts of deception and deceit,” he already possesses the ability to deceive others, and regularly practices the arts of dissimulation, for he fraudulently represents himself as a true believer and dedicated disciple of the militant Islamic teachings of Bulbul Fakh. Shalimar’s ability to take on the personas and identities of others derives directly from his years of bhand pather training. Shalimar’s position within Islamic militancy is a fraudulent one that releases an acerbic, satirical critique of the militancy’s hypocrisy and ignorance. The narrator, who is not Shalimar, satirically represents the world of militant Islam as fully of hypocrisy, ignorance, and stubborn masculine bravado,³²³ which indirectly implicates all who are involved in that world as ignorant young men who have been bamboozled by Bulbul Fakh’s ideology. Yet the novel focuses first and foremost on a character whose presence in that world is more calculated and concealed than earnest, and who is not necessarily included in the circle of fools to which, according to the logic of the novel, most militants *must* belong:

He felt like a fraud and feared exposure constantly. He had not surrendered his self as he had been required to do, had hidden it deep beneath a performance of abnegation, the greatest performance he had ever given. He had his own goals in life and would not give them up. *I am ready to kill but I am not ready to stop being myself*, he repeated many times in his heart. *I will kill readily but I will not give myself up.* (271, italics in original)

The novel is decidedly vague on the matter of whether or not Shalimar silently critiques the militancy or is himself a representation of it. To be sure, the narrator gives a scathing critique of the militancy. Shalimar may claim that he will “not give myself up,” but the narrative gestures towards another reality. While the narrative does not replicate these conversations directly, we

are told that Shalimar experiences a conflict with his brother Anees on the subject of religion, militancy, and nationalism:

He [Anees] is against Pakistan and doesn't want to talk about religion. He laughed in my face when I spoke of my faith and told me I didn't know what faith was if I could be faithless to my own brother. I said there was a higher allegiance and he laughed in my face again and said maybe I could fool everyone else but I couldn't fool him that all of a sudden I had turned into some kind of fire-eater for God. . . . We have left Anees behind, left him to his outmoded ways, and are heading toward the future. The insurgency is divided; very well then, it is divided. (259-60, italics in original)

Despite the fact that this report of a conversation alludes to Shalimar's agreement with extremist ideologues such as Bulbul Fakh, there exists a great deal of distance between this conversation and Shalimar's cool performative habitude within the structure of militancy. This distance is what distinguishes Shalimar from other texts that represent Islamic militancy with tired clichés.³²⁴ Because he is represented as a character of questionable allegiances, Shalimar's presence in the militancy is unsettling and unhomely; because he uses the militancy to achieve closure to very personal events, he contaminates and critiques the world of militancy from the inside out.

In the first chapter I discussed how both Dracula and Mustafa Sa'eed represented the *unheimlich* return of a repressed historical narrative as they migrated from colonial periphery to center in order to exact their violent revenge plots. Shalimar operates in a similar manner as he cloaks his true intentions from the other militants in order to emerge with the tools necessary to migrate to Los Angeles and fulfill his vengeful plot. Just as Salih ironically deploys references to earlier works and modes of English and Arabic fiction writing in his representation of Mustafa

Sa'eed as an *unheimlich* and monstrously deformed amalgamation of Arabic literary tropes, Rushdie uses the bhand pather in order to invest Shalimar's revenge with the historical weight of a threatened indigenous tradition. Shalimar cannot leave behind his role as clown in the bhand pather when he leaves Pachigam, and indeed it forms the backdrop of his militant activities and his revenge plot. Shalimar's role as clown not only emphasizes the performativity of belief, zeal, and group membership in general, but it frames Shalimar as the *unheimlich* figure of the past that cannot be suppressed, contained, or detected within the structures of even the most paranoid of organizations. The moment in which Shalimar decries his fidelity to Bulbul Fakh best captures this paradox between belief and performativity and Shalimar's atavistic role within the structure of militancy:

“Truth, I am ready for you!” He was a trained performer, a leading actor in the leading bhand pather troupe in the valley, and so of course he could make his gestures more convincing, and imbue his journey toward nakedness with more meaning, than any eighteen-year-old youth. . . . Shalimar the clown prostrated himself at the feet of Bulbul Fakh, and *almost believed his own performance, almost believed that he was no longer what he was and could indeed leave the past behind.* (267-68, emphasis mine)

Shalimar's performative mode as a militant does not self-consciously signify him as the uncanny avatar of the past with the same ironic vehemence as Sa'eed. Yet insofar as the performativity that enables his uncanny revenge plot rests upon a centuries-old tradition of political theater, the novel “indirectly” invokes Shalimar as the uncanny avenger of past wrongs through the forms of the bhand pather. Bhand pather thus revolves around a playful dissimulation of those in power; in this instance, bhand pather helps to mediate the contradiction that Shalimar must himself be unfaithful (to the militancy) in order to avenge his wife's infidelity.

In *Shalimar*, there is a continual displacement of these violent and erotic energies from the original source (the traitorous spouse) onto someone else who is more often than not the romantic interloper with whom the cheating spouse had his or her affair. Shalimar plans revenge on Boonyi, yet derives greater satisfaction and spends much more time planning how he will wreak his vengeance upon Max. Likewise, Peggy redirects her disappointment with Max's infidelities towards the helpless Boonyi and the newborn Kashmira. Allegorically speaking, the novel continually displaces all feelings of disappointment and anger associated with the failure of national and regional reconciliation away from the *homely*, familiar, and offending spouse, onto the *unhomely*, unfamiliar, and foreign interloper. This displacement is yet another way in which *Shalimar* defamiliarizes the romantic and political familiar, and stages the relationship between large-scale geopolitics and the local political conflict of Kashmir as *homely*, full of nostalgia and familiarity, yet continually made *unhomely* and unfamiliar, because it must literally be displaced as *somewhere or someone else*.

Shalimar's violent threat issued in the throes of romantic passion locks the novel's gothic narrative trajectory, for the fulfillment of the threat must come to pass once the "sin" of infidelity occurs: " 'Don't leave me,' he said, rolling onto his back and panting for joy. 'Don't you leave me now, or I'll never forgive you, and I'll have my revenge, I'll kill you and if you have any children by another man I'll kill the children also'" (61). This threat focuses Shalimar's potential revenge at Boonyi first and foremost, and secondarily, targets any possible illegitimate children Boonyi might have as a result of an affair. Nowhere in this threat is there mention of doing the other man any harm. The novel makes it clear that Shalimar modifies his threat at a later date and as a direct result of political tensions between India and Pakistan over the issue of Kashmir:

Shalimar the clown decided he had to murder the American ambassador at some point not

long after the end of the Bangladesh war, around the time that the Pachigam bhandhs went north to perform near the cease-fire line which had just turned into the Line of Control; that India and Pakistan signed the agreement at Simla which promised that the status of Kashmir would be decided bilaterally at a future date; [and] that the Indian army tightened its choke hold on the valley. (243)

The 1972 Simla agreement attempted to reconcile India's and Pakistan's claims on Kashmir by instituting bilateralism and a jointly shared Indian-Pakistani Line of Control that ran along the Kashmiri border.³²⁵ The time between the Simla agreement in 1972 until the commencement of the Islamic insurgency in the late 1980s is recognized by many historians as a "peaceful" time in Kashmir because Simla quieted Indian-Pakistani tensions to the point where Kashmir was a "nonissue in Indo-Pakistani relations" throughout much of the 1970s and 80s.³²⁶ Most Kashmiris beg to differ, because the so-called peaceful bilateralism between India and Pakistan concealed the fact that the Kashmiris were not consulted in the Simla negotiation process or in the management of their own borders. Victoria Schofield notes that: "the Simla agreement was rejected by the Kashmiris on both sides of the line of control in 1972 because their views were not included."³²⁷ *Shalimar* debunks the historical narrative that the Simla agreement resulted in a peaceful time for Kashmiris by illustrating how it actually resulted in the intensification of violence perpetrated by the Indian army, as evidenced in the violent crackdown of Pachigam and the repression of Kashmiri Hindus. Just as *Shalimar* wanted to encode Indian-Kashmiri tensions through the United States-Vietnam debacle, he transfers his political frustrations towards India onto his personal animosity for the American ambassador. The result is a displaced, political vendetta that uncannily masks itself as a purely personal one.

When it comes to violence and the threat of the feminine, *Shalimar* seems to function in a parallel manner to *Season*; both represent historical violence as violence done by native men toward native women. In doing so, both novels suggest that the return of the repressed is *always* a return to home that disrupts the timelessness of tradition and other forms of nostalgia. Perhaps such associations allow for an easy linkage between home and the feminine, as native women are the necessary victims or sacrifices of that *unheimlich* return. In *Season*, Hosna Bint Mahmood takes the onus of revenge upon herself as she violently retaliates against the village patriarch by killing him. In *Shalimar*, Boonyi accepts her fate with a Zen-like resignation, but this resignation by no means resolves the political or personal questions that plague the narrative. The problems of the past uncannily linger in the next generation, which necessitate that Kashmira should avenge Boonyi's murder by killing Shalimar, who, like Wad Rayyes, signifies the evils of tradition and religious extremism that seek to control women.

5.3 NOSTALGIA AND THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED: AVENGING THE MOTHER

In its conclusion, *Shalimar* enacts, but does not itself participate in, nostalgia for mother and nation. When India learns the truth of her origins, the novel enacts the familiar soul-searching that one might expect to result from such a momentous insight. With the news that her biological mother is alive comes a piercing longing to "return home" to a place she has never been to: "Kashmira. The weight of the word was too much for her to bear. Kashmira. Her mother was calling to her from the far side of the globe. Her mother who didn't die. Kashmira, her

mother called, *come home*. I'm coming, she called back" (354, my italics). In this instance, the novel aligns the discovery of the mother with one's unknown origins. Uncovering the mother releases a nostalgic, exilic longing to "return" to a home one has never been. Estranged from her home country, mother, and her name, Kashmira has been made foreign, or unhomely, to herself. In the recuperated figure of Boonyi, home, Kashmir, and mother become the same thing, and offer Kashmira the opportunity to discover her origins and return home to the familiar, or homely. The novel thus stages a "return" to one's origins and establishes expectations for an emotional reconnection between mother and daughter and perhaps the daughter's marriage and resettlement in Kashmir. Because Kashmira's return to Kashmir is so seductively rendered, readers may be shocked when Kashmira forcefully repudiates both Kashmir and Yuvraj's love, in favor for her former life in Los Angeles.

Shalimar's narrative structure is circuitous; the novel opens with Max's murder, but does not describe the killing for another forty pages and holds off on divulging who committed the crime for even longer. Nestled in the middle section of the novel is the narrative of Boonyi's own violent end, which the novel does not describe with the same gory detail as it does Max's. In this way, the novel seems to stretch out Max's murder while it compresses Boonyi's, which I read as an instance of a narrative silence. In fact, no description is given at all of Shalimar's murder of Boonyi: "*He said nothing. He was reading the story of her skin. . . . He moved toward her. He was reading her body. He held it in his hands. Now, she commanded him. Now*" (318, emphasis in original). The next thing that readers learn is that Shalimar "was on his way down the pine-forested hill with tears in his eyes" (318). For a novel that spends much time anticipating Boonyi's murder, this sudden distance from the violent event is strange. The narrative silence regarding Boonyi's murder is manifest in the textual "embeddedness" of the event and its

comparative lack of description compared to the other murders in the text. Despite the narrative silence regarding her murder, however, Boonyi remains the central figure around which the violence and mystery of the entire text emanate. As such, crucial aspects of Boonyi's fate remain textually mysterious. Not until Kashmiri visits the site of her mother's murder does the novel divulge a few very cryptic details of her demise.

