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Monstrous Domesticity – Home as a Site of Oppression in Crimson Peak

Abstract

This paper begins by offering a brief overview of the popular culture narrative Crimson Peak (2015), directed by Guillermo del Toro. The analysis focuses on the most compelling Gothic trope del Toro reintroduces, the proverbial mansion, simultaneously displaying Freud's heimlich and unheimlich elements, oppressing and liberating its inhabitants. Since the narrative revolves around two female protagonists, Lucille Sharpe and Edith Cushing, the paper also refers to feminist socio-cultural perspectives on space, primarily Gillian Rose's and Shelley Mallett's, in order to understand the position of the two protagonists within the decidedly Gothic space. This paper aims to emphasize that Lucille's liberation as the mistress of the house is illusory regardless of the fact that she is represented as the embodiment of domestic corruption. It is precisely because she is a sexually active woman and a disruptor of the patriarchal order that she must ultimately be punished. Even though del Toro subverts the traditional image of the madwoman in the attic by positioning her at the center of the narrative, Allerdale Hall does not reveal itself as a space of female empowerment.

Keywords: home, domesticity, monstrosity, incest, Crimson Peak

1. Crimson Peak – Introductory Remarks

Guillermo del Toro's Crimson Peak (2015) is constructed through references to various Gothic tropes continuously reinterpreted throughout the narrative. One of these vividly portrayed tropes the spectators engage with is the image of the heroine, Edith Cushing, wearing a white nightgown and running away from her persecutors, while frantically clutching an ancient candelabrum. The

heroine is virginal and vulnerable, radiating childlike innocence and naivety. There is also the image of the dilapidated Allerdale Hall, which is first and foremost a traditional Gothic space. It is huge yet empty, cold and damp, home to ghosts of violently murdered people and bleeding decrepit floors. The interior architecture of the mansion is maddening, a perceptual confusion to Edith, its spatial instability hiding many monstrous transgressions. Furthermore, del Toro also introduces the image of the raving madwoman in the attic, represented by the character of Lucille Sharpe, which has been significantly reappropriated in comparison to her famous predecessors, most notably Bertha Mason.[1] Del Toro utilizes these images in order to create a multilayered text which simultaneously interprets and reinterprets the well known Gothic tropes of decrepit mansions, innocent maidens in distress and raving lunatics well hidden in the attic. Even though female characters have played a pivotal role in the creation and development of the Gothic genre, they were imprisoned within archetypal roles of the persecuted heroine or the imprisoned madwoman. Del Toro is undeniably focused on the reinterpretation of these roles by creating two complex female characters, Edith Cushing and Lucille Sharpe, whom he positions at the forefront of the narrative.

Del Toro introduces the narrative's heroine at the very beginning of the movie. Edith Cushing is an aspiring writer, a Mary Shelley enthusiast and an heiress of a wealthy 19th-century New York family. She lives with her father, having lost her mother when she was very young, and spends her days writing ghost stories and proclaiming her disinterest in men, primarily her childhood friend Dr. Alan McMichael. When her father's coworkers comment: "… our very young Jane Austen? Though, she died a spinster, no?" (Crimson Peak), Edith replies coldly: "I would prefer to be Mary Shelley. She died a widow." (Crimson Peak). Soon after her proclamation, Edith is swept off her feet by a mysterious English baronet, Sir Thomas Sharpe, who comes to England with his sister seeking financial backing for one of his investments. Edith meets Thomas at her father's company, where he comes to seek funding for his revolutionary clay-digging machine. Carter Cushing, Edith's father, is a shrewd businessman who feels that something is not right about Thomas and his older sister, Lady Lucille Sharpe. He eventually manages to expose Thomas's prior marriages and offers them a generous check to break Edith's heart and leave England in the morning. Thomas soon realizes that, as an heiress, Edith is far more valuable than a one-time check, so he

decides to speed up their courtship by killing her father. After experiencing the loss of both of her parents, Edith decides to marry Thomas and eventually finds herself on the other side of the Atlantic, sharing the creepy Allerdale Hall with Thomas and his sister. Later in the narrative, Edith realizes that she is not Thomas's first wife and that all of his former wives were killed by his sister. Furthermore, she realizes that Thomas and Lucille are having an incestuous relationship and learns of their child, born "wrong," whom Lucille killed. Edith also learns that Lucille is not only an infanticide but a matricide as well because she killed her mother in cold blood. Finally, she learns that Lucille is the one who killed her father. Eventually, Lucille's world collapses when Thomas starts falling in love with Edith. She tries to kill Edith but instead stabs her brother in a fit of raging passion. At the end of the narrative, Edith manages to kill Lucille and escape Allerdale Hall without the assistance of a male protagonist, even though Dr. Alan McMichael exposes the tantalizing Sharpe family secret and comes to her aid.

