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Haunted Dwellings, Haunted Beings: The Image of House and Home in Allende, MacDonald, and Morrison

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November, 2002

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M.A. Thesis Abstract

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This study examines the image of house and home as the reification of our domains as living, dwelling, housed beings in three novels: Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*; Anne-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*; and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Being human, we *form* through perception, *build* through forming, *dwell* in building, and *perceive* through dwelling. Through close reading and analysis, this thesis examines questions of: If we are how we dwell, then what happens when the structures and the spaces of our dwellings become haunted? What happens when "home" becomes a facade that suspends necessary elements of dwelling? This study projects that *if we are how we dwell*, the very nature of our being entails a constant questioning of what it is we allow a *presence* to in our how we form, build, dwell, and perceive within both tangible and intangible realms and the influential perspicacity literature bears within this process.

M. A. Thesis Abstract
French translation by:
Noëlline M. Fournier
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November, 2002

Des pensées obsédées, des êtres obsédés: L'image qui s'installe à l'intérieur selon Allende, MacDonald et Morisson

Cette étude examine l'image qui s'installe comme domaine d'existence d'idées concrètes ou matérielles vivantes, influençantes et demeurantes selon trois romans: Isabel Allende *The House of the Spirits,* Anne-Marie MacDonald *Fall On YourKnees* et Toni Morisson *Beloved.* Être humain, c'est *former* à travers nos perceptions, c'est *construire* à travers la formation, c'est *exister* à travers la construction et c'est *percevoir* à travers l'existence. Grâce à une lecture approfondie et analysée, cette thèse examine de grandes questions: Si nous sommes ce que nous pensons alors que se passe-t-il lorsque l'espace et les structures de nos pensées deviennent obsédants? Que se passe-t-il quand nos idées intérieures deviennent une façade qui suspend les éléments nécessaires de l'existence? Cette étude projete l'idée que *si nous sommes ce que nous pensons*, la vraie nature de l'être entraine une question constante; qu'est-ce qui arrive si nous permettons une *présence* dans ce que nous formons, contruisons, pensons et percevons à l'intérieur du tangible ou de l'intangible et de la perspicacité de l'influence littéraire qui se retrouve à l'intérieur de ce processus.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend special thanks to the following people who have been instrumental to my own inspiration and personal wholesomeness during the composition of this thesis: Dr. Berkeley Kaite of McGill University — whose supervision, enthusiasm, editing work, and suggestions have been invaluable; Dr. Michael Bristol, also of McGill University — who suggested Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a means of looking at my idea of wholesomeness, and whose guidance and inspiration has ensured my own academic integrity throughout my time at McGill; Dr. Leah Fowler of the University of Lethbridge — whose friendship and trust, guidance, artistic inventiveness, and immeasurable support has been an eminent source of inspiration in my life; Yousef El Samra — whose generosity in helping me understand the Lebanese-Arabic of *Fall On Your Knees* has contributed greatly to my own interpretation of the novel; Mom and Dad — for their financial support and over-the-phone long-distance encouragement; and Tim — whose endless support and friendship have sustained many of my own subtle material needs.

Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it. A phrase then, of impatience, thud of Blake's wings of excess. I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then?

—James Joyces

Letting Be

The universe changes according to how we dwell. This statement is captured beautifully in Maurice Sendak's *WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE*. Everyone knows of Max, whose mother calls him a "WILD THING!" and sends him off to his room. However, Max is not confined to the physical dwelling of his bedroom:

> That very night in Max's room a forest grew
> and grew—
> and grew until his ceiling hung with vines
> and the walls became the world all around.

Max's dwelling is not the confinement of a child forced to brood in his bedroom, but the entire universe of the imagination: where wild things romp with Max in a wild rumpus and Max is the locus of control for his own being in a realm of his own creation. But let us remind ourselves of what we mean by this word, *universe*. The universe; all existing things: the entire space of the cosmos *and* any particular sphere of activity or existence or interest. The universe: the encompassing *all* that inhabits our living, being, dwelling humanity. Most of us imagine that it is humanity that inhabits this space we call the universe; a child sent to his room is said to dwell within that space. And he does; but that space also exists within him – within his conception of its boundaries and possibilities. In actuality, it is the space, the universe, that, in many ways, inhabits us. We are occupied by our conceptions of our walls and of what exists as "the world all around". This idea is not original. The entire history of fiction, poetry, philosophy abounds with metaphors of humanity's occupation by the spaces, the constructs, the boundaries, the possibilities we have created. But although (when taken in the context of 'all that exists' or 'the entire

cosmos') the universe is vast and incomprehensible in all of its entirety, it is not entirely incomprehensible when taken into chunks and fragments. And so we use metaphor to break down our universes (for there exists a certain plurality) into graspable spheres; to pull out from that overwhelming mass of infinity, the significance, the meaningfulness, the *adamantine qualities* of our present-navigating concretions of being. One metaphor, or image, that is common to contemporary fiction and poetry, film and television, everyday conversation, and is useful for developing our ideas about how we think about and be within our existing universes, is the image and metaphor of the house. The concept of a contained, protective, and nourishing space images back to our earliest human origins of being: the womb. We all contain within us a nostalgia for this type of containment — evident in our most basic, human, needs. For we are dwelling beings. And many of us are housed beings, too. How many of us are lucky enough to possess the mind of a being like Max, whose walls are limitlessly expanding to contain "the world all around"? There are many ways and means by which we house ourselves. My interest is in the image of the house and of the housed being in contemporary fiction. More specifically, for the purposes of this thesis, I am interested in three particular pieces of fiction by three contemporary female novelists: Isabel Allende's *La Casa de los Espiritus* (*The House of the Spirits*); Anne-Marie MacDonald's *Fall On Your Knees*; and Toni Morrison's *Beloved.*

Each of the three works featured in this study explores the house as the central image of both felicitous and infelicitous familial dynamics, and as that which is intricately connected with our perceptions of ourselves as meaningful, wholesome, beings. The

house both limits and contains one's state of being. Each of the three works focusses on the house as a phenomenological image of wholesomeness, and constraint. The word wholesomeness, with its connotations of health, well-being, and wholeness, is a centralizing term used throughout this study to locate the image of the house and the home as intricately connected to *human flourishing*. Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia*, or, as interpreted by Martha Nussbaum, the concept of "fullness of life or richness of value" (369), helps to provide a theoretical basis for my idea of wholesomeness and being. According to Aristotle, one's *eudaimonia*, or, as I prefer to call it, wholesomeness, consists in the combination of *both* one's "excellence(s)" and one's "activity" (Nussbaum 6). In other words, *eudaimonia* is not simply "a good ethical state or condition," but "requires actual activity for its completion" (Nussbaum 322). Wholesomeness entails both "living well and doing well" (Nussbaum 6), or, in terms of phenomenology, interchangeably both *dwelling* and *building*. I am interested in how our images of house and home are intricately related to our abilities to live and dwell wholesomely. The house is a central image in phenomenology, psychology, and literature. Gaston Bachelard speaks of the house as the intimate and psychic space in which memory and imagination meet and "remain associated" (5). Martin Heidegger applies architectural concepts of dwelling and building to explicate how being is inextricably linked to space. Sigmund Freud's study of the 'uncanny' traces the etymological origins of the German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* to the root *heim*, or 'home'. For Freud, the home becomes a metaphor to represent that which is both comfortable and uncomfortable; that which is familiar and that which is intimate, hidden, and secret. The felicitous and infelicitous

images of the house are commonly used throughout the history of both fiction and poetry to explore the inter-dynamics of self/self, self/family, self/world, self/beloved relationships.

This study examines the question of what happens when our homes become haunted, or when the home is no longer a place for protecting or cultivating wholesomeness within the housed being, but is instead a space that houses and prolongs trauma and history. In all three works of fiction, the houses, the subjects, and their interrelations with each other and the world, are haunted. All three novels deal with the confines of a haunted house and with the individual's traumatic limitations within his or her own haunted being. All three represent the self as fragmented or walled-up within and by the confines of history, society, family, and *the house* itself. Each of the three novelists I have chosen tell stories of characters who are in some way displaced from and by societal and political-cultural norms. Thus, the house becomes both a symbol of resistance to socio-political norms, and of the isolation due to this displacement. Simultaneously, the house is a symbol of transgression, or, how to move beyond walled confines to a re-creation of the self. The magical realist nature of these works, that is, the treatment of the extraordinary, the magical, and the absurd as normal aspects of everyday living, and that the houses and characters are, in fact, haunted, opens up psychoanalytic and phenomenological concerns that are not as easily or openly explored in works of realist fiction. Along similar phenomenological lines of thinking such as those of Bachelard and Heidegger, and the psycho-analytical theories of Freud, this study will continue with the idea that there is a direct correlation between the nature of being and the

nature of the concept of the house, in that the very conception of the self is indelibly connected to the nature of the space in which human being and dwelling occurs. This space in which we reside physically, such as the space of one's house or office or garden, and the space in which we dwell or think about our being, is what Bachelard refers to as "the non-I that protects the I" (5). But the spaces we create for protection, whether consciously or unconsciously, are not always beneficial. Dwelling, as Heidegger brings to our attention, "signifies: to remain, to stay in a place," and is etymologically linked to "building," "cultivating," and "sparing"(101). However, *to dwell*, also signifies the negative connotations of *to brood*, just as *to abide*, can also signify *to tolerate*, or *to endure*.

Freud's idea that everything which is once *heimlich* will eventually become *unheimlich* is essential to this contemplation of the image of the house as a haunted house, and the image of the housed-being as haunted by trauma and familial ghosts of both one's past and present. Cathy Caruth's critical theories on literature, trauma, and history will be useful in expanding Freud's psycho-analytic theory about the anxiety of recurrence when what was once familiar or *heimlich*, eventually becomes un-familiar or *unheimlich*. Caruth examines Freud's analyses of how traumatic events are repeated within the dreams and unconscious of the traumatized. Her text explores "the complex ways that knowing and not knowing are entangled" (4) in traumatic events and the stories and histories associated with trauma. Not only can the *unheimlich* arise out of what was once *heimlich*, but that which is *unheimlich* is sometimes hidden or concealed within the *heimlich*. The being who dwells also broods. Trauma "is always the story of a wound that cries out, that

addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (Caruth 5). Thus the intent to build, and care for, protect, and spare, can at times, uncannily, become what traumatizes one's self, and those close to one.

I have specifically chosen a novelist from three distinct areas of North and South America to emphasize the impact of this image and concept of the house and housed being throughout Western culture. This will support my approach to the concept of human wholesomeness and the questions of how the house is inextricably bound in our most basic, fundamental conceptions of being. I will note here that the symbolism of the house or the housed being is a common contemporary recurrence, not just throughout literature, but, throughout all of popular culture. Recent films such as *Life as a House* and *The Shipping News* deal with the dynamics of family wholesomeness, building, moving, and both the histories *and* the haunts of the home. Current television programs such as *Trading Spaces* or Martha Stewart's home-making debuts, not to mention, an entire television network dedicated to 'Home and Garden', focus thematically on the relationship between people and the spaces they live in; on bringing the home 'up-to-fashion'; and on building infrastructure in and around the home. Even the latest music by Tom Waits growls out lyrics that accentuate the cultural imagery of the house and the housed being, of the uncanny and the familiar — in songs such as "Come On Up to the House" or "What's He Building [in there]?" or "The House Where Nobody Lives". These specific examples are just a few of the many that crowd the shelves and 'air-time' of current cultural space.

It seems that when people are talking about the house, what is really going on is a

discussion of the idea of home. Witold Rybczynski, in a book entitled *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, states that the word "home," "derived from the Old Norse 'heima,'" not only "connotes a physical 'place' but also has the more abstract connotation of a 'state of being'" (62). He reminds us that as far back as its early etymological origins,

> "Home" brought together the meanings of house and of household, of dwelling and of refuge, of ownership and of affection. "Home" meant the house, but also everything that was in it and around it, as well as the people, and the sense of satisfaction and contentment that all these conveyed. You could walk out of the house, but you always returned home. (62)

This study will attempt to discover the sociological, psychological, and phenomenological significance behind our current emphasis on the notions of house and home in relation to being and wholesomeness by tackling, or turning over on their heads, the master constructs, ideals and narratives that surround our conceptions of domesticity and home. To be clear, this study will not be an attempt to directly oppose our current conceptions of domesticity, but instead to reveal it as something larger — keeping in mind the expression *god is in the details* — more intricately bound to our existence as housed and dwelling beings.