Shalimar displaces a more detailed telling of Boonyi's murder onto Kashmiri. If *Frankenstein* is "a book constructed like a pregnancy"³²⁸ because "the concentric Russian-doll structure of the narrative 'contains' the monster's story within that of its 'parent,'"³²⁹ then *Shalimar* is constructed as a "reverse" pregnancy because the daughter uncovers the mystery of her mother's fate. The entirety of Boonyi's story is not solely Kashmiri's to tell, yet crucial elements of the mother's fate are left for the daughter to uncover and relay to the reader. The daughter's narrative may concern itself almost solely with the mother's death, yet in doing so it grants her life a comprehensiveness and closure that would otherwise be lacking. In other words, the structural displacement of Boonyi's narrative makes it so that the daughter's narrative contains the mother's. Kashmiri carries the burden of uncovering the truth about her mother's violent fate as well as doling out her own kind of justice toward Shalimar. Like *Bleak House*, *Shalimar* locates the mysteries of origins and legitimacy in the mother. Kashmiri's mysterious adoption estranges her from her origins and makes a mystery of her mother. The mother's infidelity, monstrous pregnancy, and mysterious demise, all locate the maternal figure as the locus of the gothic historical sensibility. Kashmiri's ignorance of her mother's fate and indeed the very cryptic nature in which the text withholds details of her murder demand the mother's *unheimlich* return in the form of the daughter's revenge:

She knelt at her mother's graveside and felt the thing enter her, rapidly, decisively, as if it

had been waiting below ground for her, knowing she would come. The thing had no name but it had a force and it made her capable of anything. . . . [O]nly the past existed, the past and the thing that got into her chest, the thing that made her capable of whatever was necessary, of doing what had to be done. (366, 367-68)

The thing that “got into her” at her mother’s grave is the haunting reminder of the mother’s demise and her untimely murder by her jilted husband. Like Shalimar, Dracula, and Mustafa Sa’eed, Kashmira becomes the uncanny avenger of past injustices that must be righted in the present.

The usually stolid Kashmira is emotionally moved and even tempted by romantic love in her mother’s nostalgic call home, but ultimately feels she must resist romantic love and emotional affect in order for her to avenge the wrongs of the past and recuperate her mother’s damaged honor. In Los Angeles, Kashmira successfully rejects the affective pulls of romantic love in her personal life, but once in Kashmir, she finds a romantic affair with Yuvraj a temptation that threatens to undo her strict sense of control and her entire identity. Yuvraj hints that his home and garden, a “heaven inside a heaven” (361), like Kashmir, “will not last . . . [w]ithout a woman’s touch” (361, emphasis in original). Falling in love with Yuvraj has the allegorical potential to reverse the tide of masculine destruction to both the environment (the garden) and the Kashmiri political sphere while positing a nostalgic “return” to the land of one’s origins in all their idealistic purity. Kashmira gains the strength to refuse romantic love on account of her mother’s history of emotional, romantic, and sexual excess. Kashmira espouses views that seem diametrically opposed to those of her mother: “To love was to risk your life, she thought. . . . Her mother had stepped toward love, defying convention, and it had cost her dearly. If she was wise she would learn the lesson of her mother’s fate” (368). In this case, the gothic

logic of uncanny repetition through transgenerational inheritance allows for a radical change in the affective composition of the family line.

If Kashmira succumbs to the spell of Kashmiri nostalgia and marries Yuvraj, the novel will achieve a sense of closure that will return the narrative to the form of the national romance and its agenda of political and ethnic reconciliation, assimilation, and unity. Likewise, if Kashmira accepts Yuvraj's offer of marriage, then the novel's gothic historicity of repetition will be deferred to yet another generation, and there will be no resolution to the ongoing repetition of violence and *unheimlich* return. When faced with the opportunity to reciprocate Yuvraj's affections, Kashmira contemplates the possibility, but decidedly rejects romantic love as a mode of solution and favors what she views as her call of duty, which is bound up with the fulfillment of justice for her deceased parents. The return of the repressed motivates Kashmira to reject the affective pulls of romantic love and to castigate men in general:

Something got into her at her mother's grave and it would not be denied. . . . How second-rate men were, she told herself. Why would any woman yoke herself to a species of such pouting mediocrity? . . . It was men who went in for the behavior they had the effrontery to call feminine, while women carried the world on their backs. It was men who were the cowards and women who were the warriors. Let him [Yuvraj] hide behind his pots and rugs if he wanted! She had a battle to fight, and her war zone was on the far side of the world. . . . This man, too, she would manage to forget. Love was a deception and a snare. The facts were that her life was elsewhere and that she wanted to return to it. . . . [She] flew ten thousand miles away from the unstable dangers of his useless love. (369-70)

By rejecting her own national romance—as posited in the romantic union with Yuvraj—Kashmira is able to shelve sentimentality and nostalgia and gain a rational distance from Kashmir, all of which enable her to avenge her mother’s honor by attempting to kill Shalimar. Abandonment and the failure of love may lead to monstrosity for both Frankenstein’s creature and Boonyi, but it becomes apparent a generation later that love masks its own coercion. In recovering the hidden story of her mother, Kashmira realizes the extent to which marriage rests upon violent patriarchal codes of female sexual fidelity, and upward mobility rests upon the prostitution of one’s sexuality. Fresh with these insights about love, it is no wonder that Kashmira should reject romantic love, for it carries the threat of repeating her mother’s folly.

As noted before, the novel deploys gothic themes and tropes at the precise moment in which the allegory strains or breaks down. In many ways Kashmira is the product of two gothic moments in the text: she is the child of a monstrous mother Boonyi (India) and is the adopted daughter of a bitter and disappointed woman (Western charity). Kashmira’s rejection of romantic love and sentimental nostalgia reconfigures the political possibility of romantic love. In the figure of Kashmira, the novel rejects the politics of romantic love that the novel embraced in the idealistic unions of Shalimar and Boonyi and Max and Peggy. The novel invests her pragmatism and emotional flatness (her lack of affective investment in others) with the possibility to avenge the wrongs of the past. In other words, romantic love is the fundamental structure that establishes both the national allegory and the conflict in the novel (Boonyi’s betrayal of Shalimar and the breakdown of *Kashmiriyat*; Max’s betrayal of Peggy and the waning of post-war anti-parochialism; and Max’s betrayal of Boonyi, or the United States’ sacrifice of Kashmir for its pro-Pakistani foreign policy), which engenders its own monstrous forms, unhomely effects, and *unheimlich* avengers.

The final scene of the novel is one that not only determines whether Shalimar lives or dies, but also makes a statement on the viability of Kashmiriyat, the national romance's reconciliatory political potential, and the political purchase of nostalgia and sentimentality. The novel ends with Shalimar advancing on an armed Kashmira, whose bow and arrow are poised for deadly attack. Critics of the novel have remarked how the suspenseful concluding scene resembles that in Jonathan Demme's film *Silence of the Lambs*. The resemblance to *Silence of the Lambs* perhaps accounts for the very familiar, almost Hollywood-like ending of the novel that constructs, bit by suspenseful bit, the approach of Shalimar and Kashmira's steadfast and poised arrow. Updike notes that: "The climactic ending, in one more cinematic allusion, suggests the most terrifying scene in 'The Silence of the Lambs.' This time, though, the night-vision goggles are on the eyes of Jodie Foster."³⁰ The novel's allusion to *Silence of the Lambs* accounts, in part, for the disappointing, clichéd feel of the concluding scene. Readers want richness and complexity, not the calculated suspense of a horror film. Yet there is something to be said for Rushdie's gendered reversal of Hollywood clichés because he trains his eye upon the young woman and invests her with the ability to stop Shalimar's cycle of violent revenge. Kashmira acts on behalf of her mother, who accepted her fate without a complaint. When "something" gets into her at her mother's grave, Kashmira inherits her mother's legacy and vows to right the wrongs done to her by Shalimar. The novel's final words in describing Kashmira's final deed resemble Boonyi's nostalgic longing for Kashmira upon giving up the child to Peggy in order to return home to Kashmir: "There was no Kashmira. There was only Kashmir" (218). Boonyi had to choose between the roles of mother and national subject, hence the continual reminder that there was no Kashmira, and only Kashmir for her to live for. The novel's

conclusion returns to this notion, but reverses it:

She [Kashmira] was ready for him. She was not fire but ice. The golden bow was drawn back as far as it could go. She felt the taut bowstring pressing against her parted lips, felt the foot of the arrow's shaft against her gritted teeth, allowed the last seconds to tick away, exhaled and let fly. There was no possibility that she would miss. There was no second chance. There was no India. There was only Kashmira, and Shalimar the clown.
(398)

Like Hosna from *Season*, Kashmira rages against the odious figure of patriarchal culture by doing violence to him. Hosna's violence against the aging patriarch Wad Rayyes was something the narrative avoided, yet it eventually divulged all of the gory details of Hosna's and Rayyes' very violent, sexual attack. We get no such finality in *Shalimar*; Kashmira is poised to do away with Shalimar, yet his fate is something the narrative does not divulge. Shalimar's fate, much like Boonyi's, remains mysterious. Because the novel is reluctant or unwilling to represent the demise of Shalimar, it is also reluctant to let go of the link to Kashmir and *Kashmiriyat* that he embodies. This is fundamentally irreconcilable with the strong image of Kashmira as one who rejects nostalgia, romantic love, and outward shows of emotion. *Shalimar* struggles with its nostalgia, yet is fundamentally unable to move past the seductive image of a homeland (Boonyi and Shalimar) and embrace instead the cosmopolitan exile (Kashmira). Despite the image of a strong woman upon whom the novel pins its hopes, the novel is fundamentally ambivalent toward its feminine heroine. *Shalimar* is, in many ways, a much bleaker novel than *Season*; *Season* was able to realize its own political shortcomings in order to issue the cry for help that we see in the conclusion. In contrast, *Shalimar* is unable to come to terms with its own form of political resolution and offers what *seems* to be a victory of new over old; good over evil; reason

over sentiment; and female over male when in actuality it finds the old virtuous, the evil explainable, and the sentiment honorable. *Shalimar* deploys the gothic in order to portray this deeply divided sensibility about home and homeland. In the end, *Shalimar* cannot give up the ghost of home; it continues to linger and lurk long after the arrow is shot.

ENDNOTES

¹ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (New York: Longman, 1980), 20.

² Fred Botting, *Gothic* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-2.

³ Ian Watt, "Time and Family in the Gothic Novel: *The Castle of Otranto*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 10 (1986): 158.

⁴ Robert Miles, "The Gothic and Ideology," in *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions*, ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003), 61.

⁵ In a similar fashion, the gothic provides William Faulkner with a narrative mode with which to represent race, repression, and buried histories with respect to the American South. We may read concerns with displacement, legitimacy, race, and repressed histories in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* as a form of racial imperialism or hegemony that haunts multiple generations of Southern families. Charles Baker writes that in *Absalom, Absalom!*: "Sutpen's Hundred itself symbolizes the South: Sutpen's initial acquisition of the land reveals his own imperialist tendencies and initiates a chain of displacement." *William Faulkner's Postcolonial South* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 71. For Faulkner, the historical legacy of the American South is written according to the logic of the phantom or revenant and takes its shape as a historical haunting that is conducted in and through the individual family. While this Southern history is shaped by the events of the Civil War, it is an intimate family affair that is shaped and, hence, haunted by its legacy of patriarchal inheritance from father to son.