2. Allerdale Hall

Ever since Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764), the mansion has been the very structure upon which the Gothic narrative is built. Walpole established a literary tradition of depicting the Gothic mansion as a site of family horror by providing an archetypal Gothic plot, grounded in the house and revolving around a persecuted heroine, literally or symbolically imprisoned within the confines of the four walls and usually persecuted by a male villain.

Del Toro takes his time to move the story to Allerdale Hall but emphasizes its importance at the very beginning of the narrative when Edith is visited by her mother, who warns her not to go to Allerdale Hall: "Beware of Crimson Peak" (Crimson Peak). Despite her mother's ominous warning, Edith marries Thomas Sharpe and departs for England following her father's death. The mansion they move to is located on the eerie Crimson Peak, where "[t]he ore and the red clay leach up from the ground and stain the snow. It turns bright red" (Crimson Peak). The mansion has dug its roots deep into infertile land and, as Thomas adds: "I am afraid nothing gentle ever grows in this land." (Crimson Peak). Allerdale Hall stands isolated, miles removed from the nearest house and a half-day's walk from the nearest town. It is home to shadows, creaks, uncanny moans, piercing shrieks and groans, spilling over with the otherworldly. The mansion is fantastically surreal, geometrically

irrational and plagued by black moths. It stands rigid, proudly emerging from the snow-covered Crimson Peak. Upon entering the mansion, Edith notices that it is even colder inside than it is outside, and Thomas adds that “with the cold and the rain it is impossible to stop the damp and erosion, and with the mines down below, well, the wood is rotting, and the house is sinking” (Crimson Peak).

Ever since the 19th century, the mansion has provided an especially favored site for uncanny[2] disturbances. In Crimson Peak, Allerdale Hall becomes the locus of the uncanny, simultaneously displacing its inhabitants while situating them in a seemingly secure space. Freud’s unheimlich emphasizes the duality of space which, paradoxically, embodies an intimate shelter of private comfort and a source of terror. Traditionally, the Gothic house represents a site of struggle, distorting the oneiric house Gaston Bachelard refers to in The Poetics of Space (1958) as “felicitous space,” “the space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space that we love” (35). Crimson Peak is refreshing in that it positions two female protagonists at the center of the narrative while drawing inspiration from various Gothic tropes. These two protagonists subvert the archetypal roles of paper-thin heroines and classic madwomen in attics, revealing Allerdale Hall as having a double meaning, signifying simultaneously a space of liberation and oppression. Since the narrative primarily focuses on the two female characters, it is necessary to briefly refer to several feminist socio-cultural perspectives on space. These perspectives are useful for understanding the women’s relationship with the house, especially since we will later discuss the illusoriness of Lucille’s liberated position and position her death as punishment for her sexual liberation.

3. A Space of Oppression and Resistance

Throughout her book Feminism and Geography (1993),[3] Gillian Rose questions human geography’s perception of home as the exemplar of space, focusing primarily on writers such as Gaston Bachelard and Yi-Fu Tuan. She believes that the essentialist perception of space is overflowing with memory, stasis and nostalgia and, most importantly, disregarding of the existence of multiple and transformative identities of the concept. Rose argues that the glorification of home has little to do with the woman’s perspective, which was continuously disregarded by the

aforementioned authors, and claims that feminist authors in the 1970s perceived it as the central site of oppression for women (45). She emphasizes that humanist desire for a home is ultimately a masculinist one, as feminists, not exclusively, perceive it as a site of exploitation. The crucial difference between these two perspectives is based on the fact that human geography neglects to analyze the power relations which for women mark home as a site of oppression by the state, capitalism and patriarchy. In her 2004 article "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature," Shelley Mallett also discusses the Bachelardian perception of the birth house as having symbolic power, i.e. representing a formative dwelling place, the place of origin and return (63). Mallet questions this universal perception of home as a private haven by emphasizing that the home can also embody a place of tyranny, oppression and persecution, which is an often neglected perspective. This idealized and romanticized perception of home completely ignores the existence of violence, oppression, tyranny, persecution and sexual abuse that can be exerted within the confines of the four walls, in which case safety, security and comfort are often found outside. The escape to the spaces outside directly negates the understanding of home based on the distinction between the public and the private sphere, as the public sphere ultimately represents a safe haven to the oppressed. By positioning public space as safe, Mallett offers a radical critique of the perception of home in human geography.