Following this introduction, this thesis is organized into three main sections which focus respectively on each of the three texts, tied together in the end by a brief conclusion. A study of Allende's novel, *La Casa de los Espiritus* (*The House* [or *Home*] *of the Spirits* [since *casa* is translated as both house *and* home]) introduces the image of the house as a reification for being by introducing the basic metaphors of building and dwelling in both the actual construction, maintenance, and alteration of the Trueba family house in the city, and in the crumbling destruction of the family's country hacienda, symbolic of a

weakening patriarchal structure, and the constructs supported by that structure. Allende's novel critiques the conceit of masculine stability through an exaggerated and not so exaggerated juxtaposition of the tangible-solid, angular, linear, measurable, end-oriented metaphors of masculinity and the more intangible-fluid, permeable, cyclical, unmeasurable, means-oriented metaphors of femininity. My interest in this section is not to establish a monolithic, masculine-feminine opposition, but to look at these metaphors of masculinity and metaphors of femininity as a means of describing a distinction important to my ideas of building and dwelling throughout this study, which is, to emphasize the correlative and reciprocal nature of that which is tangible and that which is intangible. Our current culture is one that is largely oriented around that which is tangible, measurable, empirically provable, and focussed on begetting direct, definitive answers. And, it is largely opposed to anything that requires beginning instead of ending, begetting questions instead of answers. Marjorie Garber calls this phenomenon a "symptom" of our current era when she speaks of the "oppposition between so-called 'hard' and so-called 'soft' subjects", and, she accutely points out: "Our culture likes numbers, statistics, 'facts.' As if a fact were somehow the end of the story rather than the beginning" (5-6). Heidegger speaks of building as a process in which we bring into a physical, tangible existence, that which already *is* in the more subtle, intangible realms, and in doing so, we reflect and reify existing constructs, ideals, values, and all that pertains to the very nature of how we exist within the world (108). In order to call attention to the association between that which is tangible and that which is intangible, but just as real, and in a way, although contrary to what our denotations normally admit,

just as material (substantial, essential), I will be using Michael Ondaatje's terms "subtle material" (all that is in the realm of feeling, emotion, spirituality, intuition) and "gross material" (all that we can see and touch and measure) to speak about the interrelations of these two very different but interdependent and correlative realms.[1] In *The House of the Spirits*, Allende explores the significance of a subtle material world which exists alongside and within a patriarchally orientated gross material world. Her establishment of mother/daughter relations that embrace a magical form of re-creation and the passing on of cultural value, despite the strict patriarchal guidelines and constructs associated with family lineage and inheritance, will be fundamental to my study of the house as an image of transgression, a place of re-creation, and a symbol of the ideals of wholesomeness, and well-being. The fact that hers is one of the first magic realist novels in woman's fiction which establishes the theme of the house as the pivotal space of the dynamics of one's being and inter-being with others, and her focus on the idea that one's very being is inseparably entwined, or housed, in the constructs and values and interactions that govern the space of one's living, makes her novel an important starting point for my study. Since Allende's readership is largely of the English-speaking world, her popularity amongst mainstream American culture overrides the complications of dealing with a text originally written in Spanish.

1

The terms "subtle material world" and "gross material world" are mentioned offhandedly by Ondaatje's character Palipana in *Anil's Ghost*. Palipana is describing a group of forest-dwelling monks when he says, "They were not really poor, but they lived sparsely—you know the distinction between the gross material world and the 'subtle' material world, don't you? Well, they embraced the latter" (86). I would like to thank Kristi Laar for drawing these terms to my attention and helping me think through their significance for this project.

If the house is an image of the materialization of our being, and we build in order to dwell, in the Heideggerian sense that building is both the raising of structures or edifices— such as a house, constructs—such as the idea of a home, and the preservation, maintenance, cultivation of our structures and constructs, then, "[w]e attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by a means of building" (Heidegger 100). However, it is important to keep in mind that although this "means-end schema" is useful to us, the acts of building and dwelling are not so linearly related, for the very act of building "is in itself already to dwell" (Heidegger 100), thus building and dwelling support each other in a cyclical fashion, in that we are always continuously and simultaneously occupying states of building and dwelling. Due to this cyclical and renewing fashion, destruction and deconstruction are necessary, too, in the processes of building and dwelling; they are necessary parts of a healthy maintenance, without which, renewal of the self becomes impossible and our beings become dangerously cluttered with structure built on top of structure, construct on construct, and, like the subject of Rabindranath Tagore's prose poem we risk losing sight of the true nature of our dwelling:

> He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around; and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.
> I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name; and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being. (45)

Allende speaks of her writing as a type of building when she says that each of her books is a brick to show the world *what her house is like*, or in other words, to represent her present state of dwelling. In terms of this metaphor, the *house of fiction* is a continuous

process of creation, preservation, and destruction; of adding and taking away, altering, destroying and renewing the bricks that represent our current states of dwelling.

David James Duncan thinks of his writing in similar terms, although he points out that our renewable moments, the ones we most value in the representation of the most concrete aspects of our being, are not always even entire stories, let alone the stuff that will comprise a complete novel. Duncan speaks of the necessity of the natural process of deconstruction, of separating the "adamantine" from the "punk" with regards to a metaphor he has for his own memoirs. He says that "a good shared story" is like a tree fallen into a river: "as the current of time keeps flowing, the aging log begins to break down. Once-vivid impressions begin to rot [. . .] [c]hunks of the log begin to vanish completely" (3). There exists a necessary process of decomposition, and so "there are portions of our past that we can no longer weave into accurate narratives" (3-4), and which no longer fit into our present dwelling: "So we stop telling them, we let them decompose" (4). However, Duncan insists, just as in the natural decomposition of a tree in a river, there remains entire sections of our experience which like parts of that tree, are composed of "a series of cross-grained, pitch-hardened masses where long-lost branches once joined the tree's trunk 'Knots,' they're called, in a piece of lumber", and which, "[b]ecause their pitch content is so high, and hardened pitch outlasts the grainy wood fibre", remain long after the rest of the tree (or one's life experience) has turned to "fertile muck" (2-3). "River teeth" is what Duncan calls them; "small parts of every human past" that contain the "adamantine" qualities "that resist this natural cycle" of river decomposition":

> there are hard, cross-grained whorls of memory that remain inexplicably lodged in us long after the straight-grained narrative material that housed them has washed away. Most of these whorls are not stories, exactly: more often they're self-contained moments of shock or of inordinate empathy; moments of violence, uncaught dishonesty, tomfoolery; of mystical terror; lust; preposterous love; preposterous joy. These are our "river teeth" — the time-defying knots of experience that remain in us after most of our autobiographies are gone. (4)

Duncan's river teeth are like the gods in the details of our dwelling; like the 'bricks' that represent Allende's world; like the 'diamonds' of Morrison's *Beloved*; and the 'moving pictures' of MacDonald's imagery.

The process by which our *river teeth* remain with us, is one of destruction, of preservation, and of creation. Duncan's hope, in sharing his own personal *river teeth*, is consistent with my idea of fiction as a means of reconstructing our dwelling, and so is another centralizing metaphor throughout this thesis. Duncan explicitly states that his process is one that intends "to let go of what can't be saved, to honour what can and perhaps to make others more aware of, and more willing to accept and share, the same cycle in themselves' (5). As Duncan indicates, one's *river teeth* experiences are not always felicitous; and even when infelicitous, our adamantine truths are not always tied neatly into narratives. MacDonald's novel, *Fall On Your Knees*, examines the ways in which the narratives of our truths are hidden from us; even though they may be the governing structure that comprises the very nature of our dwelling-being. Like Duncan's metaphor of *river teeth*, *Fall On Your Knees* reminds us that our truths come to us in fragments; fragments that are felt and experienced more than they can be seen or represented or explained. Fragments that are unknown and repressed even when experienced directly. However, it is through our very interrelations with others that the

subtle penetrating essence of our truths is experienced. For we can only *be* in relation to others. This is best explained through this millenium's first version of the film *Hamlet* in which a documentary T.V. clipping of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh viewed by the Ethan Hawke-Hamlet trips-up the most famous 'to be or not to be' soliloquy in a scene wherein Hahn proposes the new infinitive, *to interbe*:

> It's not possible to be alone, to be by yourself. You need other people in order to be. You need other beings in order to be. Not only you need father, mother, but also uncle [. . .] brother, sister, society [. . .] sunshine, river, air, trees, birds [. . .]. So it is impossible to be by yourself, alone: You have to *interbe* with everyone and everything else and therefore, to be, means *to interbe*. (Hamlet. *Dir*. Michael Almereyda)

MacDonald's novel is about the *interbeing* of a family within a house that has become a space where one's humanity, or, basic necessities of wholesome living and being, has become suspended in a *No Man's Land* existence. MacDonald's novel will focus this study on the image of the house as the traumatic space of filial relations, and what it means to dwell and abide within a house that is haunted by familial violations justified by the very patriarchal, religious, and societal constructs that the idea of 'home' is structured by. Much like Allende's goal in the task of writing, MacDonald's vivid imagery, in the form of a 'moving picture' relation of her characters' *river teeth* experiences calls attention to the often terrible, hidden, intimate, and secretive nature of our dwelling. MacDonald's intense narration of the secrecy of a family in Nova Scotia, and of the burial of trauma and memory deep within the confines of the home, the garden, and the housed self, will be useful in exploring questions such as what is it that makes the *heimlich, unheimlich*; and is it possible to atone for and come to terms with a fragmented and disjointed self amidst the confines of a home that is haunted?

Dwelling entails looking back over, thinking about, and sometimes even confronting and exorcizing one's present-past in order to create space for a re-creative building of the present-future. Our idea of time consists of the present moment, that which has passed, and that which we project into the future. Morrison's *Beloved* explores the question of what happens when that which is *heimlich* grows to excess and becomes *unheimlich*, when time becomes livid and angry and furiously haunts our dwelling; well then, when this happens – as Stephen Dedalus asks – "What's left us then?" (Joyuce 28). The central concern of *Beloved* is with the infelicitous space of the house and the being housed within the physical structure of a haunted house, and within socio-political constructs. Thus, *Beloved* is concerned with the need to un-fix or re-arrange the 'diamonds,' or stories, or 'rememories' of our concretized pasts in an effort to transgress the political, historical, cultural walls of our own dwelling. Morrison's novel explores how the being housed in trauma must necessarily go through a process of remembering in order to come to terms with the oftentimes excessive ways in which one can be unknowingly confined to haunted ideas of oneself and one's existence within any sphere of universe. But the preservation of remembering is not merely a recounting of experience that has passed, but also the re-membering, or placing-together the pieces, the members, of a fragmented being into a more wholesome and functional form. The haunting recurrence of the wounding of another who is beloved, and of familial and historical trauma, is explored in Morrison's idea of 'rememory' and the struggle of her characters to re-establish value in a world that is confined politically, socially, and psychically to the haunted construction of a past which is based mostly on master

narratives. After raising Beloved, and after confronting and exorcizing the ghosts of excess, the struggle Morrison's characters deal with is how to create the felicitous space in which to build and dwell within an already haunted and *unheimlich* present; as Baby Suggs points out, "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief" (*Beloved* 6). It is the character of Baby Suggs who suggests that in order to come to terms with what has passed and 'go on out' into the future, it is necessary to 'lay down' one's 'sword' and one's 'shield', to stop battling, and *let*. Let the subtle material, emotional, spiritual world exist within the physicality of the gross material of tears and laughter and dance, and like young Max in Sendak's book, allow a *presencing*[2] for the wilderness within and around us.

Interestingly enough, all three of the novelists I have chosen can be located on contemporary culture's *list of lists*, the ever-contentious Oprah Winfrey Book Club. Is this coincidence due solely to their magical realist storytelling style of writing, the socio-political engagement of their texts, or their haunting images of a fragmented and displaced self attempting to reconstruct meaning and wholeness? In the cycles between modernism and post-modernism, the arts have undergone recent periods of mass fragmentation. Perhaps, now, it is more and more becoming a question of establishing a means of *how to make oneself whole again.* And, perhaps, it is the image of the home and its representation of that which is at once familiar and unfamiliar, composite and fragmented, intimate and secretive, that we feel is the most likely place to start. Keeping this in mind, this study will focus on questions of: how the magically *real* haunted house is an effective

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[2]This word is Heidegger's and will be brought up later on in the context of this thesis.

image for exploring the means by which resistance, transgression, and re-creation can occur; how the dwelling and abiding of the individual, is inexorably connected to the space and the relations amidst that space of one's living-being in both subtle and gross material realms; and how, housed within a fragmented socio-political, historically traumatized present, it is possible (if at all) for the individual to build and establish an existence of wholesomeness within the self and with others.