⁶ Lucie Armitt, "The Magical Realism of the Contemporary Gothic." In *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 307.

⁷ Judie Newman focuses her discussion of the postcolonial gothic in Jhabvala's novel, but names Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, Anne Hébert's *Héloïse*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet*, and Isak Dinesen's *Seven Gothic Tales* as constitutive of the postcolonial gothic. "Postcolonial Gothic: Ruth Praver Jhabvala and the Sobhraj Case," *Modern Fiction Studies* 40 (1994): 85-100. Additionally, Victor Sage considers J.G. Farrell's *Empire Trilogy* as a postcolonial gothic work. "The Ghastly and the Ghostly: the Gothic Farce of Farrell's 'Empire Trilogy,'" in *Empire and the Gothic*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, 172-191 (New York: Palgrave, 2003). While he does not name them explicitly as gothic, David Punter reads a host of postcolonial novels, including V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*, Arundhati Roy's *The Reading in the Dark*, Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, and Fred D'Aguiar's (2007) *Feeding the Ghosts*, for their haunted houses, and spectral and phantomatic understanding of postcoloniality. *Postcolonial Imaginings* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

⁸ Bernd-Peter Lange, "Postcolonial Gothic: Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*." In "*The Decolonizing Pen*": *Cultural Diversity and the Transnational Imaginary in Rushdie's Fiction*, ed. Liselotte Glage and Ruediger Kunow (Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier), 42.

⁹ Newman, "Postcolonial Gothic," 86.

¹⁰ Lange, "Postcolonial Gothic," 49.

¹¹ Robert Heilman argues that Charlotte Brontë's works should be understood not as realist, but as exemplars of what he calls a "new gothic" form. For example, *Jane Eyre*'s form endorses reason and an accurate portrayal of real life, but the narrative is shot through with an intensity of emotion and unregulated feeling that connect it with a distinctly gothic mode of excess. In doing so, Heilman believes that Brontë "finds new ways to achieve the ends

served by old Gothic” (121). “Charlotte Brontë’s ‘New Gothic,’” in *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad*, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 121. Brontë’s “new” form of gothic is constituted by something less tangible; her foray into the dark elements of inner life and its unrelegated obsessions and feelings forms the basis for a new version of the gothic mode. Heilman believes that this departure inward from the more exterior world of reason and concrete reality “released her [Brontë] from the patterns of the novel of society and therefore permitted the flowering of her real talent—the talent for finding and giving dramatic form to impulses and feelings which, because of their depth or mysteriousness or intensity or ambiguity, or of their ignoring or transcending everyday norms of propriety or reason, increase wonderfully the sense of reality in the novel” (132).

¹² In my selection of texts, I have purposely avoided much of what may already be considered standard exemplars of the postcolonial gothic, such as Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* because I wish to expand the category of what constitutes the gothic, and to perform different ways of reading texts that are not usually read as constituting the postcolonial gothic.

¹³ James Norton reminds us that Walpole’s love of the gothic began “as a love for antiquarian collectibles and medieval ruins.” “The First English Gothic Novel: Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*,” in *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: The British and American Traditions*, ed. Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003), 93. For more on how the gothic revival was enacted through architectural renovation, see Hussey, *The Picturesque*; Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins*; and McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*.

¹⁴ Jonathan Arac, “Narrative Form and Social Sense in *Bleak House* and *The French Revolution*,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 32 (1977): 59.

¹⁵ Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

¹⁶ Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 5-6.

¹⁷ Ronald Paulson, “Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution,” *ELH* 48 (1981): 534.

¹⁸ For more on the conventions of gothic fiction, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick argues that the gothic novel, more than any other narrative form, is “pervasively conventional. Once you know that a novel is of the Gothic kind, you can predict its contents with an unnerving certainty.” *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986), 9.

¹⁹ Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History’s Nightmares* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), vi.

²⁰ Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 11.

²¹ Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, xviii.

²² Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴ Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 52.

²⁵ Robert Miles, “The Gothic and Ideology,” 62.

²⁶ Toni Wein, *British Identities, Heroic Nationalisms, and the Gothic Novel, 1764-1824* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 53.

²⁷ Horace Walpole, introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, by Horace Walpole, in *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. E.F. Bleiler, (New York: Dover, 1966), 18 (my italics).

²⁸ Walpole, introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, 17.

²⁹ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, in *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1966), 81.

³⁰ Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 99.

³¹ Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 53.

³² David H. Richter, “From Medievalism to Historicism: Representations of History in the Gothic Novel and Historical Romance,” *Studies in Medievalism* 4 (1992): 89.

³³ Peter K. Garrett argues that *Otranto* gives life to inanimate objects (the bleeding statue of Alfonso) and in doing so, engages with one form of the Freudian uncanny. He argues: “The most genuinely uncanny effect of *The Castle of Otranto* may be this collapsing of superstition and enlightenment into the common terms of narrative power.”

Walpole’s use of inanimate objects “violate[s] the boundary between life and death or animate and inanimate and

incite[s] readers to take positions in constructing naturalistic or preternaturalistic versions.” *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 50-51.

³⁴ Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 4-7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁸ Wein, *British Identities, Heroic Nationalisms, and the Gothic Novel, 1764-1824*, 56.

³⁹ Many have written on the link between *Otranto* and questions of British nationalism. For example, E.J. Clery maintains that: “By the second half of the eighteenth century, debate over the divinely appointed succession of kings was effectively dead, whereas patrilineal inheritance of land and titled to be a live issue. . . . [The eighteenth century] as to be the scene of a ceaseless struggle to maintain the legitimacy of the aristocracy’s continuing political and economic domination of a rapidly changing society on the basis of a mystique of land.” *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 73. Markman Ellis situates the novel within Britain’s own succession crisis. Ellis argues that: “The novel’s focus on Otranto’s succession crisis points the reader back to Britain’s tumultuous politics of the previous century, during which two kings were deposed. The novel offers tacit support for the political settlement of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which the Dutch Protestant prince, William of Orange, deposed the catholic king, James Stuart—figuring Theodore as William and Manfred as the autocratic James. In terms of contemporary political discourse, Manfred’s autocratic rule would have appeared as a curiously resonant political settlement, reminiscent of the Jacobite crypto-Stuart conspiracy against the Whig constitution, and the notorious abuses and corruption of the Whig ministry (1727–41) of Walpole’s father.” Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*, 38. For more on the question of *Otranto* and nationalism, see James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); and Benjamin Bird, “Treason and Imagination: The Anxiety of Legitimacy in the Subject of the 1760s,” *Romanticism* 12 (2006): 189-99.

⁴⁰ Sue Chaplin, “Specters of Law in *The Castle of Otranto*,” *Romanticism* 12 (2006): 176-77.

⁴¹ Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, 60.

⁴² From *Don Quixote* on, the novel was considered an “illegitimate” or “mongrel” form. Despite its mongrel origins, the novel is still a new form.

⁴³ George Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/ Gothic Form* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 3. Markman Ellis makes a similar observation about *Otranto* and the politics of Walpole’s “new” narrative form in *The History of Gothic Fiction*: “The gothic is not the destroyer of civilized values of classical Rome, but rather is perceived as the source and repository of some of the unique, valuable, and essential elements of English culture and politics” (24).

⁴⁴ Robert Miles writes in “The Gothic and Ideology” that: “According to the Whig myth, the Gothic constitution was the incarnation of legitimacy and succession. A single organic line linked the Saxon witenagemot, Magna Carta, parliament, the two revolutions, [the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution] and the present joyful status quo of constitutional monarchy, a line without any gaps or ruptures capable of throwing into doubt the appeal to Gothic precedent on which the whole ideological edifice rested” (61). For more on the connections between the gothic and Whig mythology, see Smith, *The Gothic Bequest: Medieval Institutions in British Thought, 1688-1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Kliger, *The Goths in England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952); and Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto, in Capital, The Communist Manifesto, and Other Writings of Karl Marx*, ed. Max Eastman (New York: Modern Library, 1958), 320.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Blackwell, 1967), 233-34.

⁴⁷ David Farrell Krell, “*Das Unheimliche*: Architectural Sections of Heidegger and Freud,” *Research in Phenomenology* 22 (1992): 44.

⁴⁸ Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 9

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 41.

⁵¹ To this effect, Césaire argues that: “[A] nation which colonizes, . . . a civilization which justifies colonization—and therefore force—is already a sick civilization, a civilization which is morally diseased, which irresistibly, progressing from one consequence to another, one denial to another, calls for its Hitler, I mean its punishment.” *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵² Chalmers Johnson explains that the term “blowback” originates in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and is their way of explaining “the unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people. What the daily press reports as malign acts of ‘terrorists’ or ‘drug lords’ or ‘rogue states’ or ‘illegal arms merchants’ often turn out to be blowback from earlier American operations.” *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Owl Books, 2004), 8. In his essay on Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*, Jerry Phillips uses the term “blowback” to probe the ways in which the “return of the imperial program inevitably establishes a critical dialogue with the domestic institutions of the ‘mother country,’” “The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*,” in *The Secret Garden*, ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (New York: Norton, 2006), 343. In the context of *The Secret Garden*, little Mary Lennox’s move from colonial India back to Britain is understood as an allegory for the “return” of empire back home, which is displaced into a discourse on British class politics. For more on blowback within the context of contemporary political discourse, see Hook and Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II*; Colás and Saull, *The War on Terror and the American ‘Empire’ after the Cold War*; Boggs, *Masters of War*; Simpson, *The Splendid Blond Beast and Blowback*.

⁵³ Phillips, “The Mem Sahib,” 343.

⁵⁴ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 478. When she realizes Osmond’s true character and the extent of her marital entrapment, Isabel describes her dwelling as a gothic house of terror: “She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. Between these four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation.” *Ibid.*, 478.

⁵⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁸ Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, 252.

⁵⁹ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McClintock (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 148.

⁶⁰ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 123-24.

⁶¹ Robert Young, “Psychoanalytic Criticism: Has It Got Beyond a Joke?” *Paragraph* 4 (1986): 93.

⁶² Nicholas Royle reminds us that the word “uncanny” has an interesting linguistic lineage in the English language. He writes: “The ‘uncanny’ comes from Scotland, from that ‘auld country’ that has so often been represented as ‘beyond the borders’, liminal, an English foreign body. The ‘uncanny’ comes out of a language which is neither purely English (as if there could be such a thing) nor foreign. The poetic roots of the modern sense of this word in Scots present a vignette of the uncanny: uncertainties at the origin concerning colonization and the foreign body, and a mixing of what is at once old and long-familiar with what is strangely ‘fresh’ and new; a pervasive linking of death, mourning and spectrality, especially in terms of storytelling, transgenerational inheritance and knowledge; and last but hardly least, a sense of the strange and irreducibly unsettling ‘place’ of language in any critical reflection on uncanniness.” *The Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 12.

⁶³ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 126.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶⁵ Charles Dickens, introduction to *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 7.

⁶⁶ Maria Tatar, “The Houses of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny,” *Comparative Literature* 33 (1981): 181.

⁶⁷ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 111-12.

⁶⁸ In *Melmoth the Wanderer*, familial identification is also made through a resemblance to a portrait. Like the portrait in *Otranto*, the portrait in *Melmoth* is endowed with supernatural life. Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶⁹ Dickens, *Bleak House*, 292.

⁷⁰ Walpole, introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, 18.

⁷¹ Dickens, *Bleak House*, 587.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 82, 85.

⁷³ David Plotkin, "Home-Made Savages: Cultivating English Children in *Bleak House*," *Pacific Coast Philology* 32 (1997): 17.