Since Gothic narratives privilege the trope of women's entrapment within the house, the focus on space can facilitate the understanding of patriarchal power structures and various issues on the nature of domesticity. Within this context, Gothic narratives are important precisely because they delineate the normative constructions of power and gender within domestic spaces. They represent women's experience within the home as unsafe and serve a crucial feminist purpose by making readers rethink the predominant modes of spatial organization. In her 1993 text "Fallen Mothers and Fallen Houses," Jennifer Lei Jenkins states that Gothic narratives are characterized by female protagonists' or narrators' fears about the threats of patriarchal society (rape, murder, forced marriage, sexual imprisonment and what women become under male rule – madwomen, witches, corpses, vampires, infanticides) (39), thus exposing these very same fears. Jenkins believes that Gothic narratives chronicle a repeated violation of domestic ritual, deconstructing the cult of domesticity, which worshipped women as icons in their property niche, the house, and which

perceived them as being literally married to it (72-74). Therefore, Gothic narratives focus on the corruption of the domestic ideal, providing their readers with images of failed mothers and fallen houses, “charting the disintegration of sentimental ideas of domesticity” (Jenkins 119). By inverting the symbolic importance of the house and positioning it as a source of violence and oppression, domesticity reveals itself as nothing more than an ideological construct.

As previously mentioned, Allerdale Hall is perceived differently by Edith and Lucille. For Edith, the mansion functions a prison – a place of persecution and oppression: “No! I am afraid I shall go mad if I stay. I have to leave. I have to get away from here” (Crimson Peak). For Lucille, the mansion functions as a safe haven, harboring illicit behavior, and a privilege the Sharpe family was born into, their only possession. Throughout the narrative, Lucille is driven by her fear of being taken away from both Thomas and Allerdale Hall. Reminiscing about her early childhood, the murder of her mother, and her stay in a mental institution, she says to Thomas: “You have no idea what they would do. I would be taken from here. Locked away. You would be hanged. We stay together. Never apart. You couldn’t leave me. You wouldn’t.” (Crimson Peak) For Lucille and Thomas, the mansion is a place which not only bleeds and breathes but remembers as well. It embodies a repository of memories and specters, both spiritual and mechanical, represented by Thomas’s mechanical toys, inventions and sound cylinders that eventually reveal Lucille’s murders to Edith. Allerdale Hall is their sole legacy and the epitome of their family name; they are tied to it.

The mansion assumes uncanny qualities because it promises stability and security and, at the same time, threatens and disorients its inhabitant, displaying the collapse of familiarity in the most familiar of places – the home. Throughout the narrative, Edith longs for illusory homeliness but never manages to find it, exposing it as nothing more than an ideological construct. This kind of deconstruction of the supposedly symbolic home is proposed by Jenkins in her previously mentioned study. Furthermore, the difference in the perception of Allerdale Hall by the two female protagonists stresses the importance of embracing an individualistic approach to spatial issues and avoiding generalization – a perspective encouraged by Rose and Mallet. One of the greatest complexities in discussing spatiality is an essentialist conceptualization of women which ignores differences that exist between them and believes in the existence of an essentialist female nature. For example, women’s association with the domestic task of cooking, although often perceived as

a form of performing the "proper" gender role, can also be a source of power. Within the narrative, the kitchen functions as one such source as it is the place where Lucille brews poisonous tea and porridge, slowly killing Edith. Furthermore, Lucille has another source of power – she is the keeper of the keys, which she denies to Edith: "You do not need ones. There are parts of the house that are unsafe" (Crimson Peak). In the absence of an archetypal patriarchal villain, the house is dominated by feminine presence. In this context, del Toro partially subverts the Gothic trope of the male villain prosecuting the entrapped heroine. In the first section of the narrative, Thomas functions as an archetypal male villain, luring Edith into a loveless marriage in order to acquire her inheritance and save his family business. He manages to entrap Edith both symbolically, by marriage, and literally, within the tomblike structure of Allerdale Hall. However, in the second section of the narrative, Thomas starts falling in love with Edith's innocence and naivety, sharply contrasted to his sister's violent nature. This moment marks the inversion of the Gothic trope of the villain, now represented by Lucille ruling over her monstrous matriarchal hell and entrapping both Edith and Thomas. Lucille internalizes patriarchal norms and organizes the space of the home into a hierarchy, explicitly forbidding Edith from accessing certain parts of the mansion. When Lucille urges Thomas to stay with her, saying: "You couldn't leave me. You wouldn't," he simply replies: "I can't. I can't." (Crimson Peak) The main male villain and the female heroine both become oppressed figures within this captivity narrative.