Toppling Masonry: The Feminine Spirit that Dwells Within *The House of the Spirits*

Born into a house where spirits, spiritualists, and sleepless bohemians traipse in and out of windows, doorways, and portals in steady streams, "where the prosaic truth of material objects mingled with the tumultuous reality of dreams," and where "the laws of physics and logic did not always apply" (82), Alba Trueba grows up in an enchanted reality in which three legged tables are devices of consultation, a naked vegetarian uncle instructs her in the arts of conquering pain and head-standing, another uncle burrows himself amidst a tunnel of books and a mystic grandmother with "silvery hair and the sweet gaze of a trapeze artist" (267) suspends the laws of gravity in a floating rocking chair. If this is not strange enough, one should consider the "big house on the corner" from the outside: "solemn, cubic, dense" – "which sat like a hat amid its green and geometric surroundings" – "stately" and "classical" with "the overall appearance of order and peace, beauty and civilization" (93) reflecting perfectly and resolutely the patriarchal dominance of Alba's grandfather. It is no wonder that Alba herself is a hybrid — a term used often by Homi Bhabha in his book *The Location of Culture* to describe a person, species or concept whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions or mixed and incongruous elements, perceptions, or constructs. But according to Bhabha – this is exactly *how newness enters the world*; more on that later.

In her novel, *The House of the Spirits*, Chilean writer Isabel Allende weaves a dramatic inter-generational tale that pokes serious fun at commonly perceived notions of what is familiar or *heimlich*, and what is uncanny, absurd or *unheimlich* within the

constructs of home, history, culture, class, and politics. The story, told from the third-person removed perspective of Alba – who utilizes her grandmother Clara's notebooks which 'bear witness' to the lives of the family Alba is born into, is intercut with the first-person appeal of her grandfather, Esteban Trueba. Alba herself contends that she writes to "reclaim" the memory of her grandmother from "the mists of forgetfulness" (75) and to put together "a jigsaw puzzle in which each piece ha[s] a specific place" (432) that is suitable to her own story — an attempt to "reclaim the past and overcome [her own personal] terrors" (433). In an interview with Virginia Invernizzi, Allende points out that "[i]n Spanish the word *recordar* (to remember) means to pass once more through the heart, *volver a pasar por el corazon*," and she states that this is what "memory is about": "It is something that is filtered through the heart, and not the mind" (445). For Allende, writing is "an act of human solidarity and commitment to the future," a process that brings "real revolutions of the spirit, of values, of life" which are instigated through the act of "dreaming" (Allende *RV* 190). According to this philosophy, in the act of writing we build our dreams, and in dreaming we create new ways of thinking and being in the world. Through this process of writing to remember, memories are passed through the heart (like *river teeth* formed through the rivers of life) to emerge as hard-grained whorled pieces, composite, but not fixed. To continue with Allende's metaphor, it is the job of the present (present-writers, present-builders, present-thinkers) to decide which 'jigsaw puzzle pieces' (or *river teeth* experiences) will be revered, which will be discarded, and how to utilize those that are chosen to remain.

For Allende, the temporary formation of these unfixed composite pieces of past

and present results in a book, or in her words, a "brick", that is then itself moved around, placed and re-placed in the building-dreaming minds of the present. This will to build is illustrated in Allende's fondness for a statement made by one of Bertolt Brecht's characters which she metaphorically connects to her own regard for writing. According to Allende, Brecht's character says, "I am that man that goes around with a brick in his hand, to show the world how his house was," and Allende explains that this is how she feels about her books: "they are [her] bricks" (*CWA* 158). Gabrielle Foreman cites a similar comment by Allende: "In *The House of the Spirits*, in some sense I recuperated the world that I had lost, that was taken from me. I feel as if *The House of the Spirits* is the size and form of a brick to show the world what was my house" (300). Foreman then goes on to speak of both Isabel Allende and Toni Morrison, as writers who assume similar responsibilities to recording history. She points out that in the writings of both women, each vision presented "reacquaints us with a history that has been erased or that has written women out of it; each works to keep memories alive so that we can learn from past mistakes, so that we can take a brick and use it in the foundations of what we build" (300).

The architectural metaphor of building is prevalent throughout philosophy and literature as a way to describe how we construct, describe, look *at*, and look *through*, the world around us. Heidegger, who etymologically links this metaphor of building to the concepts of dwelling and thinking, tells us that the old word *bauen*, or building, also contains the meanings of "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine" (101). Thus, according to Heidegger, not only is

building suggestive of how one describes and constructs the world, but necessarily, it is indicative of one's state of being (dwelling), *and* of how one cultivates that being. Heidegger points out that the Latin root for cultivating, is *colere*, or *cultura* (101). As a direct English translation, this is culture. Building as cultivating is a caring for, preserving, and nurturing of one's *cultura* from within that culture. He also indicates how building, in the sense of "the raising up of edifices", the Latin concept being, *aedificare* (101), is linked denotatively with notions of caring. Thus building not only entails the construction of an idea, a concept, an institution, a thing, but also the caring for, the cultivating and viewing from within. In this way, "building as dwelling" is "habitual", that is, "we inhabit it" (Heidegger 101). When Allende, in her article "Writing as an Act of Hope", states: "I'm sure we have the capacity to build a more gentle world – that doing so is our only alternative, because our present equilibrium is very fragile" (187), she is acknowledging the political nature of her writing and the power that words have in their contextual choice and order to influence *how* we dwell. "We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building" (Heidegger 100): we build in order to dwell, consequently building and alternatively dwelling compel the political.

Aristotle contends that the very nature of being requires that one interacts with others in the *political* realm. He states that "the human being is by nature a political animal" (Nussbaum 351), or a *politikon*: "a political creature [. . .] naturally disposed to living-with" (qtd in Nussbaum 350). In reference to the *political realm*, or life in the city (*polis*), Aristotle is not merely referring to a limited "sphere of laws and institutions", but other areas of formal and informal social experience as well (Nussbaum 345), including

the many ways in which a person can interact and *interbe* with everyone and everything in the process of daily living. Allende encompasses this political *nature* when she arguably points out that in the United States, "writers are not supposed to mingle in politics. To be considered a political writer here is an insult; North Americans believe that literature should be art for its own sake and should not be involved with a political reality" (*CWA* 164). She states that in the reality of Latin America, it is impossible to separate what is considered "political" by North American standards from the smallest act of everyday living and being, and that "the situation in [her] continent is so terrible [. . .] that writers have necessarily assumed a voice of the people" — "What else can they write about?" (*CWA* 164) she inquires. Allende's undaunted passion for writing, for the act of communication, and her initiative to *build*, places her in the category of Aristotle's *politikon*.[3]

Reclaiming Memory from the *mists of forgetfulness*

In an article on 'in*vis*ibility, clair*voy*ance, and re-*vis*ions of history', Deborah Cohn cannily explores how in works such as Allende's *The House of the Spirits* writers share a "recourse to non-realist discourses to *bring the hidden past to light* and *restore experiences* that have been elided from the historical record *to visibility*" (my emphasis, 373). She states that in this way, writing "doubles as an extra-literary means of resistance, a challenge to dominant structures which overpower and disempower" (372). In her magical realist engagement with the political through a resistance to dominant structures,

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The remainder of this thesis will continue to utilize Aristotle's conception of the political nature of being.

Allende's work encompasses (embodies) some of the essential aspects of a "matriarchal aesthetic" as proposed by Heide Gottner-Abendroth in her definition of a "matriarchal art" — which is "the ability to shape life and so change it; it is itself energy, life, a drive towards the aestheticisation of society" and thus "can never be divorced from complex social action because it is itself the centre of that action" (84). Gottner-Abendroth's idea of "matriarchal art" is, in my interpretation, an art that focuses on the more subtle material aspects of being; that realm of life that is not considered to be 'measurable' or 'provable' but is still, nonetheless, in the very nature of our intuitive, interactive, emotive human being, significantly crucial to our socio-political actions. Allende states that for herself writing is "an act of hope, a sort of communion with our fellow man" (*RV* 187). And she draws out for us an image of the task of the "writer of good will" as one who "carries a lamp to illuminate the dark corners. Only that," she says, and "nothing more — a tiny beam of light to show some hidden aspect of reality, to help decipher and understand it and thus to initiate, if possible, a change in the conscience of some readers" (187).

The women in Allende's *The House of the Spirits* dwell within a subtle material realm of magic and story, feminine fluidity and permeability which exists alongside and within a more masculine, empiricist, solidity of a patriarchally-oriented social and political structure. Although this measurable, provable, gross material orientated mode of being in and describing the world around us has been the dominant mode for centuries, a more subtle material focussed mode of existence is not new to us, but, is a mode of being that has always existed. Gottner-Abendroth stresses that the earliest societal structures focussed on a more interdependent being, and were "matriarchal" in structure and

spiritually connected in nature. Alba's intention to "reclaim" her grandmother's spirit from "the mists of forgetfulness" has much to do with bringing to light and recovering the more subtle, intangible, aspects of being. Through an emphasis on the Trueba family's coexistence within an unquestioned magical realm that grows within and arises out of their solid geometrically structured house, Allende's *The House of the Spirits* reveals the value of both subtle and gross material realms to the very nature of how we interdependently build and dwell. Heidegger's implicit suggestion that *we are how we dwell* is evident in the interactions (the buildings and the dwellings) of both women and men within the Trueba household.

In *The House of the Spirits*, the house becomes a reification of how both men and women dwell. The house is not only representative of the structure in which the Trueba family abides, but is also indicative of how society (through the ready-made blueprints of tradition and history) structures its dwelling, thus reifying the constructs (groups of ideas, angles of looking that we *think* to *be* reality) which have become our texts, our structures, our bodies. Through exaggerated and not-so-exaggerated images of existing metaphors of masculinity and metaphors of femininity Allende critiques a dominant societal structure which segregates and separates the gross material from the subtle material, placing all that is fluid and spiritual in an unreachable heavenly realm, separate and unattainable from an earthly, scientific, and empirically dominant realm of existence. The magical realist nature of Allende's work re-establishes the subtle-spiritual-magical within a tangible-gross-reality. By a process of resistance, transgression and re-creation of three generations of Truebas, the act of testimonial writing, the magical feminine house, and the

body itself, become sites of new modes of being and dwelling wholesomely within the prevailing dominant realms of reality. By means of the interrelations and co-dependence of the Trueba women working and cultivating from *within* the house, not to mention the contributions of Clara's eccentric sons, the acts of re-building, re-forming, and re-creation become a bringing-to-consciousness of that which already is — *a letting-dwell*. The magical realist nature of Allende's novel aims at this amplification of that which is *already present*. The spirits within the Trueba household, and the spirit of the women in Allende's text, are emblematic of the tolerance and strength, ebb and flow, of a feminine reality that despite its suppression has always been in existence. Through metaphors of building and dwelling, Allende presents a magically real world that enlarges "the very conception of 'experienced reality'", thus politically challenging 'realist' modes of knowing in her presentation of a world that is "multiple, permeable, transformative, animistic" (Zamora 121) and, though it is of the subtle sort in our regular terms of materiality, altogether essential.

The term magical realism was first used by the German post-expressionist art critic Franz Roh to distinguish between the concepts of 'mystic' and 'magic'. Roh states: "I wished to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world [from a higher spiritual realm], but rather hides and palpitates behind it" (15). Latin American writer Alejo Carpentier, who refered to the now more commonly called "magical realism" as *lo real maravilloso*, or the "marvelously real", and who first introduced the term to describe a common technique of Latin American literature, also makes the distinction that "lo real maravilloso [. . .] does not explore another or second reality, but rather amplifies

the parameters of our present reality" (Foreman 298). Through this amplifying of 'parameters', the constructed boundaries between what is real and what is not begin to move and blurr – as that which is real is no longer limited to that which is measurable and solid. Allende's focus on the magical reality of her characters' lives emphasizes Gottner-Abendroth's point that magic "has the effect of changing reality" and that "modern matriarchal art [such as Allende's novel] attempts to change psychic and social reality using magic (modern magic)" (81). Through a close examination of images of the house and the housed being within *The House of the Spirits*, this study will examine the political nature of Allende's magic with regards to how we dwell.