⁷⁴ I chose *Bleak House* for the purposes of this discussion because it demonstrates so well the connections between gothic and realism; private (house) and public (city); and sentimentality and social critique. Other examples of nineteenth-century British novels that deploy the gothic in an innovative way for the purposes of a social critique include Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*; and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.

⁷⁵ Allan Pritchard, "The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 45 (1991): 435-35.

⁷⁶ Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 35.

⁷⁷ Dickens, *Bleak House*, 83 (my italics).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁹ Lillian Nayder, "Class Consciousness and the Indian Mutiny in Dickens's 'The Perils of Certain English Prisoners,'" *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 32 (1992): 691.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸¹ Bruce Robbins, "Telescopic Philanthropy: Professionalism and Responsibility in *Bleak House*," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990): 215.

⁸² Deirdre David writes that "writing about empire . . . elaborates Victorian gender politics." *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire, and Victorian Writing* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995), 5.

⁸³ Timothy Carens, *Outlandish English Subjects in the Victorian Domestic Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 86. Carens goes on to write that: "The middle-class woman's proper civilizing mission . . . consists of performing and imparting the duties that sustain the middle-class English domestic sphere and thus preserve distinctions between 'home' and Borrioboola-Gha. Although the figure of the gradually expanding circle suggests the potential for incrementally extending 'civilization' beyond that sphere, Dickens remains suspicious of projects in which middle-class women attempt to carry the torch too far" (105).

⁸⁴ Carens, *Outlandish English Subjects in the Victorian Domestic Novel*, 95. Eric G. Lorentzen also focuses on the African imagery in *Bleak House*, but unlike Carens, views the novel as Dickens's "most sustained polemic against colonialism." "'Obligations of Home': Colonialism, Contamination, and Revolt in *Bleak House*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 34 (2004), 155. Dickens wrote a review of the *A Narrative of the Expedition Sent by her Majesty's Government to The River Niger in 1841 under the Command of H.D. Trotter* in which we find many echoes of Esther Summerson: "Gently and imperceptibly the widening circle of enlightenment must stretch and stretch, from man to man, from people on to people. . . . [N]o convulsive effort, or far-off aim, can make the last great outer circle first, and then come home at leisure to trace out the inner one . . . [T]he work at home must be completed thoroughly, or there is no hope abroad." Review of *A Narrative of the Expedition Sent by her Majesty's Government to The River Niger in 1841*, *The Examiner* 19 August (1848): 533.

⁸⁵ For example, Allan Woodcourt leaves England in order to be a surgeon on board an English military ship bound for India; Grandfather Smallweed is described as a "pigmy" (349); *Bleak House* contains a "Native-Hindoo chair . . . brought from India" (86); the Bagnet family were involved in English empire abroad and have named their children (Quebec, Malta, and Woolwich) after various places and military barracks; one of Mrs. Badger's former husbands, Captain Swosser, suffered from a yellow fever, which he contracted from his service in Africa (206). Dickens, *Bleak House*.

⁸⁶ In this sense, I disagree with James Buzard's reading of the place of Africa in *Bleak House*. For Buzard, Africa is "a name for the 'place-less,' unrepresented, external spaces of unmeaning of unvalued against which British consequential ground locates itself." "'Anywhere's Nowhere': *Bleak House* as Autoethnography," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 12 (1999): 15. Continues Buzard: "In the moral logic of Dickens's novel, readers are not to object to Mrs. Jellyby's misdirected charity because it has deleterious effects 'out there'—there are no effects out there; they are to protest its waste of resources needed in that bounded region of 'home' where they can have effects." *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁷ Dickens, *Bleak House*, 15.

⁸⁸ Alice van Buren Kelley, "The Bleak Houses of *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25 (1970): 254.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹⁰ John Jarndyce never admits whether or not the Jarndyce property that is in Chancery is Tom-all-Along's. The name, however, indicates that it has something to do with Tom Jarndyce, the tragic victim of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*, who commits suicide in *Bleak House*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 710 (my italics).

⁹² In Dickens's day, there was the common understanding that: "If a house be seen in a peculiarly dilapidated condition, the beholder at once exclaims, 'Surely that property must be in Chancery.'" Editorial, *The London Times*, December 24, 1850.

⁹³ Grace Moore, *Dickens and Empire: Discourses of Class, Race and Colonialism in the Works of Charles Dickens* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 23.

⁹⁴ Additionally, the novel modifies gothic tropes of monstrosity and represents lawyers, usurers, landlords, and the like as vampires, ogres, goblins, and cannibals. For example, Grandfather Smallweed is described as "ogreish" (547) and having an "air of goblin rakishness" (337) about him. Mr. Vohles has "something of the vampire in him" (924) and is described as a "man-eating . . . cannibal" (622-23). Dickens, *Bleak House*.

⁹⁵ Arac, "Narrative Form and Social Sense in *Bleak House* and *The French Revolution*," 62.

⁹⁶ Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: 18th-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁸ Freud, "The Uncanny," 143.

⁹⁹ Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud explores Moses and the historical roots of Judaism by identifying Moses as first and foremost an Egyptian. In doing so, Freud wishes "to deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons" in the service of truth, and not "national interests" prescribed by Zionism. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 3. Also in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud denies that Jews are the "foreigners" of Europe who are somehow fundamentally different from their gentile hosts. In doing so, he recuperates a European identity for the Jews in a historical period in which Europe was outright hostile to them. In *Freud and the Non-European*, Edward Said reads Freud's strange reevaluation of the relationship between Moses and Egypt to the current relationship between Europe and the Jews and wonders: "Could it be, perhaps, that the shadow of anti-Semitism spreading so ominously over his world in the last decade of his life caused him protectively to huddle the Jews inside, so to speak, the sheltering realm of the European?" Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, 2003), 40. If we frame Freud's project within the language of the *unheimlich*, we may say that Freud wished to collapse the distinction between the *heimlich* (gentile Europeans) and the *unheimlich* (the Jewish presence within Europe) in order to reconceptualize what constituted Europeanness and foreignness. Freud identified himself as a German and Jewish; he did not necessarily view these two things as contradictory or mutually exclusive. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud emphasizes that Jews were present in Europe since the days of the Roman Empire and, as Said notes, "made valuable contributions to the surrounding civilization." Said, *Freud and the Non-European*, 39. One has to wonder about the extent to which Freud's fascination with the *unheimlich* in 1919—twenty years prior to his publication of *Moses and Monotheism*—itself originated in his own feelings of alienation as a secular Jew living in Europe in a time in which that identity was radically racialized. If there is indeed a link between Freud's personal alienation and the historical context of European anti-Semitism, then we can understand the notion of the *unheimlich* that informs the gothic as stemming from a profoundly racial and racializing experience of alienation.

¹⁰¹ Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 6.

¹⁰² Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 112.

¹⁰³ Georg Lukács, *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John and Necke Mander (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 19.

¹⁰⁴ Frederic Jameson claims that: "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of a national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society." "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Literature and Politics* 15 (1986): 69.

¹⁰⁵ J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 39.

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Arac, "The House and the Railroad: *Dombey and Son* and *The House of the Seven Gables*," *The New England Quarterly* 51 (1978): 6-7.

¹⁰⁷ Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹¹⁰ Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 2-3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹² Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and its Discontents: Woman and the Nation," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 382.

¹¹³ Winifred Woodhull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 11.

¹¹⁴ Newman, "Postcolonial Gothic," 86.

¹¹⁵ In this way, we may view *Country* as problematizing Partha Chatterjee's claim that women function as symbols under which cultural or social problems are resolved or mediated. Chatterjee notes that in Bengali India, the woman question seemed to be absent from nationalist discourse. National issues dominated public discourse; the usual concerns about women's place in a postcolonial nationalist project seemed curiously absent. Chatterjee explains that postcolonial Bengali nationalism lacked a gendered component because it had "solved" the woman question through the creation of a new patriarchy that deployed a discourse of tradition, but did so in a way that was different from before. Bengali nationalist discourse conscribed women to the home, but her function there was a distinctly modern phenomenon: "The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not lose their essentially spiritual (i.e. feminine) virtues. . . . There would have to be a marked difference in the degree and manner of westernization of women, as distinct from men, in the modern world of the nation." "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 243.

¹¹⁶ Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, 2003), 23 (my italics).

¹¹⁷ For example, Saree Makdisi reads *Season* as a counternarrative that "participates (in an oppositional way) in the afterlife of the same project [as Conrad's] today, by 'writing back' to the colonial power that once ruled the Sudan." "The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present." *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 805. Mohammed Shaheen traces the similarities between Kurtz and Mustafa Sa'eed and argues that Sa'eed's migration north "echoes Kurtz's journey, but in reverse." (89). "Tayeb Salih and Conrad," *Comparative Literature Studies* 22 (1984): 156. Edward Said claims that Salih's "novel is also a rewriting of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, seen now as the tale of someone who voyages into the heart of light, which is modern Europe, and discovers there what has been hidden deep within him." "The Politics of Knowledge," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, ed. Edward W. Said (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 381. R.S. Krishnan writes that "Salih's work reclaims for itself both the fictive territory and the imagined topos of Conrad's Africa, and substitutes a postcolonial retelling, a new mythos for Africa, for a colonizing tale." "Reinscribing Conrad: Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*," *The International Fiction Review* 23 (1996): 7.

¹¹⁸ Barbara Harlow argues that *Season* "participates . . . in what, in Arabic literary terms, is called *mu'aradah*, literally opposition, contradiction. . . . [*Season*] is a re-reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*, a re-statement of the tragedy, a re-shaping of the tragic figure of the Moor." "Sentimental Orientalism: *Season of Migration to the North* and *Othello*," in *Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North: A Casebook*, ed. Mona Takieddine Amyuni (Beirut, Lebanon: American University of Beirut Press, 1985), 75. Ferial Ghazoul (1998) interprets *Season's* intertextuality with *Othello* as an figuration of collective Arab rage. "The Arabization of *Othello*," *Comparative Literature* 50: 21.

¹¹⁹ Wail Hassan notes that *Season* evokes *Nahda* Arabic literary works such as Tawfiq al-Hakim's '*Ushur min al-sharq* (*A Bird from the East*), Yahya Haqqi's *Qindil Umm Hashim* (*The Lamp of Umm Hashim*), and Suhayl Idris's

Al-hayy al-latini (The Latin Quarter). Tayib Saleh: *Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 83.

¹²⁰ Jerry Phillips, “The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*,” in *The Secret Garden*, ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (New York: Norton, 2006), 343.

¹²¹ Christopher Simpson. *Blowback: America’s Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 5.

Johnson (2000) explains that the term “blowback” originates in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and is their way of explaining “the unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people. What the daily press reports as malign acts of “terrorists” or “drug lords” or “rogue states” or “illegal arms merchants” often turn out to be blowback from earlier American operations” (8).

¹²² Mary Layoun comments that while nationalism is “constructed as a narrative . . . the narrative of nationalism postulates a narrative future or constructs a telos, presumably one deriving from the structure and content of the narrative—and the nation—itsself.” Layoun, “Telling Spaces: Palestinian women, National Narratives,” in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Routledge, 1992), 411.

¹²³ Stephen Arata, “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization.” *Victorian Studies* Summer (1990): 634.

¹²⁴ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, Introduction to *Woman-Nation-State*, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (New York: St. Martin’s, 1989), 7. For more on the figure of women in the national narrative, see Amireh, “Between Complicity and Subversion;” Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*; Moghadam, *Gender and National Identity*; Layoun, “A Guest at the Wedding” and “Telling Spaces;” Radhakrishnan, “Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity;” Joseph, “Women Between Nation and State in Lebanon;” and Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*.

¹²⁵ Deniz Kandiyoti, “National Identity and Its Discontents: Woman and the Nation,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 382.