The two different spatial perceptions represented by Lucille and Edith are also important when it comes to trying to make sense out of the architectural confusion of Allerdale Hall. Later in the narrative, the spectators learn that the basement is home to horrific secrets as it hides the bones of murdered women inside the wells overflowing with red clay. If we were to perceive the basement in Bachelardian terms,[4] it would function as a space of irrationality, obscuring monstrous crimes. For Lucille, the basement embodies precisely that. However, for Edith the basement functions as a place of rationality because her descent into the confusing unconscious of the house awakens revelations about the Sharpe family. Furthermore, it is not only the basement which obscures monstrous crimes. The attic also harbors its own monsters, primarily its own madwoman in the attic, directly negating its presupposed rationality. If this were a different kind of narrative, like Brontë's Jane Eyre, Lucille might have been a classic madwoman in the attic, but del Toro allows

her out of the attic, both literally and metaphorically. Crimson Peak's madwoman lives everywhere in the house because she owns it, from the kitchen to the underground mines of clay. The mines are overflowing with maternal imagery – the walls are constantly dripping thick, red clay, and the wells are overflowing with it. The wells resemble death/wombs, hiding the bodies of Thomas's previous wives, whom Lucille murdered in cold blood.

Archetypally, the madwoman in the attic reveals the dark underside of the domestic setting and routines. However, within Crimson Peak, Lucille is in complete control of the domestic life. Therefore, by positioning two female characters at the center of the narrative, del Toro does not only want to portray the house as a negative space of horror and imprisonment for Edith, but also as a site of resistance for Lucille, who exposes and subverts patriarchal and domestic ideologies. She is the agent of domestic disruption, exposing the cult of domesticity.

4. Absent Mothers and Monstrous Transgressions

In his 1992 book The Architectural Uncanny, Anthony Vidler states that architecture is, at certain times and for different purposes, invested with various uncanny elements (12). Even though the uncanny is resituated within lived space, Vidler believes that there is no such thing as uncanny architecture. In other words, the uncanny is not a property of space but "a representation of mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming." (Vidler 11) Within the context of Crimson Peak, it is not space per se which is uncanny. Allerdale Hall is filled with uncanny occurrences such as shadows, creaks, moans, piercing shrieks, blood and ghosts. Vidler believes that all of the uncanny qualities emerge when those who live in a particular house begin to project their hidden and repressed fears on it. These fears, according to Freud, stem from something that has been repressed but has now returned to haunt its inhabitants (147). All of the conflicts within the narrative converge upon the house, which harbors years of abuse and violence. Primarily, it harbors perverse deviations from conventional sexuality. In Crimson Peak, the uncanny is located at the heart of the family and is identified with sexual repressiveness. Although the repressed can return in different forms, del Toro has chosen the form of incest – monstrous love shared between brother and sister.

According to Gunn and Welch, incest thrives as the trope par excellence throughout the Gothic tradition, and the drive towards an incestuous union has ever since the late 18th-century Gothic novel haunted its landscape. However, there has been a shift in the interpretation of this trope in contemporary Gothic narratives. Gunn and Welch state that in the early Gothic works women were not represented as having any sexual subjectivity of their own, and the narratives sustained the trope of the angel in the house by representing their heroines as dehumanized and lacking erotic desire. The sexually active and eroticized women, particularly the ones voluntarily engaging in incest, operated on the fringes of the dominant social order. Therefore, they were portrayed as transgressive and were ultimately punished. Contemporary Gothic narratives are always in dialogue with their predecessors, leaving us with the haunting feeling that we have visited this particular castle before. Gunn and Welch refer to various contemporary narratives in order to question whether the female character can deconstruct her archetypal position of a victim.[5] They argue that no matter how much a certain female character is liberated, she is always punished for her sexual and taboo desire and is never freed from being a sexual and social casualty. The incestuous relationship between Lucille and Thomas reveals a female character which Gunn and Welch refer to as “the new woman, or more correctly perhaps, a more powerful and feminized being in which binaries are combined and thus collapsed: male and female, erotic and familial, hunter and hunted, victim and perpetrator” (4).