A world he thought was good had crumbled at his feet . . .

Within the fictional realm of 'the big house on the corner', Allende toys with psychological and constructural reification through explicit differences in the caricatures and buildings of Esteban Trueba and his wife Clara. Once the official ceremony of his engagement to Clara has been publically announced and celebrated, Esteban Trueba takes charge of "a team of brick layers, carpenters, and plumbers" whom he engages "to construct the largest, sunniest, and sturdiest house imaginable, built to last a thousand years and lodge several generations of a bountiful family of legitimate Truebas" (92). The initial construction of the Trueba family home does not even hint at the "enchanted labyrinth" (93) that it later becomes. The big classical house with all the comforts of modernity is the perfect embodiment of the patriarchal ideals "of family, tradition, private property, law and order" that Esteban Trueba represents with his "fanatical, violent, and

antiquated" (307-8) personality. Heidegger reminds us that what we bring to existence through architecture, is that which already is: architecture, as technique, or, in ancient Greek, *techne*, is linked etymologically to the term *tickto*, which means "to bring forth or to produce" (108). Thus *techne*, is conceived "in terms of letting appear" (Heidegger 108). With its "overall appearance of order and peace, beauty and civilization" (93), Esteban's architecture is a materialization of his need to dominate, possess, control, and order – the perfect environment for "bringing healthy, legitimate children into his [upper-class conservative] world" (88).

The *patron*'s need to possess, control, and order, as apparent in his meticulous attention to the construction of his family home, and prior to that in the management of his hacienda, is evident throughout the novel in his desire to keep the women he loves within the structures he provides. Early in the novel, he mourns over the body of Rosa the Beautiful, telling her that if he had known she hadn't long to live, he "would have stolen the money [he] needed to marry her and built her a palace studded with treasures [. . .] kidnapped her and locked her up" (only he "would have the key") and he then could "have loved her without interruption almost till infinity" (36).[4] A decade later, Esteban similarly desires to possess and confine his wife, Clara: "He wanted Clara to think of nothing but him, and he could not bear for her to have a life outside that did not include him. He wanted her to tell him everything and to own nothing he had not given her with his own two hands. He wanted her to be completely dependent" (127). Even many years later after his wife has died, despite the fact that through endless trial and error Esteban is

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[4]Garcia-Johnson uses this example to make a similar point.

finally convinced of his inability to penetrate that "unknown, other dimension" (130) in which she existed, he continues to create for himself an illusion of control by designing "the most fitting, most luxurious mausoleum" into which he re-buries the excavated Rosa alongside the body of his wife: "I decided that if I hadn't been able to have them while I was alive, at least they would accompany me to death" (295). But by the time he narrates his story at the age of ninety, Esteban is aware that the spirit of his wife is as free of her body in death as it had been of his attempted imposition of her person in life: "I realized that she had simply fulfilled her mission in this life and that she had escaped to another dimension where her spirit, finally free of its material burden, would be more at home" (292).

But what Esteban does not fully realize, is how much Clara's life had been devoted to maintaining freedom from (both subtle and gross) "material burdens" imposed by himself, which she does precisely through the architectural and conceptual alterations of their "home". In resistance to Esteban's sturdy "heroic floors, rows of white columns," "majestic staircase", "enormous well-lit windows" and "hall of white marble" (93) Clara's art overrides the "formalist, elitist, socially effective" architecture of what Gottner-Abendroth would define as a patriarchal aesthetics (84). Esteban's architecture is concerned with the gross material world of order and control, possession and ownership of material and societal status. Clara, on the other hand, with her "crooked hallways, and portals that linked the living quarters so that people could communicate during siesta," "twisted staircases that led to empty spaces," "turrets and small windows that could not be opened, [and] doors hanging in midair" (93), architecturally brings forth and creates space

for the intangible realm. Clara's house becomes a space of magic and flux that acknowledges the spiritual within the tangible and relies on an interaction between its inhabitants that encourages spiritual connections and intuition alongside the physical means of communicating with the five measurable, definable, senses. In this way, Clara is constantly creating and re-creating space within her husband's domain. Her inspiration to build another room each time "a new guest arrived", to knock down walls or alter the foundation in search of "unburied bod[ies]" or "hidden treasure" (93), and to always keep an extra place-setting at the family dinner table – "for anyone who might arrive unannounced" (266) – resists the formal quietude of Esteban Trueba's idea of the "prestige" (93) of family and privacy of the home. With the "main door left permanently open to allow guests and visitors to come and go" (266) and her open and steady contact with life from other spiritual realms, Clara's presence in the house encompasses elements of an ancient more feminine world in which the connection with spirit is an essential aspect of all society, male and female. In contrast to Esteban's formal design, Clara's architectural style, with its continual change and flux according to the events of the house and the most opportune utilization of space is, like Gottner-Abendroth's concept of "matriarchal art", a means of returning the power of creation through art to a more interactive public role which, in an acknowledgement of the importance of communication and connection through intangible human essences, brings people together instead of separating and segregating them through a measurement and comparison of physical attributes and gross material status.

As Cohn points out, the "power-dynamics behind the competing visions of reality

in [Allende's] novel are concretized in the structure and remodelling of the family home" (380). In transforming the "solid, cubic, dense, pompous" (93) dwelling into an "immense covered wagon of a house rolling with its population of eccentrics" (268), Clara creates a space in which both tangible and intangible dwell, and by doing so, "she sets a precedent for the women of her family" (Cohn 380). All three Trueba women re-create within the confines of Esteban's domain. All three utilize and manipulate space within the house and within the female body to resist preconceived notions, transgress walls and boundaries, and re-create new potentials for being.[5] The utilization of space to define and enhance one's potential is a current theme among writers and philosophers. bell hooks speaks about her grandmother's "wood-frame dwelling" as "a place where rooms were continuously added in odd places, tacked on, usually to accommodate the desires of the individual who was destined to inhabit that space" (*BV* 148). In that house, she says, "there was always an excitement about space – a sense of possibility. There dwellings were seen as in a constant state of change" (*BV* 148). Heidegger, too, links inhabited space to being and possibility. As Neil Leach points out in his introduction to "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 'space' for Heidegger "contains a sense of 'clearing-away', of releasing places from wilderness, and allowing the possibility of 'dwelling'" (98). Through her ability to connect the hidden, magical realm of the subtle material world to the gross material world of structure and form, Clara transforms the Trueba household into a space in which all preconceived constructs and laws are transgressed.

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This process of resistance, transgression and re-creation of Clara, Blanca, and Alba will be examined more thoroughly later on.

The big house on the corner becomes a a site of resistance to the gross material overpowering of a presiding elitist, formalist, patriarchal realm from within the very structures of that realm. Through Clara's architectural alterations the house becomes a felicitous space where "divine good humor and the hidden forces of human nature act[] with impunity to provoke a state of emergency and upheaval in the laws of physics and logic" (267) and where its inhabitants dwell in a constant flux of change and alteration; and thus in possibility.

Ronnie-Richele Garcia-Johnson goes as far to say that through Clara's manipulations, the house in *The House of the Spirits*, becomes feminine: "With spatial symbols, Allende communicates the message that, although the patriarchy may seem to be in control, women and traditionally feminine spirits prevail behind the facade" (189). She also significantly stresses that Clara is constantly defeating Esteban "with his own space" (189). However, it would be a mistake to conceive of this novel solely as a 'battle between the sexes'. In all of their successes in resisting patriarchal imposition, transgressing prevalent constructs, and re-creating their own ways of seeing and being, not one of the three women even attempts to *reverse* the powers of their patriarchally dominant society by placing Esteban into a position that is subjective to feminine control. In fact, by the end of the novel, with the inspiration of Clara's all-encompassing creative spirit, Alba and her grandfather reunite to re-build and re-store the family home and re-write the family history together. In this way Allende's novel promotes the values of a "matriarchal art," which, according to Gottner-Abendroth, due to its descent from matriarchal mythology, is representative of a compendium of different realities, or ways

of living, from all kinds of different societies, and therefore embodies a "diversity in unity, in which the unity is not dogmatic, the diversity not subjective" (81-2). In Clara's domain primal energies are embraced and celebrated in the constant influx and outflow of household guests and spirits, and in the continuous building and creating of new space within the home. As Cohn notes, through her acceptance of anyone, of any class — all from varying spheres of interest — into her house, "Clara gradually erases the boundaries between public and private, 'masculine' and 'feminine' space and, with them, the separation between her earthly and otherworldly enterprises" (382). Until much later in his life, Esteban, on the other hand, dwells within his idea of the home as a reserved, traditional, and prestigious institution. However, his stout patriarchal beliefs are increasingly overrun with extraneous spirits and feminine spirit. For Esteban the home, or that which is *heimlich*, definitely becomes *unheimlich* in the horror he experiences at the grotesque "protuberances and incrustations" that develop from within his house (93), not to mention, the unexplainable spirits that drift in and out of its various windows, doorways and portals. The ebb and flow of this type of uncanniness within the house, however alienating to Esteban, is embraced by the women within his house.

In her article on ghosts in the fiction of the Americas, Lois Parkinson Zamora states that the presence of ghosts in magical realist fiction "is inherently oppositional, because they represent an assault on the basic scientific and materialist assumptions of western modernity: that reality is knowable, predictable, controllable"(119). What most alienates Esteban is the fact that he cannot possibly understand, predict, or control the feminine spirit within his household: "[He] allowed this invasion of grotesqueries because

he had long ago realized that it was pointless to interfere in his wife's life" (136). The very house that he built has become a type of inwardly growing and outwardly expanding tower of Babel in which everyone but himself understands and gets along with each other. One thing is no longer separable from another, rooms no longer confine or isolate, rocking chairs no longer obey the force of gravity. Later on in his life, poor Esteban becomes so estranged by feminine spirit(s) and by his own incomprehension of a realm that he is completely oblivious to, that he imagines that his physical body is actually shrinking. The "shrinking" of his body is symbolic of his relationship with his wife Clara and of his own conception of the domination and power of a gross material world. Through Clara's increasing evasiveness, and the actual installation of a lock on her bedroom door, Esteban's domination of her, especially his appropriation of her physical body, becomes less and less possible. By the time of her death Esteban makes the discovery that this woman whom he "had always felt like a giant next to" is actually the same size, and he concludes that this is due to "the effect of [his] own shrinking" (293). After he knocks her teeth out in sudden physical violation, Clara refuses to ever speak to her husband again. Her body becomes a fortress that he cannot penetrate and he is forced to dwell within a new conception of himself, one that does not include the ownership of his wife nor, even, of his house. Esteban's growing obsession with the shrinking of his body symbolically correlates to Clara's refusal of him and the elimination of his patriarchal power and pride: "He was the only one to notice that he was shrinking. He could tell from his clothes [. . .] But he would not tell a soul, just as he never talked about his pain, because it was a matter of pride" (181).

The "pain" that Esteban does not complain about is another example of Allende's irony in that it is created by the earthquake which topples the masonry of his hacienda home *right on top of him*, "flattening him beneath a pile of rubble" (160) and breaking nearly every bone in his body. The earthquake symbolically crumbles the patron's control, and the resulting pain and fear of physical shrinking that he experiences, is a type of repetitive nightmare symbolic of the nature of his traumatized dwelling as one who is slowly coming to the realization that his power is declining. Throughout the rest of his life, the traumatic shrinking of his body can be seen as the unconscious acknowledgement of a growing helplessness instigated by an incident which confines a broken Esteban to the immobility of splints, bandages and a stretcher, rendering him completely dependent on Clara's care for his survival. The uncanny timing of the earthquake incident reveals itself explicitly to the reader (and perhaps subconsciously to Esteban) as occurring on the very night that Blanca first transgresses her father's walls to meet her peasant lover by the river — unbeknownst to her, in the exact spot that "Esteban Trueba had stolen Pancha Garcia's humble virginity" (156). Allende's attention to the uncanny 'lights-up the corners' of the *house of Trueba* to the extent that what Esteban would normally consider as uncanny, or *unheimlich* (such as the hybrid granddaughter born of a cross-class relationship), becomes familiar and *heimlich* (by the end of his life, Esteban Trueba recalls "those moments with his granddaughter as the happiest of his whole existence" (275)), and that which has always been according to the order of things, *heimlich* (the rakish conduct of his role as patron), results in that which is quite convincingly, unheimlich, uncanny, and disastrous.