¹²⁶ Arata, “The Occidental Tourist,” 630.

¹²⁷ David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 38.

¹²⁸ Hibernian readings of *Dracula* include Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals*; Morash, “Ever under Some Unnatural Condition;” Deane, *Strange Country*; Moses, “The Irish Vampire;” Schmitt, *Alien Nation*; Daly, “The Colonial Roots of *Dracula*,” and Stewart, “Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.”

¹²⁹ Moses, “The Irish Vampire,” 93.

¹³⁰ Christopher Craft, “‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” *Representations* 8 (1984): 111. For more on homosexuality and *Dracula*, with respect to the trial of Oscar Wilde, see Shaffer, “‘A Wilde Desire Took Me.’” For more on *Dracula* and sexuality, see Roth, “Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*; and Stevenson, “A Vampire in the Mirror;” Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*; and Bentley, “The Monster in the Bedroom.”

¹³¹ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 183.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 183.

¹³³ Joseph Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 74 (my italics).

¹³⁴ Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals*, 41.

¹³⁵ Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt*, 3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁷ There has been a great deal written on the vampire as a cultural Other whose practices threaten the purity of the English nation through an invasion into the sanctity of the home and family. For example, Nancy Armstrong writes that *Dracula* “uses the foreigner, the Jew, the Oriental, and the immigrant to render intolerable all social groupings hostile to the family.” *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 147. H.L. Malchow, Christopher Frayling, Jules Zanger, and Judith Halberstam interpret *Dracula* as a figure of the wandering Jew. Halberstam, for instance, argues: “*Dracula*’s need to ‘consume as many lives as he can,’ his feminized because non-phallic sexuality, and his ambulism that causes him to wander far

from home in search of new blood mark him with all the signs of a Jewish neurosis.” *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 98. More general discussions of Dracula’s cultural otherness with respect to a Victorian concern with cultural degeneration and decay, see Spencer, “Purity and Danger: *Dracula*, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis;” Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*; Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-c.1918*; and Mighall, “Sex, History, and the Vampire.”

¹³⁸ Van Helsing’s theories of the “criminal mind” are taken from well-known nineteenth century studies, such as Nordau, *Degeneration*; Lombroso, *The Female Offender and Criminal Man*.

¹³⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 12.

¹⁴⁰ Stoker, *Dracula*, 27.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 45 (my italics).

¹⁴³ Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fiction and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 2.

¹⁴⁴ Nicholas Daly reads the band of brothers who join together to protect Mina as an “origin tale for a new professional class.” *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 26.

¹⁴⁵ The phrase “new woman” was originally coined by Sarah Grand, 1894. “The New Aspect of the Woman Question.” *North American Review* 158 (1894): 271-73. “New woman” usually conjures images of an unmarried woman who wore bloomers, smoked cigarettes, and drank alcohol. In reality, there was no such consensus on what constituted the new woman. Women were considered to be “new women” if they challenged the definitions of what constituted women’s nature, and their traditional roles as wives and mothers only. For more on the figure of the new woman in *Dracula*, see Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*; Eltis, “Corruption of the Blood and Degeneration of the Race;” and Senf, “*Dracula*: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman.”

¹⁴⁶ Sos Eltis, “Corruption of the Blood and Degeneration of the Race,” in *Dracula*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 454.

¹⁴⁷ Stoker, *Dracula*, 240.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 257 (my italics).

¹⁴⁹ Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Clark, “The Battle of Omdurman in the Context of Sudanese History,” in *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised*, ed. Edward M. Spiers (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 202.

¹⁵¹ Abdel Salam Sidahmed and Alsir Sidahmed, *Sudan* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 14. The Mahdiya was a period of revolt in the Sudan led by Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah and saw the establishment of an independent Mahdist state that lasted from 1881–1898. Born of decades of resentment toward colonial Turco-Egyptian policies, the Mahdi organized an uprising built on Islamic principles, and sought to recuperate Sudanese territory and form it into an independent, mostly Islamic, state. The Mahdi identified both Britain and Egypt as colonizing forces in the Sudan. A Mahdist state was established in Omdurman, northern Sudan, in 1885, and after the death of Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah, also in 1885, was governed by three lieutenants, or khalifas.

¹⁵² Robin Neillands writes that: “The reconquest of the Sudan was a three-year campaign fought in annual phases. In 1896 Kitchener retook the province of Dongola. In 1897 the Anglo-Egyptian army advanced to Berber and the Atbara river. Finally, in 1898, the Dervishes were defeated at the Atbara and overwhelmed outside the city of Omdurman. During this final phase the British army returned in force to Egypt and the Sudan.” *The Dervish Wars : Gordon and Kitchener in the Sudan 1880-1898* (London : John Murray, 1996), 176.

¹⁵³ Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated,” 813.

¹⁵⁴ Alice Moore-Harrell claims that: “The European states showed little interest in the Sudan at this time [the late 1870s] except in economic matters, when they thought the Sudan could support the Egyptian treasury and its ability to repay debts. . . . [T]he east coast of Africa and the Red Sea received priority owing to their strategic location and for economic reasons. Instability in these regions could threaten Britain’s maritime artery to India and the Far East.” *Gordon and the Sudan: Prologue to the Mahdiyya, 1877-1880* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 232.

¹⁵⁵ Clark, “The Battle of Omdurman in the Context of Sudanese History,” 215. For more on the relationship between Gordon’s death and Kitchener’s revenge in the Sudan, see Beckett, “Kitchener and the Politics of Command;” and Neillands, *The Dervish Wars*.

¹⁵⁶ Dominic Green writes that the extent of Kitchener’s revenge troubled the British public and even Kitchener’s colleague, Winston Churchill. Writes Green: “In a mostly lopsided slaughter, Kitchener had overseen the killing of over ten thousand Dervishes [or Mahdist *Ansar*]. Hundreds more had been killed in Omdurman the night after the battle, when the Sudanese troops had exacted their own revenge on the Mahdists. Thousands of wounded were left to die on the sunbaked plain outside the city. . . . Kitchener’s abandonment of the Dervish wounded gave rise to a story that he had ordered their killing. . . . His methods had been brutal. In Britain, even imperialists wondered if Kitchener, by waging total war on savages, had himself become a barbarian.” *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869-1899* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 265.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Tayyeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1970), 120. Subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically in the text.

¹⁵⁸ Green includes this infamous exchange between Kitchener and Mahmoud Wad Ahmed and chronicles as such: “‘Are you the man Mahmoud?’” Kitchener asked. Almost as tall as Kitchener, Mahmoud looked the infidel in the eye. ‘Yes. I am Mahmoud, and I am the same as you.’ ‘Why have you come to make war here?’ ‘I came because I was told—the same as you.’ Kitchener paraded Mahmoud through the streets of Berber, his hands bound.” *Three Empires on the Nile*, 255.

¹⁵⁹ Sa’eed’s characterization of his colonial education as learning “how to say ‘Yes’ in their language” (95) references Caliban’s speech in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*: “You taught me language, and my profit on’t/ Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/ For learning me your language!” *The Tempest*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katherine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 1997), 1.2 366–68.

¹⁶⁰ Heather Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 43.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 52 (my italics).

¹⁶² Concerning “colonial alienation,” Thiong’o writes: “For a colonial child, the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably broken. This resulted in the disassociation of the sensibility of that child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the center of the universe. This disassociation, divorce, or alienation from the immediate environment becomes clearer when you look at colonial language as a carrier of culture.” Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), 17.

¹⁶³ Adonis, *An Introduction to Arab Poetics*, trans. Catherine Cobham (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 60.

¹⁶⁴ Barbara Harlow, “Sentimental Orientalism: *Season of Migration to the North* and *Othello*,” 77.

¹⁶⁵ Wail Hassan, *Tayeb Salih*, 92.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁶⁷ Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 62-63.

¹⁶⁸ Mona Takieddine Amyuni, Introduction to *Tayeb Salih’s Season of Migration to the North: A Casebook*, 19.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁰ The novel does distinguish between northern and southern parts of the Sudan. Sa’eed’s mother, for example, originates from southern Sudan and is a former slave.

¹⁷¹ Hassan, *Tayeb Salih*, 115.

¹⁷² Abdallah Laraoui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* Trans. Diarmid Cammell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), vii.

¹⁷³ Hisham Sharabi writes that “neopatriarchal society was the outcome of modern Europe’s colonization of the patriarchal Arab world, of the marriage of imperialism and patriarchy.” *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21.

¹⁷⁴ Saree Makdisi, "Post Colonial Literature in a Neo-Colonial World: Modern Arabic Literature and the End of Modernity," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 283.

¹⁷⁵ Notable *plaasromans* from this period include the works of Van den Heever, *Op die Plaas; Droogte; Somer*; and Laar, *Laat Vrugte*; and Malherbe, *Die Meulenaar*.

¹⁷⁶ J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture and Letters of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 83. Subsequent references to this work will be made parenthetically in my text.

¹⁷⁷ Jennifer Wenzel, "The Pastoral Promise and the Political Imperative: The Plaasroman Tradition in an Era of Land Reform," *Modern Fiction Studies* 46 (2000): 94.

¹⁷⁸ Hein Viljoen identifies the Afrikaans novels of Tryna du Toit as exemplary of the "light" period of *plaasromans*. "Land, Space, Identity: The Literary Construction of Space in Three Afrikaans Farm Novels," in *Storyscapes: South African Perspectives on Literature, Space, and Identity*, ed. Hein Viljoen and Chris N. van der Merwe (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 109.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁸⁰ Viljoen (2004) translates these Afrikaans titles respectively as *Foxtrot of the Meat Eaters, Ancestral Voices, The Master Breeder, Deep Waters*, and *This Life*. *Ibid.* 109-110.

¹⁸¹ In this chapter, I make use of Coetzee's notion of "lineal consciousness," which is a sense of identity that is based upon the historical line of lineage, inheritance, and ancestry as it is tied to the occupation of the South African land. See Coetzee, *White Writing*, 63-114.

¹⁸² Rita Barnard, "Dream Topographies: J.M. Coetzee and the South African Pastoral." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93 (1994): 110 (my italics).

¹⁸³ For a contemporary novel that tells the story of displacement from the cape, see Wicomb, *David's Story*.

¹⁸⁴ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 46.

¹⁸⁵ For more on the works of Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee within a larger context of South African letters, see Rich, "Tradition and Revolt in South African Fiction;" and Easton, "Text and Hinterland."

¹⁸⁶ Teresa Dovey, *The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories* (Cape Town: AD Donker, 1988), 150.

¹⁸⁷ Oliver Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 237.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15-16 (my italics).

¹⁸⁹ Malvern van Wyk Smith. "From 'Boereplaas' to Vlakplaas," in *Strangely Familiar: South African Narratives in Town and Countryside*, ed. C.N. Van der Merwe (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Content Solutions Online), 28.

¹⁹⁰ Nadine Gordimer, *The Conservationist* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 22-23. Subsequent references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

¹⁹¹ Stephen Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 138.

¹⁹² Irene Gorak, "Libertine Pastoral: Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 24 (1991): 246.

¹⁹³ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 223.

¹⁹⁴ Gorak, "Libertine Pastoral," 246. This "accelerated" development was manifest in several milestones for South Africa's economy. In 1967, South Africa was numbered "amongst the most prosperous and stable nations of the world." Balthazar Johannes Vorster, *Select Speeches* (Bloemfontein, South Africa: Institute for Contemporary History, 1977), 78. In 1974, the United Nations budget committee listed South Africa as one of 26 "developed" nations that saw a flood of local and foreign capital into the country's market, which resulted in a 7.3 percent growth rate in 1973 alone. Gorak, "Libertine Pastoral," 246.