Edith first unmasks Lucille’s transgressions when she finds her and Thomas engaged in intercourse in Lucille’s room in the attic (or more precisely, Lucille pleasuring Thomas). At this particular moment of the narrative, Edith exposes Crimson Peak as a tale of incestuous desire and violence, that is, the violence of Lucille’s desire which saves her from the archetypal position of the subject of entrapment, rape and abuse. Del Toro does not position the figure of the father, the patriarch, at the center of the narrative. The heterosexual dominant figure of our culture is absent from the narrative, and the male protagonist is reduced to a submissive position and becomes the object of exchange between the two female characters – Lucille and Edith. Lucille is what Gunn and Welch refer to as the new powerful and feminized being, the source of true energy, embodying the breaking of taboos and transgressions aimed against the predominant patriarchy and the construct of normality. However, what is repressed in the individual or in culture must be perceived

as necessarily obscene in order to protect the illusion of the aforementioned construct. Therefore, the release of Lucille's sexuality is presented as monstrous and excessive – a repression perverted beyond redemption. The monstrosity of her sexuality stretches out to the mansion itself as they twist and maim each other. The very architecture of the mansion is fantastically irrational, mirroring the irrationality of Lucille's desire, whereby domesticity and sexuality become equally displaced and disturbed. The extremity of the repression is proportional to the excessiveness of the uncanny elements which are visible in the mansion's decor. The spectators engage with constant visual associations to blood, continually bursting forward. The mansion is also haunted by the ghosts of murdered people – repositories of the repressed, returning to haunt its inhabitants. The spectators are presented with several ghosts of the people murdered by Lucille: Pamela Upton (Thomas's first wife), Margaret McDermott (Thomas's second wife), Enola Sciotti (Thomas's third wife), Lady Beatrice Alexandra Sharpe (the Sharpe siblings' mother) and Thomas and Lucille's murdered child.

Besides embodying deviant sexuality, Lucille is also a matricide and an infanticide, thus negating the equation of the house with the fantasy of the good mother. Lucille killed her mother, Lady Beatrice, with a brutal blow that split her head in half. She also killed her and Thomas's child because it was born deformed, becoming the monstrous mother and/or the monster who refuses to be a mother. Because of the underlying images of absent and/or monstrous mothers, Allerdale Hall serves, with its flooded floors, coated walls and wells of clay overflowing with blood, as a metaphor for the female body. With crimson blood lavishly sprouting from dark holes, the mansion displays maternal imagery. The depiction of the womblike interior of Allerdale Hall might be a reference to birth- and maternity-related anxieties, primarily the absence of the symbolic Mother who functions as the preserver of patriarchal ideology. In the aforementioned Feminism and Geography, Gillian Rose discusses the importance of the figure of the Mother, the symbol of a communal Utopia and an exemplar of desirable female qualities (47). The figure of the Mother is completely confined to the symbolic and emptied of all meaning women ascribe to themselves. As explained by Simone de Beauvoir, only when emptied of all meaning can the Mother represent community, mainly due to the patriarchal assumption that women are dominated by their maternal function, which naturalizes them as men's Other and creates a kind of mystified awe, spiritualizing the woman into Woman as Mother (Rose 48). Opposed to the figure of the symbolic Mother is the non-motherly figure,

portrayed as a monstrous deviation from the desirable norm. Non-motherly figures and absent mothers inhabit Crimson Peak – Lucille, who murders her own child and mother, and Edith, who cannot fulfill her symbolic role of a mother because her husband is sexually active with his own sister. The absence of a mothering structure reveals Allerdale Hall to be a fallen house, run by a monstrous mother, a madwoman outside of the attic, unconstrained by the mechanisms of domestic order. Since the narrative is focused on unhomely homes and unmothering mothers, del Toro interchanges the womb/tomb imagery to reveal that the uncanny elements are a representation of the mental state of the mansion's inhabitants (Vidler 12). Allerdale Hall is where Lucille has committed all of her sins, most notably the sin of infanticide. The mansion takes on uncanny qualities related to the womb imagery because Lucille projects her sin onto its very structure. As a repository of numerous sins/fears, the mansion also represents a tomb, predestined to be buried in its turn. The womb imagery then has another role within the narrative: it is simultaneously the place of origin and a tomb for Lucille and Thomas, who eventually become unborn and fuse permanently with the very structure of the mansion.