Esteban belatedly discovers that his very lineage, which, in his narrow perspective, is the only valid reflection of his success in life — its value revealed early in the novel in his dreams of "generations of a bountiful family of legitimate Truebas" (92) and "the prestige he planned to give [his] surname" (93) — is that which returns to haunt him. The grandson of Pancha Garcia (the peasant woman whom Esteban first rapes), "the strange Esteban Garcia", who is the son of the only one of Esteban's offspring "who bore his name, though not his surname", returns late in the patron's life to "play a terrible role in the history of the family" (140). Following Freud's distinction that trauma is defined as the "wound of the mind", Cathy Caruth tells us that our traumas are always an "attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" and that in their "delayed appearance and belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4). Esteban Garcia is the result of the 'wound' that Esteban Trueba forgets completely (or is patriarchally unconscious of). And with the repressed hate and jealousy of three generations, this grandson comes into the lives of the family as the embodiment of "a wound that cries out" (Caruth 4): to tell a very common story of patriarchal repression and to rebel against it. What ensuingly happens to Esteban Trueba's beloved granddaughter, Alba, is the materialization of a horrible and traumatic 'chain' of history that he himself instigated. By the end of his life, Esteban Trueba finally 'sees' his world through the eyes of his granddaughter who returns home in full acknowledgement of the absurdity of her grandfather's upper-class conservative realm: "The big house on the corner was sadder and older than I had remembered, and looked absurd, with its architectural eccentricities, its pretensions to

French style, its facade covered with diseased ivy" (423). After listening to his granddaughter's horrible reality of torture under the power of a regime he had supported, Esteban Trueba finally recognizes the stark hypocrisy of his upper class world in which there exists "that solid peace of conscience without memory" of "everything in order, everything clean, everything calm" and in this realization, "[a] world he thought was good [crumbles] at his feet" (429).

Matricircularity: *the spirit of these women*

While Esteban Trueba's lineage grows *unheimlich* and both his hacienda and the 'big house on the corner' go to ruins, the lives of the women of his household thrive within a cyclical process of destruction, preservation, and re-creation. Martinez comments that the "bond established between mother, daughter and granddaughter" within *The House of the Spirits*, "suggests a subtle matrilinearity, or better yet, a subtle matricircularity, [which] is evocative of the ever-creative goddess" (292). She emphasizes that "the re-creative worldview" established by the women in the novel, whose caricatures interchangeably embody the maiden, mother and crone triad of the goddess figure, "undermines the patriarchal linear interpretation" of things: "To the extent that the Trueba women are nonsubmissive, wildly imaginative, and dangerously eccentric, and thus shake the very foundations of patriarchy, all of them stand for the witch" (292). The painting of Clara "dressed in white, with silvery hair" suspended in a rocking chair above the floor "floating amidst flowered curtains, a vase flying upside down, and a black cat that observes the scene" (267) is emblematic of the stereotypical witch figure. While all three

women synonymously represent the creator, the preserver and the destroyer figures of the triple goddess, Clara in her resistance most fittingly embodies the maiden, or creator; Blanca in her transgression of class boundaries through her birth to Alba embodies the mother and preserver; and Alba embodies the crone and destroyer who completes the cyclical role of the goddess through her compulsion to return amidst the destruction, and to not only restore and preserve, but to re-create. The relationships formed through the interactions of the three women within the house, the outside world, and with each other cultivate and preserve a strong feminine spirit that strengthens with each generation to subvert masculine-dominating forces. Through Allende's "repeated conflation of patriarchy and military", Cohn reminds us that this subversion does not merely transgress the patriarchally structured family, but challenges the patriarchal focus of a society that attempts to sequester feminine spirit within the home, as, "[i]n addition to an unbridled imagination, each woman also passes on a strong sense of social justice to her children, a compulsion to confront forces of victimization outside of the home and so does not allow them to enclose themselves in a fantasy world" (381-2).

If the house in Allende's novel is a site that preserves and strengthens the magical and feminine through a relationship of resistance, transgression and re-creation with the outside world, then the body, or the spirit, is also a site for this process. Just as the house structures the dwelling or well-being of the persons who live within, the body houses the dwelling and well-being of the spirit. From within the nature of that dwelling, the spirit, or person, is constantly building. Garcia-Johnson draws to our attention Gaston Bachelard's idea of the role of women's maintenance, renewal and preservation within the

house when she points out that it is the women in *The House of the Spirits* who "make the house livable" (Garcia-Johnson 190): "since men only know how to build a house from the outside" (Bachelard 68). However, the 'care' of the Trueba women is not entirely the "housewifely care" that Bachelard speaks of. Bachelard states that the housewife in her cleaning and care of the interior home "awakens furniture that was asleep" as "[f]rom one object in a room to another, housewifely care weaves the ties that unite a very ancient past to the new epoch" (68). For Nivea, Clara, Blanca and Alba, this weaving from one epoch to another *is* connected to the "furniture" of the house such as the daguerrotypes on the wall, a tree in the garden, uncle Marcos' trunk, and the pelt rug of old Barrabas, however this connection is not through a cleaning, re-arranging and renewal of the household artifacts, but rather a re-telling, re-weaving, and in some cases, re-inventing of oral stories that surround such artefacts and thus bear witness to the history of the family. By not having anything to do with the actual housework, Clara resists the stereotypical role of "housewifely care", yet at the same time, it is her presence and "care" within the house that keeps everything together and cultivates the well-being of the family, evident in the fact that after her death, the house quickly falls to ruin.

While Clara, who decides to marry without love, creates a magical realm within the house and resists her husband with her silences and with her body, her daughter Blanca transgresses the familial walls of her father's home, and claims her right to love despite strict patriarchal and class boundaries. Blanca not only resists and creates from within the house, as her mother had done, but in her elopement with Pedro Tercero Garcia she embraces her own erotic feminine nature and moves beyond the walls of her father's

house. A quiet and subdued girl within the realms of her house in the city, the unconfined Blanca of the countryside emerges in the freedom of fresh air, dirt, and space: "Only in the country, her skin tanned by the sun and her belly full of ripe fruit, running through the fields with Pedro Tercero, was she smiling and happy" (143). The transition from childhood to maiden to motherhood for Blanca involves running and cavorting with Pedro Tercero, "stealing fresh-baked bread straight from the oven, and clambering up trees to build secret houses": hiding, 'playing house' "in the forest's thickest, most secret recesses, making beds of leaves and pretending they were married" (147). This rich, full, sated version of Blanca is emblematic of the all-embracing mother-goddess. Upon recognizing her change from childhood to womanhood, Blanca finds herself connected with a cyclical, renewing, time: "She felt that the shaggy meadows, the golden wheatfields, and the far-off purple mountains disappearing in the clear morning sky were part of some ancient memory, something she had seen before exactly like this, as if she had already lived this moment in some previous life" (145). This ripe earth-mother Blanca acknowledges the cyclical nature of time and her own feminine embracement of love, sex and fertility as she rolls with her lover in a "soft bed of damp earth" (157).

Garcia-Johnson makes explicit, the significance of Blanca's transgression:

> Instead of opening her window and waiting for her lover to climb over a wall and into her father's space, Blanca crossed the barriers of her father's home herself. [. . .] She did not go to the peasant quarters to meet her lover – that space, technically, belonged to her father. Instead, she and Pedro Tercero Garcia met far from the structures, the houses and the huts, which symbolized the tyranny imposed over both of them and found each other by the banks of the stream, which for them, represented the flow of life, freedom and passion. (190)

Blanca's transgression becomes an embracement of her own feminine empowerment; of

life, of beauty, of magic, freedom and passion. As her mother had done before her, she defies structural boundaries and creates her own realm of existence. Also like her mother, Blanca utilizes her female body as a fort of resistance and a means of transgression through her conception and birth to a small daughter with the dark green hair of Rosa the beautiful and the "sparkling black eyes" of her lover, Pedro Tercero, which, like his, "bore the expression of ancient wisdom" (262). However, despite her youthful deviance, Blanca eventually submits to the pressures of class difference,"resign[s] herself to the idea that she and Pedro Tercero would always have to make love on the sly" (174), and confines herself and her daughter to the comforts of her father's estate. Much later, Alba, who is openly active against the very political party her grandfather is head of, and who cavorts with her Marxist-socialist lover in the basement of her grandfather's Conservative home, is of the opinion that her mother, a "woman who was so down to earth and practical in all other aspects of life" has "sublimated her childhood passion", "fed it with fantasies [. . .] stripped it of its prosaic truth, and turned it into the kind of love one found in novels" by living it all so "tragically" (371). Garcia-Johnson points out that Alba is different from both Blanca and Clara in that she "lived as she pleased in the space where she had grown up" instead of "leaving her father's house as Blanca had" or "preserving her intimate space with [a separate world of] silence and magic" as Clara had done (192). Alba confronts her grandfather's patriarchy by re-creating the basement of his house into a love-nest, and this active union with Miguel "suggests that a new generation, women and men alike," will "overcome" the prevailing patriarchal system (Garcia-Johnson 192).

However, despite these natural transgressions, Alba's most significant challenge is

a more abrupt process in comparison to those Blanca and Clara endured. Kidnapped from her grandfather's home in the middle of the night, Alba is subjected to mutilation, rape, and torture at the hands of the estranged Esteban Garcia. Forced to dwell in the ultimate torture chamber, 'the doghouse' — a small, dark, sealed and airless cell in which she is "unable to either stand up or sit down despite her small size" (413), Alba invokes the spirit of her grandmother to help her die. However, when Clara appears she does not *save* Alba by alleviating her pain or freeing her into either life or death, she instead appears as her *guide*, with a very strong voice to invoke in her granddaughter a will to live: "[She] appeared with the novel idea that the point was not to die, since death came anyway, but to survive, which would be a miracle" (414). And she brings "the saving idea of writing in her mind [. . .] a testimony that might one day call attention to the terrible secret she was living through, so that the world would know about this horror" (414). Viktor Frankl, who believes that all of life is about finding a *will to meaning*, has a message similar to what Clara tells Alba. He says: "everything can be taken from man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (86). Alba, who has entered the very doghouse of the fascist regime, forced to abide underground, deep within her own physical body, discovers that there is power to be found in the depths of her innermost self, and that power is her will to choose not only *how to* survive, but also the means by which she will continue to build and dwell. Surviving to tell her story becomes a means for Alba to bring to light the terrible, secretive, and unacknowledged nature of the current existence of her country.

In her article on female politics in *The House of the Spirits*, Martinez expounds on

the potential empowerment of Alba's experience in the doghouse as a "descent into dictatorial hell": "A dictatorship, which is unquestionably the most extreme and the most cruel manifestation of patriarchal might, sends people underground, literally and symbolically" (288). In the doghouse, there is no longer space outside the body. The only place Alba *can* go is within. Here again, the physical body is emblematic of a house that one retreats deep into, for sanctity and for survival. Martinez speaks of "the insight of a 'boundless' intimate space" (288) that is often experienced by imprisoned men and women whose ordeals have lead them "to the release of the creative and thus liberating energies, which symbolically demolish the prison walls and heal both the body and the mind" (287). During such experiences the body itself becomes a vast and measureless house of the mind and spirit. After a lengthy duration in the doghouse Alba is so far removed from her physical and emotional situation that when she is brought weakened by death to Esteban Garcia, she no longer reacts to or recognizes him: "She [is] beyond his power" (415). For within the smallest most cramped space, Alba discovers the inner power of the spirit – "an all-pervading, although largely repressed [and hidden] potency" which Martinez interprets as a source that "endlessly seek[s] to heal and transform the world" (290). Cohn suggests that it is in this concept of "spirit" that Allende's novel suggests a collective power for action that is much greater than the individual power or "spirits" of the women. Alba states that she knows that "the days of Colonel Garcia [. . .] are numbered" because even though he may exercise torture to demolish individual spirits, he is unable to "destroy the spirit of these women"(429): or, as Cohn comments, "[t]he regime may harness their spirits, but their spirit, like Alba's, is beyond reach"

(383).