¹⁹⁵ Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 223.

¹⁹⁶ Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, 144.

¹⁹⁷ *The Conservationist* is not the only Gordimer work to feature the buried corpses of Africans. In "Six Feet of the Country," a black Rhodesian dies on the farm of a white couple from Johannesburg. The body is buried and then exhumed. "The implication," writes Stephen Clingman, "is plain: 'six feet of the country' cannot be granted to blacks, even in death. South Africa is a white man's country in which the basic dignities, in death as in life, are not to be afforded to blacks." *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, 140.

¹⁹⁸ Thompson notes that the establishment of locations, or ghettos, was a result of Prime Minister P.W. Botha's policy of "orderly urbanization." Promoted by the Natives Land Act (1913) and the Group Areas Act (1950) and its

amendments, “orderly urbanization” and the creation of locations “confined Africans to specific zones in towns . . . [and] excluded Africans from land ownership outside the Homelands and African townships.” *A History of South Africa*, 226, 228.

¹⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock, ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 124.

²⁰⁰ J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 3. Subsequent references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

²⁰¹ *The Religious System of the Amazulu* is an anthropological report of the Zulu’s ancestor cult collected by the British missionary Henry Callaway that was first published in 1870 and was reissued in facsimile in Cape Town in 1970. For more on the Callaway text, see Thorpe, “The Motif of the Ancestor in *The Conservationist*,” and Newman, “Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*.”

²⁰² Michael Thorpe, “The Motif of the Ancestor in *The Conservationist*,” in *Critical Essays on Nadine Gordimer*, ed. Rowland Smith (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990), 118.

²⁰³ Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Three Rivers, 2000), 181-82.

²⁰⁴ Eleni Coundouriotis, “Rethinking Cosmopolitanism in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist*,” *College Literature* 33 (2006): 4.

²⁰⁵ For more on “history from below,” see Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*.

²⁰⁶ Gorak, “Libertine Pastoral,” 253.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 247.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁰⁹ For example, see Goodheart, “The Claustal World of Nadine Gordimer;” JanMohamed, *Manichean Aesthetics*; and Gorak, “Libertine Pastoral.” JanMohamed believes that Mehring dies and that he “merges with the dead body, becomes one with nature and becomes one of the ancestors of Africa.” *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 123-24. Gorak writes that to “all intents and purposes, Mehring dies, the victim of an interracial attack.” “Libertine Pastoral,” 251. In an interview with Robert Boyers, Gordimer asserts that a careful reader of the novel will understand that Mehring does not die.

²¹⁰ Clingman, *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer*, 152-53.

²¹¹ Esperanto is an artificial international language based on words common to the chief European languages. Speakers of French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and other romance languages were able to, supposedly, understand Esperanto as a language that made use of the common roots of words to all of these languages, yet did not privilege one particular language over another.

²¹² Paul Cantor, “Happy Days in the Veld: Beckett and Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country*,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93 (1994): 83-110.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 88.

²¹⁴ Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.

²¹⁵ For more on Coetzee’s style, including discussions of his realism, modernism, and postmodernism, see Macaskill, “Charting J.M. Coetzee’s Middle Voice;” Parker, “J.M. Coetzee;” and Durant, “Bearing Witness to Apartheid” and *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*.

²¹⁶ Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* shares this contradictory fascination with place (the torture chamber and work camp) that refuses to locate itself in a concrete locality or temporality.

²¹⁷ Barnard, “Dream Topographies,” 38.

²¹⁸ Viljoen, “Land, Space, Identity,” 108.

²¹⁹ Thompson writes that “the indigenous transhumant pastoralists of southwestern Africa . . . called themselves Khoikhoi . . . [but the] white settlers called [them] Hottentots,” which is a racially pejorative term. *A History of South Africa*, 37. For more on the Khoikhoi and their displacement during the early settlement period, see Elphick, *Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*.

²²⁰ Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 17.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²²² Freud gives a definition of the uncanny as the premonition that water will reappear where it once was: “I have the same impression with them as I have with a buried spring or a dried-up pond. You can’t walk over them without constantly feeling that water might reappear.” “The Uncanny,” 129.

²²³ C.M. Van der Merwe, *Breaking Barriers: Stereotypes and the Changing of Values in Afrikaans Writing 1875-1990* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 52.

²²⁴ Krog gives a compelling example of how racial inequality is “built into” colonial language using the pejorative Afrikaans phrase to denote an indigenous African, “kaffer.” She writes: “In the big Afrikaans dictionary, you will find words like “kafferbees,” “kafferwaatlemoen,” “kafferkometers”—and each time the word is used derogatorily: *kafferbees*—low-quality cattle; *kafferwaatlemoen*—tasteless melon; *kafferkometers*—cheap type of blanket. There are also words like “kafferslet” and “kafferlui,” indicating the intensive form. “Very useless” is “kaffersleg.” “Very lazy” is “kafferlui.” *The Country of My Skull*, 250. Language becomes *the* signifier and name for racial difference in *Country*. For Krog and Coetzee, language becomes the mode by which power manifests itself, and the thing that represses and masks meaning through intricate and overlapping layers of signification. Krog unmaskes these hidden layers in a straightforward way, while Magda’s seemingly friendly exchanges with her servants are unmasked by the narrative for their sinisterness. For more on the intersections of the Afrikaans language and power structures in *Country*, see Schreiner, *African Farm*; Ashcroft, “Irony, Allegory, and Empire;” Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee*; Glenn, “Game Hunting in *In the Heart of the Country*,” and Brian Macaskill, “Charting J.M. Coetzee’s Middle Voice.”

²²⁵ Attridge notes that *Country* was released in two formats, the 1977 British and American version and the 1978 South African version, “which presents the reader with another defamiliarizing surprise: the dialogue is in Afrikaans.” *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, 22. The juxtaposition of the two languages in the South African version emphasizes the “narrative’s mediation via English, and via the European fictional tradition” as well as the extent to which Afrikaans is a racially coded language full of nuances, barriers, and limits. *Ibid.*, 22 This is made clear when the father attempts to use the word “we” with Anna. The Afrikaans word “we” between white and black signifies a flagrant breaking of taboo: “My father is exchanging forbidden words with Klein-Anna... *We*, he is saying to her, *we two*... There are few enough words true, rock-hard to build a life on, and these he is destroying. He believes that he and she can choose their words and make a private language, with an *I* and *you* and *here* and *now* of their own. But there can be no private language. Their intimate *you* is my *you* too... How can I speak to Hendrik as before when they corrupt my speech?” (35).

²²⁶ Viljoen, “Land, Space, Identity,” 108.

²²⁷ Dick Penner, *Countries of the Mind: The Fiction of J.M. Coetzee* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 65.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

²²⁹ For more on Magda’s contradictory relationship with the father, see Briganti, “‘A Bored Spinster with a Locked Diary;” and Parry, “Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J.M. Coetzee.”

²³⁰ C.N. Van der Merwe notes: “Previously [in the mid- to late-nineteenth century] Afrikaans was scorned as a ‘kitchen language,’ only fit for communication with uneducated ‘Hottentots’. If Afrikaans should become a medium to combat the prestigious English language [in South Africa], its links with the ‘Hottentots’ and all of lower social standing had to be hidden. . . . [Afrikaans] was no more a means of communication of all mother tongue speakers, but a language used by white Afrikaners to propagate Afrikaner nationalistic ideology in opposition to English domination.” *Breaking Barriers*, 5.

²³¹ For more on the role that women play in mediating power relations between men, see Rubin, “The Traffic in Women;” and Sedgwick, *Between Men*.

²³² There has been much written on the intersection of race, gender, and class in feminist theory. Some of the more well known examples include Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism;” Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*; Lugones and Spelman, “Have We Got a Theory for You!;” Donaldson, *Decolonizing Feminisms*; Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” and “Cartographies of Struggle;” hooks, *Feminist Theory*; and Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*.

²³³ No Coetzee novel has been able to grant blacks an intelligible voice. His fiction is notorious for its long stretches of white pontification and black silence or unintelligibility. For example, see Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*; *Life and Times of Michael K*; *Foe*; *Age of Iron*; *Disgrace*.

²³⁴ In his review of *Small Things*, Michael Gorra notes makes a comparison to Faulkner and even intimates that the novel may be read as gothic. Gorra notes: “The writer whom Roy most reminds me of is Faulkner, and with its story of sex and sudden death, transgression and familial decay, *The God of Small Things* could be seen as the first Indian

attempt at Southern Gothic. Not just because its landscape is hot and humid . . . the similarity goes deeper than that, to Roy's concentration on a past that can't be smoothed over, a history with which one has to go on living, knowing 'that a few dozen hours can effect the outcome of whole lifetimes', hours that 'like the salvaged remains of a burned house—the charred clock, the singed photograph, the scorched furniture—must be resurrected from the ruins and examined.'" "Living in the Aftermath," *The London Review of Books* 19 June 1997: 22.

²³⁵ The novel's emphasis on the private realm stands in contradistinction to the very public mode of activism with which Roy engages in India. Roy focuses her attention to "the structural and epistemic violence of globalization on local and indigenous systems." Julie Mullaney, "'Globalizing Dissent'? Arundhati Roy, Local and Postcolonial Feminisms in the Transnational Economy," *World Literature Written in English* 40 (2002-3), 63. Roy has been described as India's leading globalisation critic. She publicly protested the big dam project of the Narmada Valley, the nuclear ambitions of India and Pakistan, the disputed territories of Kashmir, the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism, the destruction of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya in 1992, and the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. Roy's activism since 9/11 has critiqued American empire and its involvement in Asia, and the ongoing dispute between Israelis and Palestinians. Before the publication of *Small Things*, Roy intervened in local feminist debates, particularly that which followed Shekar Kapur's 1994 film *Bandit Queen*, which drew on the life of the late Phoolan Devi. She accused Kapur of perpetuating a homogenous figure of third world women "in representing her own story and relocating it within trans/national material, historical and political relations of inequality." Mullaney, "Globalizing Dissent?," 63. For more on Roy's political activism, see Roy, *The Cost of Living*; "Fascism's Firm Footprint in India;" *Power Politics*; *War Talk*; and *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*.

²³⁶ Victor Ramraj, "Arundhati Roy's and Salman Rushdie's Postmodern India," in *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*, ed. R.K. Dhawan (London: Sangam Books, 1999), 154. Ramraj writes that Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy appeared together on August 14, 1997 on the Charlie Rose show upon the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. On that show, Rushdie complained that Roy's novel was too quotidian and "is not exotic enough in its portray of India." *Ibid.*, 154. Graham Huggan ironically argues the reverse. He views *Small Things* as an example of "strategic exoticism, designed to trap the unwary reader into complicity with the Orientalisms of which the novel so hauntingly relates." *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 77. Elleke Boehmer, in contrast, contends that that the novel "remains constantly vigilant about . . . the neo-orientalist aspects of its own interpretive terms, and of its neocolonial context." "East is East and South is South: The Cases of Sarojini Naidu and Arundhati Roy," *Women: a Cultural Review* 11 (2000): 69.

²³⁷ E.P. Thompson's concept of "history from below" as articulated in *Making of the English Working Class* focuses on the role of the working class in England, while Ranajit Guha's concept of "subaltern studies" as articulated in "The Small Voice of History" takes the droves of non-elite working Indians as his focal point. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the two historical modes should not be conflated. "[S]ubaltern studies could never be a mere reproduction in India of the English tradition of writing 'history from below'" writes Chakrabarty, because Guha effectively redefines what it means to be political, which "open up a very interesting problem in the global history of modernity and citizenship." *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 4, 12. For a discussion of the ways in which *Small Things* puts forth a notion of history along the lines of Guha's subaltern "small voice of history," see Needham, "'The Small Voice of History' in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*."