At the end of the narrative, Lucille and Edith engage in a fight in front of the mansion. The land is snow-covered and crimson, oozing blood like a threateningly palpitating mass. Edith manages to kill Lucille and free herself from the confinement of the mansion, escaping from the monstrous womb/tomb and finding safety outside. In the final scene of Crimson Peak, the spectators see Lucille playing the piano. She has now become one of Allerdale Hall's numerous ghosts, permanently entombed within it. Having in mind that the narrative's power resides with the two female protagonists, it is possible that del Toro wanted to accentuate the conflation of Lucille's and Edith's bodies with space, on a both literal and metaphorical level. Ultimately, Lucille is quite literally conflated with the house as she becomes one of its uncanny elements. On the other hand, after her marriage with Thomas Sharpe, Edith's fragile body becomes enclosed within the gloomy walls of the isolated mansion of Allerdale Hall. While Edith's conflation is temporal, Lucille's becomes permanent as her body becomes securely fastened to the mansion. In their book The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that "to literally become a house, after all, is to be denied the hope of that spiritual transcendence" (88). Jennifer Lei Jenkins also argues that female

characters become married to the house (72), becoming devaluated and depersonalized. Once fused with the mansion, Lucille is degraded into an inhabitable object and refused the possibility of ascendance. She is punished for her violent desires and the disruption of the patriarchal system through the incestuous relationship between herself and Thomas and through the internalization of patriarchal norms by assuming the position of the male villain. Trapped within the tomb, Gun and Welch's sexually active woman will always remain a casualty.

5. Concluding Remarks

Even though del Toro rewrites the traditional Gothic narrative by focusing on two female characters, Allerdale Hall does not function as a space of female empowerment. Throughout the narrative, del Toro focuses on Lucille's desire for having a home and Edith's struggle for domestic security. At first, the mansion functions as a safe space where Lucille and Thomas can practice their incestuous relationship. By focusing on the trope of incest and associating it with the familiar and familial, del Toro deconstructs the notion of domesticity. However, this deconstruction is only temporal as Lucille is ultimately punished for being unable to sustain the rigid standards of culturally sanctioned femininity. Lucille's dream of creating a home outside of the heteronormative system proves to be a transgression for which she must ultimately be punished. Her liberation as the mistress of the house is partial and temporal, her freedom revealing itself as a non-lasting illusion. On the other hand, Edith's initial illusion is shattered. At first, Edith dreams of domestic security. Her perception of the mansion changes from a humanist to a feminist one as she realizes that Allerdale Hall does not hold promises of a domestic haven. By discovering numerous uncanny elements, Edith is able to uncover what has long been buried and unmask the disturbing unfamiliarity of the familiar. She finds herself trapped within the prisonlike Allerdale Hall and eventually liberates herself by killing Lucille. Her freedom comes at a cost – the death of her father and husband, who had, by the end of the narrative, fallen in love with her. Lucille, on the other hand, becomes permanently entombed within the very walls of the mansion, degraded into an inhabitable object. Her death becomes a warning for all those wishing to escape the confines of patriarchy, and her attempt to assert power over it reveals itself as a hopelessly failed illusion.

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[1] Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel, introduces the character of Bertha Mason – the raving madwoman in the attic, kept spatially isolated by the male protagonist Edward Rochester.

[2] In The Uncanny (1919), Sigmund Freud presents a careful study of the German words heimlich (homely) and unheimlich (unhomely), which, although opposites, are also identical. In the German version, heimlich incorporates the contrary meanings of both familiarity and unfamiliarity, relating simultaneously to what is familiar and comfortable and to what is concealed and kept hidden (Freud 132). The uncanny (unheimlich) refers to something that was intended to remain secret but has eventually revealed itself (Freud 132).

[3] Rose's Feminism and Geography primarily contains a critique of geography's masculinist approach to the discipline. The book's immense popularity lies in the fact that it embodies the first cohesive and comprehensive analysis of human geography from the woman's perspective.

[4] In The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard compares the structure of the house to that of the human mind, stating that the roof is aligned with rationality, while the cellar is evocative of irrationality and is primarily marked as "the dark entity of the house" (17). The roof and the cellar are mutually dependent in ensuring the verticality of the house.

[5] Gunn and Welch discuss the position of female characters in Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles. Even though Rice believes that she liberated her female characters by portraying them as sexually desiring and active partners, Gunn and Welch state that their liberation is a temporal illusion as their voices are ultimately silenced and their sexuality punished. The moral woman can avoid punishment only if she is sexually undesirable (Gunn and Welch).

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