In the end, Alba as maiden, mother and crone, transcends the patrilineal idea of history and time by refusing to add another link to the terrible chain of events instigated by her grandfather and by her choice to interdict what had become an "inexorable rite" (432) in the Trueba family fate. Alba, who writes to "simply" fill the pages as she waits for the return of her lover Miguel, who carries within her womb a child "of so many rapes or perhaps of Miguel, but above all [her] own daughter", and who buries her grandfather (432), believes in the infinite potential that exists in a circular now-time of the ever-creative present. And, in a voice imbued with the presence of her grandmother and the communal spirit of all the women from the camp, she exposes the linear tendency to label space into terms of a "past, present, and future" as simply a construct or way of seeing or even a *fiction*: "we believe in the fiction of past, present and future, but it may also be true that everything happens simultaneously—as the three Mora sisters said, who could see the spirits of all eras mingled in space" (432).

The idea of space as 'all of time simultaneously' is suggested by Heidegger when he ascertains that the old word for space, *Raum*, "means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging" and thus "[a] space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free within a boundary" (105). Space can only exist in relation to the "locations" or the boundaries we have created (Heidegger 105). Heidegger points out that a 'boundary' is not necessarily that which limits, but as the Greeks recognized in their word *peras*, a "boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*" (105). Homi Bhabha speaks of "newness" as that type of "stubborn chunk of

identity" which arises out of an interstitial space "in-between" the past and the present (227). The space for "newness" arises as both a creation and a re-creation. Alba's choice to write her story, or the history of her family, is an act of creating the space in which to begin the *presencing* of her testimony. Her hybrid position and awareness of being *in-between* class boundaries; *in-between* the world of her grandfather's upper class construction of "peaceful existence" (414) and the totalitarian world of sadism and torture; *in-between* a linear past and a potentially circular present; and the situation of her pregnancy as an unknowable *in-between* of rape and love, establishes Alba as one of those "stubborn chunks" of identity in Bhabha's "interstitial future" space "that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present" (219), the space "through which 'newness comes into the world'" (227).

Just as Clara's architectural alterations created the space for her magic and autonomic silence, and Blanca's transgression of her father's walls and cultivation of her femininity and love created a space for the birth of a hybrid daughter, Alba's creation, and re-creation, through the act of writing is a bringing into dwelling, "a founding and joining of spaces" (Heidegger 107). Not only her writing, but her embracement of the child in her womb of love and rape, her reunion with her grandfather, and her intent to re-store the spirits of the family home, are acts of both individual and collective empowerment, a harmonic "letting-dwell" (Heidegger 108) which re-joins, re-conceives, and re-builds the transcendental spirit of her grandmother's matriarchal magic into a present reality. Esteban Trueba's choice to re-store and re-build 'the big house on the corner' hand-in-hand with his granddaughter, is symbolic, as Gloria Duran mentions, of the "most sought-

after archetype", that of the reunion of male and female and of the *wholeness* of self: "By deciding to inhabit his entire house, Esteban at last recognizes the feminine part of his own personality" (14). Alba's embracement of her present, however, is not merely an end or an elusive answer of wholeness, but rather, an admission of the interstitial space of the in-between, an embracement of beginning – a new way of perceiving, a new way of dwelling, that begins its presencing in the very questioning of the past through the testimonial act of writing and the conscious refusal to participate in or propagate that "terrible chain" of events.

Alba's desire to survive, and to live to write a testimony that will bring meaning to her suffering, entails a constant questioning *of* and questioning *by* life. This corresponds to Allende's idea of writing as an act of 'illumination' and 'communication' and her mission to participate in "a literature that searches the spiritual dimension of reality, that accepts the unknown and the unexplainable, confusion and terror; a literature that has no answers, only questions" ("Writing as an Act of Hope" 190). In speaking of 'how newness comes into the world' Bhabha highlights the importance of allowing for the possibility of a future that "becomes (once again) an *open question*, instead of being specified by the fixity of the past" (219). Heidegger's mission is also that of bringing into awareness the nature of the inextricable connections between dwelling and building and how significantly dwelling and building are incorporated in our very *being*. The suggestion that we *are* how we *dwell* is implicit in Heidegger's question: "What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight?" (109). This question is similar to that of my friend, who, in a

lengthy discussion during a church lesson where the question was asked about the purpose of life and all attending were positive that life was strictly about being tested for some future end, thought he would add some levity to the discussion by venturing rhetorically: "What if the Hokey-Pokey *is* what it's all about?" – and who was met by a rather disgruntled silence. Allende seems to emphasize the significance of focussing on our dwelling rather than on our ability to attain an end when she introduces the character Clara as a small child in the *house of God*, who, during an anxious and strictly penitential silence following the priest's oratory on "the torments of the damned in hell" (2) innocently voices: "Psst! Father Restrepo! If that story about hell is a lie, we're all fucked, aren't we. . . ." (7). Allende's novel is political. It demands that its readers focus on and question the very nature of how we build and how we dwell. In this manner, writing becomes an *aedificare*, a cultivating that brings awareness, acknowledges the importance of questioning, and endows the space to begin. Writing, as Allende suggests, is a means to empower the awareness of *presencing* within the very nature of our dwelling.

Fabled by the Daughters of Memory

"This isn't a story, Frances." [. . .]
"Yes it is, Lily. Hayola kellu bas helm."

Ann-Marie MacDonald's harrowing tale of the Piper family examines the correlation between dwelling and being. The image of a "relatively sober" Frances Piper "whisper[ing] whisky" in an epigram-like-fashion into the ear of her younger sister an idea that for her has become an unbearably eerie truth — "Lily. We are the dead [. . .] except we don't know it. We think we're alive, but we're not. We all died the same time as Kathleen and we've been haunting the house ever since." (295) — evokes the uncanny nature of a family haunted by the ghost-selves of their past. Through the interactions of family members within the home, MacDonald's text examines how one's being can become haunted by the *unheimlich* nature of one's dwelling as both a place or abode, and as one's ability to come to terms with the past. As with James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, "History," for Frances, "is a nightmare from which" she is "trying to awake" (Joyce 42). Told in an unmistakably oral ghost-story style, *Fall On Your Knees* is a narrative that investigates familial haunting. The family's history is presented in a saga-like fashion that for the reader uncannily takes on the effects of a nightmare as it reels itself out through image layered over image, picture framed within frame, in a "silent" "moving-picture" (3).

For Freud, "the 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (369-70). By way of emoting the reader's notions of what is familiar and home-like and what is un-home-like and perturbing, the story of the Piper family explores how that which is *heimlich* becomes or

reveals itself to be *unheimlich*. MacDonald's skill at this *is* uncanny and hers is the type of art Homi Bhabha is speaking of when he declares that "[i]n the house of fiction you can hear today, the deep stirring of the unhomely" (*W&H* 445). Bhabha uses the term "unhomely" to describe what he feels to be "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (445). If we *are* how we dwell, then Bhabha's emphasis on that which is "unhomely" reminds us that we better pay attention to our current "unhallowed" states of living, for: "The unhomely moment creeps up on you as stealthily as your own shadow, and suddenly you find yourself, with Henry James's Isabel Archer, taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror'" (445). The household of Macdonald's fiction explores the unhomely nature of our current notions of 'home' by stirring-up the constructs of 'greatness' or 'wholeness' that are formed around a societal ideal of a patriarchally structured nuclear-family home, and, through the story of the daughters of James Piper, renders how truly fictitious this ideal can be. The home of James and Materia Piper becomes a representation of the very pre-formed (and haunted) constructs that have *allowed* familial trauma to *occur*. The house in Macdonald's text thus comes to represent a place that no longer protects and nurtures in its containment, but instead fosters infelicitous being. Rather than examining the house as a material reification of how we as beings dwell, as was done in the section of this thesis that examined Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, this section will examine the nature of the being *housed* in familial trauma.

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as the "wound of the mind" or that which "is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to

consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). MacDonald's narrative is about the psychological effects of trauma, but more precisely, it is about what happens when the space of familial containment, the space where that which is supposed to be intimate and comforting, becomes estranged in a vast wasteland, a "haunted foggy expanse"or "No Man's Land" (108) of suspended human reality. Little Frances, who becomes witness to the family's most covert and climactic trauma, and who is also, unknowingly, a victim to the same source that instigated that trauma, spends the rest of her life coming to terms with these unsettling wounds impressed upon her five-year-old mind. It is at this point in the narrative in which MacDonald's most vivid image that deals with trauma as the "wound of the mind" becomes preponderantly obvious to the reader, cryptically entertaining our most early notions of human dwelling. Both Frances and her father James who witness the grotesque scene of "*Death and the Young Mother*"(143) are psychologically described as painting in their minds a picture, a "cave painting" that is stored in the "involuntary part of [the] mind": the "cave" (144). However, Frances, whose young mind is not at all prepared for such an experience, represses the image:

> The difference between Frances and James is that, although she sees a version of the same horrible picture, Frances is young enough still to be under the greater influence of the cave mind. It will never forget. But it steals the picture from her voluntary mind — grand theft art — and stows it, canvas side to the cave wall. It has decided, "If we are to continue functioning, we can't have this picture lying around." So Frances sees her sister and, unlike her father, will forget almost immediately, but, like her father, will not get over it. (146)

Caruth explains that "literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (3). MacDonald explores this "specific point at

which knowing and not knowing intersect" (Caruth 3) through the character of Frances whose "cave mind", at the time of witnessing her sister's horrific death scene, "has entered into a creative collaboration with [her] voluntary mind" (151). For Frances, the subconscious and the conscious together "cocoon memory in a spinning wealth of dreams and yarns and fingerpaintings. Fact and truth, fact and truth . . ." (151). The cave is the most primitive form of human dwelling. Symbolically associated with the most primal and nostalgic notions of being human, the cave represents the origin of every human's first stages of dwelling: a dark cave-like, natural and nourishing place; the womb. As Tomoko Kuribayashi points out, "[c]aves, the earliest dwellings, were 'nature's womb'" (8). Cave imagery is used throughout MacDonald's novel as a means of exploring and excavating the most intimate depths of how one dwells, broods, or comes to terms with one's self and with the past; and of what is ambivalently *heimlich* and *unheimlich* about the constructs and actualities of family and home. Through a narration of the traumatic inter-being within the Piper family home, MacDonald explores the need to separate fact and truth, and suggests that the two are not necessarily one in meaning: "The facts of a situation don't necessarily indicate anything about the truth of a situation" (142). *Fall On Your Knees* plays with this notion by revealing that just as that which is *heimlich* can also be *unheimlich*, and that which is *unheimlich* can become *heimlich*, that which is fact is not necessarily true, and that which is true, is not always represented by fact.

just because it was new, doesn't mean it wasn't haunted

It is a fact that Materia's father builds Materia and James a brand new house. It is a truth

that despite this apparent support, Mr.Mahmoud has cursed the home and all those within it. Is it a truth, then, that the home is haunted? For Frances, it is. For James, it is. Even Kathleen was haunted by a garden scarecrow. And Materia, well, can one blame her for only sticking around long enough to find out that, for her, it unretrievably is? But in the beginning — with the exception of Kathleen's scarecrow (and she is only a child with childish nightmares, is she not?) — it is not so haunted: the Piper family household meets all standards of 'home' and 'family' to which James has always aspired. And at first, at least to James, it looks as though his idyllic constructs of how a family should be, of how a home should be run, may stand. But MacDonald's narrator, placing together and pulling away images and then re-adding them as though they were "Janga" blocks, does not let her readers dwell within James' ideals for long. For, the deep ambivalence of the values of the house, the home, and the nuclear family are foregrounded in the first section of *Fall On Your Knees* which is mythically and biblically (not to mention rhetorically) entitled "The Garden". MacDonald's narrator does not fool her readers. The Piper family is far from paradisal. In fact, the more the images build, the more frequent and glaring the gaps in the Piper family facade. James's desire to own "a great house" and to have "enough money" (or class status) "for ready-made things, and a wife with soft hands; for a family that would fill his house with beautiful music and the silence of good books" (9), represents the ideological category of "greatness" that Marjorie Garber warns us to be wary of when she queries: "Is 'greatness' largely or entirely an effect – and if so, what kind of effect? A stage effect, a psychoanalytic effect — or an effect of nostalgia?" (42). Garber reminds us that in an attempt to overcompensate, to achieve an "anxious" idyllic

"fantasy of wholeness", what most do not realize is that what is actually created is the *facade* of the real thing: "It's not something extra, but something missing" (42). James's vision of "a big house", "[a] family", "a lot of love", "music", "[a] beautiful girl", "laughter", "water" presented to him by Mrs. Mahmoud who "only sees good" (11) is exactly what comes true. However, behind this facade of domestic "greatness" lies the uncanny prophecy of the [Grand]father's profane oath: "may God devastate *his* dwelling . . . well, perhaps not *the* dwelling" (and) "As for my daughter. May God curse her womb" (my emphasis, 17). The distinction of more than one type of dwelling is indicated here in Mr. Mahmoud's specification of dwelling as a place, and dwelling as a mode of being. For the wood-frame house does not *cave-in* on itself, the structure itself *does stand*, and in the end is even passed on to a future generation. However, it is not the structure that the novel is primarily concerned with, but the *being* of the housed family — symbolically represented by a cursed "womb".