²³⁸ The novel engages with the terms "untouchable" and "Paravan" to refer to the caste of Velutha and his family. I use the term "untouchable" and the more contemporary term, "dalit" here. Anupama Rao gives a succinct history of the term "untouchable:" "The term untouchable was first used . . . [by] the Maharaja of Baroda . . . in addressing the Depressed Classes Mission Society in Bombay on October 18, 1909. Depressed Classes was the official term until the current terminology of Scheduled Castes came into effect with the Government of India Act of 1935. . . . As early as 1931 . . . Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan had suggested the term "non caste" or "non conformist Hindus" since Depressed Classes was an insulting term. From about 1935 or so Gandhi called untouchables Harijans (children of God) . . . [which] is a term abhorred by almost all untouchables, being seen as a term of paternalism and condescension. . . . The term dalit is the preferred [one] today. . . . It means "ground down, broken to pieces" and was adopted by untouchables in an attempt to subvert the stigma associated with untouchability, referring instead to a long history of oppression and violence that had given them a militant and separate identity." 2001. "The Question of Caste for Indian Feminism." Unpublished manuscript of a talk given at Oberlin College, 11 May, 2001. 1-7.

²³⁹ Alex Tickell, “*The God of Small Things: Arundhati Roy’s Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism*,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38 (2003): 81. For example, Estha’s description of a beaten Velutha as “a pumpkin . . . with a monstrous upside-down smile” (320) and the bellboy at the Sea Queen Hotel as a “boy [who] hadn’t a bell. He had dim eyes and two buttons missing on his frayed maroon coat [and] his greyed undershirt showed” (114) ironically emphasize the disjuncture between the children’s perspectives and the grim political reality that surrounds them.

²⁴⁰ Georg Lukàcs, *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*. Trans. John and Necke Mander (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 31 (my italics).

²⁴¹ Pramod K. Nayar frames Roy’s “journey into [secrets and] secret places” through the metaphor of the crypt. Roy’s novel, argues Nayar, “is spatially organized around closed spaces. In terms of topography and architecture, Things abounds in crypts of various types.” “Cryptosecrets: Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*,” in *The Critical Studies of Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things*, ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya and Joya Chakravarty (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2001), 74. Starting with Sophie Mol’s coffin, crypts are manifest in the enclosed space of the Ayemenem House, the History House, Estha’s silence, Baby Kochamma’s cryptic reference to herself as “Koh-i-noor,” the trapped sparrow in the family’s Plymouth, and the many secrets kept by various characters in the novel.

²⁴² Aijaz Ahmad, “Reading Arundhati Roy *politically*,” *Frontline* 8 August 1997, 107.

²⁴³ Georg Lukàcs, “Narrate or Describe?” In *Writer & Critic and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. Arthur D. Kahn (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1970), 124.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 105. Ahmad bemoans the novel’s use of the erotic: “It is a very great pity that a tale so masterfully told should end with the author succumbing to the conventional idea of the erotic as that private transgression through which one transcends public injuries.” (105).

²⁴⁵ Elleke Boehmer attends to the way that Roy uses language. The novel’s “skittish burlesques . . . [and] over-stylized arabesqueries . . . [demonstrate] a subtle subversion” that, through a representation of childhood language acquisition, puts pressure on notions of realism, as well as the critical problem of classification. “East is East and South is South,” 69.

²⁴⁶ David Punter, “Arundhati Roy and the House of History,” in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 193.

²⁴⁷ David Punter, *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 193.

²⁴⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” In *The Uncanny*, trans. Davic McLintock, ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 132, 134.

²⁴⁹ Julie Mullaney, *Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 33.

²⁵⁰ Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997), 48 (my italics). Subsequent references will be made parenthetically in the text.

²⁵¹ Brian McCuskey, “Not at Home: Servants, Scholars, and the Uncanny,” *PMLA* 121 (2006): 427.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 427.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 428.

²⁵⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 178, 184.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

²⁵⁶ Freud, “The Uncanny,” 125.

²⁵⁷ Padmini Mongia, “Between Men: Conrad in the Fiction of Two Contemporary Indian Writers,” In *Conrad in the Twenty-First Century: Contemporary Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. Carola M. Kaplan, Peter Mallios, and Andrew White (New York: Routledge, 2005), 91.

²⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 181.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁶⁰ Ahmad, “Reading Arundhati Roy *politically*,” 104.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁶² M. Dasan concurs, stating: “Arundhati seems to contend that the Marxist theory of class struggle which forms the focus of the Communist experiment in Kerala has not done much to fight against the social hierarchy based on Caste

prevailing in Kerala. The early theoreticians—chief among them is E.M.S.—who put communism into practice in Kerala overlooked the institution of caste.” “Arundhati Hits the Socio-Political Ball,” In *The Critical Studies of Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things*, ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya and Joya Chakravarty (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1999), 30.

²⁶³ Cynthia Vanden Driesen, “When Language Dances: The Subversive Power of Roy’s Text in *The God of Small Things*,” in *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary*, ed. R.K. Dhawan (London: Sangam Books, 1999), 374-75.

²⁶⁴ Namboodiripad was the head of the CPI (Marxist). The Naxalites splintered the Marxist party, and designated themselves as the CPI (Marxist-Leninist).

²⁶⁵ Roy’s glorification of the Naxalite movement seems to overlook the horrendous violence with which the movement has been associated and, in so doing, seems ethically suspect. For more on the Naxalite movement and their violent insurrection, see Singh, *The Naxalite Movement in India*; Ray, *The Naxalites and Their Ideology*; Duyker, *Tribal Guerillas*; and Banerjee, *India’s Simmering Revolution*.

²⁶⁶ The one exception to this claim is the brief moment in which Velutha tries to talk himself out of loving Ammu: “He tried to hate her. *She’s one of them*, he told himself. *Just another one of them*. He couldn’t. *She had deep dimples when she smiled. Her eyes were always somewhere else*. Madness slunk in through a chink in History. It only took a moment” (204).

²⁶⁷ Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 231-32.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁶⁹ Brinda Bose, “In Desire and Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy’s ‘The God of Small Things,’” *ARIEL* 29 (1998): 68.

²⁷⁰ Ketu H. Katrak, “Post-Colonial Women Writers and Feminisms,” In *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. Bruce King (New York: Clarendon, 1996), 234.

²⁷¹ This is not to say that individual characters abandon completely organized political struggle for the private realm. In other words, Velutha does not, as Devon Campbell-Hall argues, abandon Marxism for the affair: “Having failed to obtain a fairer society through Marxism, Velutha makes the fatal decision to seek it through forbidden love.” “Dangerous Artisans: Anarchic Labour in Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* and Anil’s *Ghost* and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*,” *World Literature Written in English* 40 (2002-3): 52. The very fact that Velutha seeks help from Comrade Pillai speaks to his continued faith in the organized Marxism and its tenets. In its unyielding cynicism toward Pillai and all Marxist figures, the novel may be said to abandon organized political struggle for the personal realm.

²⁷² Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*, 48.

²⁷³ Nancy Armstrong, “Emily Brontë In and Out of Her Time,” In *Wuthering Heights*, ed. William M. Sale, Jr. and Richard J. Dunn (New York: Norton, 1982), 371 (my italics).

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

²⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 108.

²⁷⁶ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes: “The most ancient and important taboo prohibitions are the two basic laws of totemism: not to kill the totem animal and to avoid sexual intercourse with members of the totem clan of the opposite sex. These, then, must be the oldest and most powerful of human desires.” *Totem and Taboo*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989), 13. For more on incest and the incest taboo, see Freud, *The Ego and the Id*.

²⁷⁷ Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation*, trans. Gregory C. Richter (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 363.

²⁷⁸ Ruth Perry, “Incest as the Meaning of the Gothic Novel,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 39 (1998): 270.

²⁷⁹ Ellen Pollak reads incest narratives in Aphra Behn’s *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* and Delarivier Manley’s *New Atlantis* “as sites of resistance to both traditional and emergent forms of patriarchy.” *Incest and the English Novel, 1684-1814* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 21. Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and Joseph Fielding’s *Tom Jones* deploy incest “as occasions for consolidating and naturalizing the contradicting logic of emergent Enlightenment ideologies.” *Ibid.*, 2. Incest in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* lays bare “the internal instabilities of an already consolidated modern patriarchy founded on an ideal of authenticity.” *Ibid.*, 24-25.

²⁸⁰ Romantic poetry that emphasizes or relies on the incest theme includes Shelley's *Laon and Cythna*, which was issued a year later as *The Revolt of Islam*, and *The Cenci*; and Byron's *Manfred*.

²⁸¹ Peter L. Thorslev, Jr. "Incest as Romantic Symbol," *Comparative Literature Studies* 2 (1965): 43

²⁸² For a discussion of incest as metaphor for the "new egalitarian order," see Shell, *The End of Kinship*.

²⁸³ Sumanyu Satpathy reminds us that the theme of incest is "encrypted" and "submerged" throughout the entire novel. She reads Rahel's nickname, "Ambassador Stick Insect" as a wordplay on incest, and Estha's nickname, "Elvis the Pelvis" as an unwitting sexual innuendo that borders on the incestuous. "The Code of Incest in *The God of Small Things*," In *Arundhati Roy: The Novelist Extraordinary* (Ed. R.K. Dhawan. London: Sangam Books, 1999), 134. Roy's representation of the community of Syrian Christians in Kerala further continues the incest theme, as she characterizes them as inbred: "The high incidence of insanity among Syrian Christians was the price they paid for inbreeding" (223).

²⁸⁴ Critics have called the narrative style of *Shalimar* "hackneyed, simplistic, and . . . very silly," (Tait) "utterly routine" (Hensher), and a veritable "retirement home for the doddery old clichés of magic realism" with a dash of "Gothic tosh," "melodromatic hissings," "stagy histrionics," "novelettish banalities" and "sentimentality Barbara Cartland might have coveted" (Kemp). Theo Tait, "Flame Broiled Whopper," *London Review of Books* 6 October 2005; Philip Hensher, "They Called Him Colonel Tortoise," *The Telegraph* 9 November 2005; Peter Kemp, Review of *Shalimar the Clown*, *The Sunday Times* 11 September 2005. Suhayl Saadi writes that the characters "seem derived, rather than sculpted." Saadi, "Storm in the Valley of Death," *The Independent* 3 September 2005. Lee Siegel more specifically notes:

"Alas, there is not a single, real intimate moment between characters in this book; not a single scene or situation unfolding according to its inner laws, away from the disheveling hurry of the novel's judgments and opinions; and barely any dialogue. *Shalimar the Clown* is nearly all exposition. Rushdie hastily comments on his characters and their milieus from the outside; he never gives them any inner life out of which they can act and speak for themselves." Siegel, "Rushdie's Receding Talent," *The Nation* 3 October 2005.

²⁸⁵ Persecutory gothic plots revolve around a persecutory relationship, which usually occurs between two men.

According to David Punter, the persecutory gothic is a mode that displays forms of tyranny, such as: "the tyranny of social classing and the conventional injustice of authority, and the tyranny of dogmatism and inhumane religion." Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (New York: Longman, 1980), 149. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and, to some extent, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are exemplars of the persecutory gothic type. This persecutory relationship is marked by psychological obsession and madness, the desire for revenge or social justice, the creation of otherness, and the exploration of the nature of good and evil. Persecutory gothic tends to frame questions of persecution, oppression, and evil within a contemporary context of its historical and social location, and foreground political questions of social justice and forms of tyranny. Persecution and revenge are, to writers like William Godwin, James Hogg, Charles Maturin, and Mary Shelley, the narrative mechanisms and productive relationships by which social tyranny is manifest and released (Punter). While Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's mode of reading the persecutory gothic attains a similar conclusion to Punter's regarding the usefulness of the persecution mode to reveal forms of social and political injustices, she does so by attending to the ways in which persecution's concealed panic about male homosexual or homosocial relations opens the text up to a feminist analysis of the "sexualization" of persecution that connects the axes of gender with that of class and generational oppression. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 116. Sedgwick concludes, therefore, that the sexualization of persecutory romance, including elements of homosexual panic, enable the author to explore a "political theory of passion" in which persecution creates a character who is "an excruciatingly responsive creature and instrument of class, economic, and gender struggles that long antedate his birth." *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁸⁶ Bhand pather is an eleventh-century satirical Kashmiri performative tradition that is based on mythological stories incorporating contemporary social and political critique and satire. *Bhand* comes from the Sanskrit word *bhaana* meaning a satirical and realistic drama, and *pathar* derives from *patra*, or dramatic character. Raina, "The Bhand Pather of Kashmir;" Emigh and Emigh, "Hajari Bhand of Rajasthan: A Joker in the Deck." The bhand pather form is based on the interaction between three characters, the *sutradhar* or *mahagun*, who is the narrator and hero of the play, the chorus or *surnai-jamat* who usually accompany the bhand with various musical instruments, and the *maskhara* or clown (Raina).

²⁸⁷ Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 10.

²⁸⁸ Gayatri Spivak, "Reading *The Satanic Verses*," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 223. Contrary to Spivak, Sara Suleri reads *The Satanic Verses* as a radical feminization of Islam. Spivak's reading of the novel, she contends, "does not pay sufficient attention to the crucial Ayesha episode, where the prophet is embodied as a woman in contemporary Muslim India. . . . [T]he Ayesha sections do indeed attempt at opening the gender code." Sara Suleri, "Whither Rushdie?," *Transition* 51 (1991): 209.

²⁸⁹ Ambreen Hai, "'Marching In from the Peripheries': Rushdie's Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism," in *Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie*, ed. M. Keith Booker (New York: G.K. Hall, 1999), 17.

²⁹⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Shalimar the Clown* (New York: Random House, 2005), 176 (my italics). Subsequent references to this work will be made parenthetically in the text.

²⁹¹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.C.D. Clark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 154, 189.

²⁹² While Kashmir may be identified with either Muslim or Hindu character due to its most significant population groups, some identify with an "essential 'Kashmiri' character that draws together Valley Muslims, Dogra Hindus, Kashmiri Hindu Pandits and Kadakhi Buddhists in a self-perception of an independent nation that is often referred to as the 'Kashmiriyat'" Robert G. Wirsing, "The Anatomy Puzzle: Territorial Solutions to the Kashmir Conflict," in *Democracy and Ethnic Conflict: Advancing Peace in Deeply Divided Societies*, ed. Adrian Guelke (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 87. Even though Wirsing couches his definition of *Kashmiriyat* as contingent on Kashmiri separatism, *Kashmiriyat* may be understood as part of a larger cultural identity that does not depend on the region's separation from India and Pakistan.

²⁹³ The displacement of sexual desire onto food and drugs is a common trope in contemporary Latin American magical realism. For example, see García Márquez, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and "The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories"; C. García, *Dreaming in Cuban*; and Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*.

²⁹⁴ For more on the figure of "Mother India" in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, see Roettjer, "Construction and Deconstruction of an Image."

²⁹⁵ Harveen Sachdeva Mann, "'Being Borne Across': Translation and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," *Criticism* 37 (1995): 296, 297. For more on Orientalism in Rushdie's fiction, see Boehmer, "Neo-Orientalism, Converging Cities, and the Postcolonial Criticism of Rushdie."

²⁹⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2000), 94.

²⁹⁷ Early feminist interpretations of *Frankenstein* rely a great deal on Shelley's biography from which to make the argument that the novel is a "horror story of maternity." Both Ellen Moers and Anne Mellor, two of the most notable early feminist interpretations of the novel, focus on Shelley's preoccupations with her mother's, Mary Wollstonecraft's, death in childbirth, and her own adulthood anxieties about birth and loss of children. Mary Shelley gave birth to three children with Percy Shelley; at the time in which Shelley was composing *Frankenstein*, she was pregnant with Shelley's illegitimate child. The first daughter was born prematurely and died shortly thereafter in 1815. Thirteen days after the death of her child she dreamt the baby had come to life again. Moers and Mellor read this dream as the biographical impetus for *Frankenstein*, as it dramatizes the desire to reanimate a lifeless body. Shelley's subsequent attempts at motherhood were unsuccessful. Shelley's second daughter died in infancy, and the third, a son, died at three and a half years old in 1819. These losses were exacerbated by a miscarriage in 1822. See Moers, *Literary Women* and Mellor, *Mary Shelley*. Gayatri Spivak finds the attempt to read the nascent feminist content of *Frankenstein* through Shelley's autobiography problematic. She views *Frankenstein* as a cryptic text "simply because it does not speak the language of feminist individualism which we have come to hail as the language of high feminism within English literature." "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," In *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*, ed. Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 372-73.

²⁹⁸ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 93.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁰⁰ Anne Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Methuen, 1988), 41.

³⁰¹ Barbara Johnson, "My Monster/My Self," *Diacritics* 12 (1982): 7.

³⁰² U.C. Knoepflmacher, "Thoughts on the Aggression of Daughters," in *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed George Levine and U.C. Knoepflmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 90.

³⁰³ Susan J. Wolfson, "Feminist Inquiry and Frankenstein," in *Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein*, ed. Stephen C. Behrendt (New York: The Modern Language Association of America Press, 1990), 57. Other feminist critics have interpreted the creature as a woman and symbolizing women's plight. Mary Poovey writes that the creature "is doubly like a woman in patriarchal society—forced to be a symbol of (and vehicle for) someone else's desire, yet exposed (and exiled) as the deadly essence of passion itself." Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 128. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that when he reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the creature identifies with Eve, and not Adam. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 244.

³⁰⁴ Moers, *Literary Women*, 93.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁰⁶ Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1987), 45.

³⁰⁷ In this regard, *Frankenstein's* argument seems to be that found in Rousseau's *Emile*: "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil." *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic, 1979), 5. A child's moral failings, Rousseau claimed, could be traced back to an absence of its mother's love: "[A] man left to himself from birth would be more of a monster than the rest." *Ibid.*, 5. For more on the connections between *Frankenstein* and the works of Rousseau, see Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster*; Lipking, "Frankenstein, the True Story;" and Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy*.

³⁰⁸ Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, 123.

³⁰⁹ Fred Botting, "Reflections on Excess: *Frankenstein*, the French Revolution, and Monstrosity," in *Frankenstein*, ed. Johanna M. Smith (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 442.

³¹⁰ Bruno Bettelheim interprets the fairy tale as a literalization of a child's fears and fantasies about his or her position in the family in *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Knopf, 1976). For an interpretation of fairy tales that revises Bettelheim's Freudian version to consider the historical dimension of fairy tales, see Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde*; Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*; and Gould, *Spinning Straw Into Gold*.

³¹¹ Michael Gorra, "Rushdie's Fantasy," in "*The Decolonizing Pen*": *Cultural Diversity and the Transnational Imaginary in Rushdie's Fiction*, ed. Liselotte Glage and Ruediger Kunow (Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001), 55. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie employs fairy tales and represents Indira Gandhi as "The Widow, evil stepmother to a nation, and as their sobriquets suggest, such characters as Parvati-the-witch and Shiva-of-the-Knees are no more the rounded figures familiar from 19th century realism than are Rapunzel and Rumpelstiltskin." *Ibid.*, 55.

³¹² Justyna Deszcz, "Salman Rushdie's Magical Kingdom: *The Moor's Last Sigh* and Fairy-Tale Utopia," *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 18 (2004): 30.

³¹³ Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Methuen, 1983), 178. Marina Warner articulates a similar sentiment concerning the political potential of fairy tales. Fairy tales attack "the worst aspects of the status quo and the direction it is taking." *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994), 415.

³¹⁴ Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 182.

³¹⁵ Frederic Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Literature and Politics* 15 (1986): 73.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

³¹⁷ Balwant Gargi, *Folk Theater of India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), 186. The bhand pather has been used in contemporary Kashmir as an entertaining way of educating the local population on the dangers of the AIDS virus. For more on this recent deployment of the bhand pather, see "Performing Activists."

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 185. For more on the social and political function of the bhand pather and other forms of folk theater in India, see Richmond, Swann, and Zarrilli, *Indian Theatre*; Srampickal, *Voice to the Voiceless*; Yarrow, *Indian Theatre*; Bhatia, *Acts of Authority/ Acts of Resistance*; Dalmia, *Poetics, Plays, and Performances*; and Dharwadker, *Theatres of Independence*.

³¹⁹ M.K. Raina. "The Bhand Pather of Kashmir." <http://www.koausa.org/BhandPather/index.html>

³²⁰ Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker, *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance in India since 1947* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 317-18 (my italics).

³²¹ The legend of Anarkali has captivated the imaginations of other writers and filmmakers, who have found in its love story a convenient political allegory. The Urdu playwright Imtiaz Ali Taj rewrote the legend as a play entitled *Anarkali* in 1921. Taj employs the legendary love story as a way to represent tyrannical forms of patriarchal authority through the relationship between Crown Prince Saleem and his father Akbar the Great, which Taj portrays as domineering, and a "complex father-son relationship" marked by "filial love interlaced with hate." Balwant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962), 177.

³²² For example, see Poe, "The Black Cat" and "The Cask of Amontillado."

³²³ Passages such as the following best illustrate the narrator's satirical disgust at militant Islam: " 'You were an actor,' Talib the Afghan said scornfully in bad, heavily accented Urdu. 'God spits on actors. God spits on dancing and singing. . . . God spits on entertainment. I would also order the execution of dentists, professors, sportsmen and whores. God spits on intellectualism and licentiousness and games'" (271-72). Talib the Afghan is also in favor of executing homosexuals, but has a sexual relationship with a young boy: "Zahir the Boy slept in Talib's tent and looked after his weapons and attended to his normal, nocturnal needs. But this was not homosexuality. This was manliness" (272).

³²⁴ For example, see Updike, *The Terrorist*; and Amis, "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta."

³²⁵ Sumantra Bose writes: "During the summer of 1972 in the hill resort of Simla, India, 'the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan . . . resolved that the two countries put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of a durable peace on the subcontinent. . . reconciliation [and] good neighborliness.' The two governments further resolved that 'the basic issues and causes of conflicts for the last 25 years shall be resolved by peaceful means. . . through bilateral negotiations or by other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them.'" *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 225. For a lengthy discussion of the Simla Agreement with respect to recent negotiations between Pakistan and India over the Kashmir question, see Wirsing (1994).

³²⁶ Gaurav Kampani, "Kashmir and India-Pakistan Nuclear Issues," in *South Asia in World Politics*, ed. Devin T. Hagerty (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 162.

³²⁷ Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unfinished War* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 228.

³²⁸ Marc A. Rubenstein, " 'My Accurs'd Origin': The Search for the Mother in *Frankenstein*," *Studies in Romanticism* 15 (1976): 172.

³²⁹ Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow*, 32.

³³⁰ John Updike, "Paradise Lost." Review of *Shalimar the Clown*, by Salman Rushdie. *The New Yorker*. 5 Sept. (2005).

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