The narratorial conflation of the patriarchal ideals of family and the Catholic religion with the "new" house built (and cursed) by the [Grand]father — who despite the erosion of memory remains "durable", "a dome of rock", the "touchstone of [Materia's] loss" (37) — and the Mahmoud family moving from "the Old Country" to "the New World" where "Anything is possible [for men]"(14), illustrates how unreachably ideal "newness" can be when it is constantly being constructed by the "old". As Bhabha indicates, "newness" is always a composition, an "in-between" renewal, of both the past and the present (7). In the realm of "The Garden" in MacDonald's text, the very idea of the family "home" is insinuatingly haunted by the constructs of the past: "James and

Materia moved into their big two-storey white frame house, with attic [. . .] But just because it was new, doesn't mean it wasn't haunted" (18). The section entitled "The Garden", however, is not entirely haunting, in fact, it is the least disturbing portion of MacDonald's novel and it is not until later in the text that the reader finds out *how haunted* a new home can actually be. Symbolically, "The Garden" represents a paradisial realm of human experience, a time *before* the "fall", *before* the indulgence in the "forbidden fruit". For the Piper family, this period represents the most felicitous aspects of being and living together; — where "Daddy", who comes home from work in the evening, and thus represents the world outside the home, the outer, public realm, teaches "the little girls" to read and with this gift the "glass of the world [. . .] simply melt[s] away [. . .] they are free to enter as many worlds as they like, together or alone. Thank you Daddy" (131); — and where "Mama" who spends time with her daughters in the inner world of the house initiates "the little girls" to the intangible magical realm of the "Old Country", teaches them to dance the "*dabke*" ("[t]he trick is that the dancing and singing are unrepeatable") and to "speak the Arabic of children — of food, endearments and story-telling" (87-90). This first section of MacDonald's text exposes a true ambivalence in Bachelard's felicitous associations of the house, where "daydreams that accompany household activities" which "maintain [the house in its] security of being" by "link[ing] its immediate past to its immediate future" (67) exist tête-à-tête in dialogue with patriarchal possession, control and containment.

Jennifer Andrews emphasizes the confining nature of the patriarchal realm when she points out that the "cliche" "that anything is possible in the New World" exposed in

MacDonald's text "focuses specifically on the political, social, and cultural limitations of life on Cape Breton for women and certain ethnic minorities" (12). This is most emphasized when James, jealous of his wife's public notoriety in "her career as a piano-player", and unapproving of "the low type of music" she entertains, makes Materia quit her job playing for "the coloured artists"(53), "local ceilidhs and travelling vaudeville troupes" (47). Materia's greatest enjoyment in her job at the Empire Theatre is the opportunity it gives her to create her music in the presence and participation of an audience. After James orders her to quit, she pries open the locked-up piano in their home with a knife (the piano is locked, because James, who does not approve of Materia's music can and does seek to control her in this way): "But after a few numbers she fell silent" and put her music away in the "hope chest" — "[s]he needed a stage, not a garret. No audience, no show" (55). James is a musician too, however his is an art based solely on the gross material realm, an art of classical training and tradition. James's taste in music represents the "aesthetic sphere" of "patriarchal societies" described by Gottner-Abendroth as an elitist and formalist art. What most upsets James is that Materia's musical passion is more situated within the subtle material realm that, like Gottner-Abendroth's matriarchal-value-orientated idea of aesthetics, does not distinguish feeling from thought. Materia's musical talent, as exemplified in her Empire Theatre popularity amongst the townspeople, is an art that does not promote elitism and exclusion, but rather emphasises a more public-interactive role. For James, who needs to see himself and his family as aesthetically and formally separate from the local miners and lower-class merchants, this interest and talent in his wife will not do — besides that, as MacDonald's

text makes clear, Materia is his wife, and her place is in the home. Materia, as her name suggests, is the *materia prima* of her husband's claim to house and home — she is only valuable as the embodiment of the material/maternal resource, the female corporeal property. This idea of women as possessions or resources that are valuable once *excavated* is a recurrent theme throughout *Fall On Your Knees*, and is indicative of the nature of female dwelling within a patriarchally constructed home.

"Beloved Daughter"

James's tendency to see the body of his wife, his household and all it contains as his own personal possession and resource is evident in the narrator's description of the "striking" discovery he makes that his daughter Kathleen possesses extraordinary musical talent:

> Kathleen sang before she talked. Perfect pitch. James was a piano tuner — he knew: his eighteen-month-old daughter could carry "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms" flawlessly, if wordlessly, after hearing him play it once. . . . [. . .] It was a moment of equal parts anxiety and awe, like the striking of a wide seam of gold [. . .] How to get it properly out of the earth? How not to be robbed in the meantime? (36)

This beautiful and fair daughter represents for James (who surprisingly finds himself in an inter-racial marriage that humiliates him — his shame enhanced by the disturbing fact that his "wife" is merely a "child" when he marries and impregnates her) a means of reconciling himself to a fancied ideal of belonging to the white middle-to-upper-class status he aspires. As Katarzyna Rukszto brings to our attention, "[s]ince his identity is perpetually stained as a result of his wanton surrender to desire for Materia, [James] sets out to accomplish his goal by the grooming of his eldest daughter, Kathleen" (26). Kathleen's talent allows him to enter the "formalist, elitist, socially effective" aesthetic

sphere of the white world's status and prestige: "James has decided that Kathleen will be a white lady of impeccable taste, unparalleled talent and worldly success" (Rukszto 26). And Kathleen, conditioned like a doll in a house, delights in "Daddy's" ivory-tower treatment: "her tower of creamy white, is steep and terrible. No one comes in or out. Except for her father, Sister Saint Cecelia and a select few minions necessary to support life. Such as her mother. Such as the buggy driver' (97). As Rukszto indicates, "[o]nce learned," Kathleen "revels in performing her identity through racial codes" (26). "[T]rained to live in that glorious place, the Future" (95), and trained to believe that the only world that exists is one of elitist classification and separation by difference — as is evident in an epigraph taken from a book Kathleen enjoys, written by "A Lady of England" (92): *"I'm very fond of dividing and classifying and examining, you see I'm so much alone, I've so much time for reflection, and Papa is training me to think."* (57) — Kathleen has difficulties relating to the other more liberal girls her age. Her refusal to acknowledge her mother's Lebanese heritage and her disdain for her mother in general indicates that "Daddy" has indeed trained her to think. *Housed* perfectly in her father's ideals, "Kathleen is chaperoned every moment but she does not see it that way. Freedom consists of being insulated from the envy and ignorance of the unimportant people who temporarily surround her" (96).

Kathleen fits perfectly her role of "Daddy's" princess and prize possession: "acting casual, working like a Trojan, singing like an angel. Not 'angelically'. The voice of an angel. Winged, lethal, close to the sun" (60). James spoils her and treats her like a "diva", admiring that at age twelve she is already a "modern girl" who has "the world by

the tail", claiming to himself that his daughter is going to be "the 'New Woman'" (60). However, as his daughter approaches the age her mother was when he married her, it is necessary for James to redirect his family's life to situations that will help him repress increasingly recurring and *unheimlich* sexual urges. He first tackles the problem by re-engaging sexual intimacy with his wife — who is now no longer a child — and produces two more daughters. But when his beautiful Kathleen, half naked in an unbuttoned nightgown, "her undone hair a halo of fire" (73) "explodes [. . .] screaming like an incoming shell into the room where [he] sleeps alone" claiming "I want to sleep with you tonight!" (77), James enlists himself in the war and thus "outsmarts the demon for the second time"(78). The fact that Kathleen's only childhoood fear is of the family scarecrow, who consistently appears to her in terrorizing nightmares and visions, is an example of MacDonald's implicit irony. Placed in the middle of the garden to scare off scavengers from raiding the bounty of the family's sustenance, "Pete" is the ultimate domestic symbol of protection and containment. James's need to protect his family from scavengers and especially to keep his "Beloved" daughter as forbidden fruit walled in his protection and yet away from his own incestuous indulgence, is exemplified in the narrator's smug poetic interjection at a time when James thinks his daughter is most safe from his exorbitant love:

> I have you fast in my fortress
> And will not let you depart,
> But put you down into the dungeon
> In the round-tower of my heart.
> And there will I keep you for ever,
> Yes for ever and a day
> Till the walls shall crumble to ruin
> And moulder in dust away. (129-30)

On returning home from the war, James "no longer deludes himself as to where Kathleen is likely to be safest" (117). He decides that the best way to protect his daughter from his own *possessive obsession* is "to send the girl to New York" (117).

The problem with James is that he does not realize the extent to which his unconscious desire to possess and contain his daughter can *and will* reach. His love is excessive. As Rukszto suggests, "[i]n the end, none of the categories that he erects in the desperate attempt for an ordinary life — in his family and community — protect him from feeling the effects of incestuous desire" (27). The socio-cultural categories that he does erect fit within a patriarchally accepted "possessive obsession" which is incapable of withstanding "the damning evidence of [Kathleen's] rejection of patriarchal control and racial/sexual norms" (Rukszto 27-8). In response to a letter from "An Anonymous Well-Wisher" that informs him of his daughter's "miscegenation" (235), James makes the trip to New York, "finds Kathleen" in bed with her black female lover, and he "takes her home again" (131). Rukszto points out that the "sight of Kathleen and Rose in bed together is unbearable to James" because it shatters his own fabrication of "Kathleen as the embodiment"of upper-class status, success and "white femininity" (28). James's subsequent rape of his daughter — "He will tell her after how much he loves her" (549) — , his confinement of her to the attic of their Cape Breton home, and the scene of Kathleen's horrible death, are emblematic of the horrific extreme of patriarchal constraint, domination, and possession that, as MacDonald's text indicates, "has been allowed to occur" (135). The remainder of the text's drama deals with the trauma "borne up through the wound in Kathleen's belly" (136). By the time of her death at nineteen, Kathleen

herself "is an abandoned mine. A bootleg mine, plundered, flooded; a ruined and dangerous shaft, stripped of fuel, of coal, of fossil ferns and sea anemones and bones, of creatures half plant, half animal, and any chance that any of it might end up a diamond" (136). As the narratorial voice indicates in an eerie sing-song voice that resonates throughout the rest of the text, Kathleen is emblematic of the "miner, forty-niner['s]" "darlin'" "daughter Clementine": "lost and gone forever, dreadful sorry, Clementine" (137).

The impact of this song reverberates in an unquieting echo throughout the rest of the narrative as the reader makes the connections between James's exclamations, while he beats and rapes his daughter, of "Ohh my darling [. . .] dreadful sorry, I'll take you home again —" (550), Frances's conclusion that "God loved [Kathleen] so much, He took her" (203), and the realization that in the end, all of the daughters are "Lost. And gone for ever" (291). This narratorial conflation of the dangers permitted within the structure of the patriarchal family, a patriarchally constructed religion, and a patriarchally formed cultural repertoire of music, fairy tale, and custom, in which everyone to a large degree participates in, contributes to, and propels, suggests that the *unheimlich* events that occur within the 'family home' are a communal and cultural responsibility: the *choices* that are made "ha[ve] been allowed to occur". In this way MacDonald's text is evocative of "Karl Jasper's concept of metaphysical guilt" that Frantz Fanon speaks of:

> There exists among men because they are men, a solidarity through which each shares responsibility for every injustice and every wrong committed in the world . . . If I do not do whatever I can to prevent them, I am an accomplice to them. [. . .] Every action is an answer or a question. Perhaps both. (89)

Thus the father's "possessive obsession" that has rendered an entire family as empty and

haunted as an "abandoned mine" is embraced by the communal embracement of prefabricated (and hollow) patriarchal ideals. Even the inscription in Kathleen's headstone is eerily symbolic of her father's *unheimlich* elitist-formalist ideals: "dignified and free of second-rate sentiment. It says simply, 'Beloved Daughter'" (194). The fact that James is a character that the reader is able to sympathize with to a certain degree, further suggests the extent to which MacDonald's characters represent the *unhomed* of this world — not just the darlin' daughters, but the helplessly lamenting fathers. James himself admits that there exists that which is ghostly and *unhomely* within his home:

> There is, and is not, any such thing as a ghost. This house, for example: James, honest with himself, admits that there are places and times which he avoids in his own home. Not out of belief — out of that spot on the back of his neck that stirs now and then for no reason. That's when he wishes he had the right to pray. Because that's what the unquiet need. "Pray for us" is what they're saying with their moans and midnight walks. (209)

The house on 191 Water Street is indeed haunted with "Pray for us" ghosts. But who will do the praying? And is prayer what these beings housed in trauma really need?

No Man's Land

Bhabha's "deep stirring of the unhomely" is evident in the images of the unhallowed Piper-family home — where an infant boy is buried in the family garden in the place where a scarecrow once stood, where a five year old is rocked (raped) in a green wingback chair, where an attic is stripped bare of religious icons and an abandoned-mine daughter, and where a mother turns on the gas of the kitchen oven and places her head inside for a rest. The Piper household becomes "some unholy No Man's Land" (139), an intermediate limbo space where the lines between what is familiar and comfortable are blurred with

that which is strange and discomforting, a place where all are shell-shocked and the only way to break out is to become, as Frances does, a "commando in training" (307). MacDonald's imagery repeatedly fuses the connotations of the family housed in trauma with the images of war and of "No Man's Land" sketched out earlier in the novel. James's experience of the World War I battlefield describes "the mud between the opposing trenches [. . .] that has yet to be won by either side" (108) as a place where one's "humanity" is "suspended": "*No man* may enter, either stealthily on his belly alone, or noisily on two feet racing through glue with a thousand versions of himself firing, falling, on either side as far as the eye can see, *and remain a man*" (my emphasis,108). The image of No Man's Land, augmented by a narrator's flippant comments or ironic attention to detail, is presented in a series of pictures throughout MacDonald's text by a type of incremental repetition that continually builds in meaning and significance. Through this layering of image on top of image, *Fall On Your Knees* seriously questions the societal construct of home and of the "greatness" of a patriarchally orientated nuclear family.

From the very start of the second section of the novel, entitled "No Man's Land", the Piper household abruptly becomes a battlefield. Unready readers are suddenly witness to one spectacle after another: the shocking scene of Kathleen dying in the attic — "a result of the bomb [we do not find out how she has come to be pregnant until much later] jammed in the antechamber of her belly, threatening to explode before it can be dropped to earth" (135); the ironic scene of the panicked Materia praying over her daughter, a "siren wail" of "incessant prayer warning of an air raid, *God is coming*, wailing in supplication, *Come O Lord*, begging God to pass over and to bless, not touch this house"

(135) — while James pounds at the attic door with his fists; the grotesque scene of Materia performing a home remedy c-section with "the old kitchen scissors, freshly sharp and sterilized to cut the cord" over the belly of her now dead daughter (135); and the unhallowed scene (despite the religious icons) that James witnesses when he breaks through the attic door: "There is the dead Young Mother, the Grandmother, the Infants, the Icons, the hope chest" (144) — a scene "Beyond shell-shock. Beyond No Man's Land" (137).

This scene "gets filed under "Normal" in the mind of the almost six-year-old Frances, who takes one look and decides that she better baptize those babies before they "die with Original Sin on them and go to that *non-place*, Limbo, and become *no one* for all eternity" (my emphasis, 146-7). No Man's Land is not only the limbo place of a World War I front or the liminal space between heaven and hell where unbaptized babies go; it is also the place where family secrets and unaccounted "truths" are buried. In the garden when James uproots the family scarecrow with the "no face" (137) and prepares to bury the infant boy, who dies unnamed, the shocked "layer of his self that is in charge of assumptions" believes that he is back in the war (158). Uncannily, Frances notices that the stick the scarecrow was mounted on is of "green wood" and has sprouted roots to anchor itself to the ground. Her young mind makes the connection that "Eventually a tree would have grown right up through the scarecrow. Maybe with fruit too" (157). And, later on, this *is* where the "family tree", revised by Lily, *with fruit* and "Ambrose" (who has since been named by Frances) as "buried treasure" at its roots, is buried — symbolic of the buried yet still unexcavated truths that Frances has hidden away in her cave-mind.

This is ironic in the fact that Frances, who at this time does not yet remember the events that occurred the evening of Kathleen's death, could not possibly foresee how accurately uncanny is her choice to bury the "family tree" in the exact spot in the garden where the emblem of protection and guardian of the "bounty" of the family — Pete with the "no-face" who had always haunted her sister Kathleen — once stood, not to mention her father's equally uncanny choice to bury the unfortunate baby there in the first place.

Perhaps coincidentally, and perhaps unconsciously due to an association of Ambrose with "buried treasure", and definitely intentionally on the part of MacDonald's craft — for Lily, the idea of No Man's Land comes to signify that "shaded area in between" "the place called Awake" and "the country of Asleep", the place where the ghost of her twin resides (226). What Lily is too young to realize, and what Frances is incrementally discovering, is that the entire household is a "shaded area", a grey hinterland where the entire family is haunted and where all that was once *heimlich* has become *unheimlich*. Caruth tells us that at the core of our stories of trauma there is "a kind of double telling, the oscillation between a crises of death and the correlative crises of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (7). From the moment of Kathleen's death onward, all of the characters are struggling to come to terms with her death, the events surrounding it, and how to go on living afterwards. For James, who does remember, and who is, after all, responsible for what has occurred in the first place, the crises of the event becomes his eternal present. Just the sight of a picture of his "laughing leaning-forward girl with the halo of hurry, 'Daddy!'" ten years later reminds him that "Now is the dim past. Then was

the shining present": "You think you're safe. Until you see a picture like that. And then you know you'll always be a slave to the present because the present is more powerful than the past, no matter how long ago the present happened" (260).

Frances too, is stuck dwelling on(in) the past. Although she cannot remember the exact scene she witnessed at the age of five, Frances is in a constant battle with the trauma it has caused. The *eerie voice of truth* continually haunts her as she tells and re-tells the family story to Lily, who notes that with each telling, Frances slips into "the eerie voice of the stray-orange-cat-story" and that even though the details of the story are continually changing from one telling to the next, this is "the voice [Frances] uses when she is telling the truth" (251). The problem is, Frances is not exactly sure what the truth is — as Jill Matus points out, "one does not have to *own* the truth, in order to effectively *bear witness* to it" (23). Frances's act of telling and re-telling the stories about the family past to Lily is an act that is "unwittingly testimonial", as through this act, she is in a continual dialogue with the past in an attempt to "bear[] witness to a truth" that "continues to escape [her], a truth that is, essentially, *not available*" (Matus 23). For Frances, as she discovers at her mother's funeral at age five, fact and truth are suddenly no longer tangible: "one thing can look like another": "fact and truth [have] become separated [. . .] to wander like twins in a fairy-tale, waiting to be reunited" (5). That fact and truth become increasingly intangible, is evident in that only the fictional stories the Piper sisters tell each other, the nursery rhymes and fables their father has introduced to their lives by teaching them to read, and the imaginary games they play, are tangible or graspable truths. All other truths are intangible: all that has been repressed and kept secret surrounding the deaths of

Kathleen and their mother; the possessive motherly-dynamic that has developed in Mercedes' relationship with Frances (who is only eleven months younger!); and the overbearing and over-thick[6] need all three sisters possess to contain and comfort each other, as the narrator keenly notes: "Mercedes needs to forgive Frances the same way Frances needs to comfort Lily" (258). All three sisters have grown to rely on the containment and closeness that familial trauma has instilled in their lives.

How intangible the inner dwelling of a household haunted by its past can become is evident in the interrelations of the Piper sisters. At the age of six Mercedes is forced to take on the mothering/preserving role that her own mother had inhabited:

> "Daddy, where's Mamma?"
> "I need you to be a big girl, Mercedes." (168)

It is a responsibility she takes very seriously. Her "almost-seven-year-old nerves are still tender but [Kathleen's death and her mother's ensuing suicide] begins a process that will eventually turn them into steel":

> When her nerves have been heated up enough, when they are white-hot, they'll be plunged into cold water, tempered and strong for ever. Strong enough to support a building or a family, strong enough to prevent the house at 191 Water street from caving in on itself in the years to come. It will stand. *It will stand.* (155)

This new responsibility forces Mercedes to grow up very quickly:

> Mercedes stroked Frances's fuzzy braids and whispered tenderly, "It's all right, baby, Mumma's here."
> Frances stopped crying.
> "I'm your mumma now," said Mercedes. (174)

6

This is an expression drawn from Toni Morrison's *Beloved.* Upon hearing about Sethe's attempt to protect her children from schoolteacher by murdering them with a handsaw, Paul D tells Sethe that her love is "too-thick". Sethe's mother-love is thick – thick with the need to protect and contain.

Eerily, her possessive role as "mother" and nurturer to Frances, is one that persists up into adulthood, even to the point that Mercedes cannot possibly bear for Frances to become a mother herself and will do everything possible to prevent that from happening: "For she knows that once Frances has a child, Frances will no longer need a mother" (437). This is no longer just a role, but a necessary part of her identity. Mercedes' desire to nurture Frances is a type of dwelling that feeds solely off her need "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for" (Heidegger 101). Mercedes has dedicated her life to a role forced upon her at age six, and enforced by her own most traumatic experience, a memory she has kept as a painting "on top of a pile of things at the back of her mind": "The painting from the junk pile is called *Daddy and Frances in the Rocking Chair.* But there never was a rocking-chair, in this room or any other. Just the pale green wingback" (374). Caruth tells us that a "certain paradox" about the traumatic experiences that create one's wounds is "that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it" (91). And, I would add, an inability to know how that event affects one's current state of dwelling. Mercedes, faced with the sudden acknowledgement that her sister may be grown-up enough to be a mother herself:

> covers her face with her arm and allows her heart to open up along its oldest wound. Where will my baby Frances go? She will disappear. She will die and I'll have no one to love and look after. Little Frances will become a forlorn ghost child, crying on the stairs at night, cold and transparent, with her fuzzy golden braids and her brave stare, "*It doesn't hurt.*" And I won't be able to comfort her. (437)

The six-year-old Mercedes must have placed her "painting" face-first against the back wall of her cave-mind as Frances had done, for although she knows that what she witnessed between her father and Frances is not right, she is unable to comprehend it

completely. Instead, she remembers the child image of her eleven-month-younger sister telling her "*It doesn't hurt*" and her own protective need to take away the pain, to consol and comfort, completely takes over. She is mother now, not sister. Mercedes forgets the event itself and focusses on the sudden protective urge it has instilled — an urge that allows her the feeling of control and order amidst a world suddenly gone to chaos: the control and order of knowing her role as "mother". Mercedes' need to contain Frances in the role of the little child has become an incestuous way of keeping the facts clear, of keeping her "oldest wound" alive so that it remains familiar and fresh without having to really know it or face it. In this way her own traumatic witnessing cannot fade into a ghost and haunt her instead.

In *Fall On Your Knees*, "ghosts" are both metaphoric and real. Metaphorically, ghosts are "re-memories" (to use a term of Toni Morrison's) of events and people from the past, and ghosts are also the spirits of these people. For example, as Andrews indicates, "Rose dresses up in the suit of her dead black father and resurrects a part of her past that she has never known" (14) and later, Lily does the same thing with her mother's dress. Frances, too, sneaks into the house of her mother's childhood, and resurrects the spirit of her grandmother by dancing the dance of the seven veils for her mystified grandfather. "By communing with ghosts, [all *three* women] experience a dimension of themselves that momentarily transcends the realities of time and space" (Andrews 14). Lily's communion is with a less metaphorical ghost: that of her twin brother Ambrose. For Lily, Ambrose *is* real. He is her guardian angel and he is the brother she has lost to an intangible No Man's Land. Ambrose, who has risen from the place of his burial, is the

type of ghost Lois Parkinson Zamora speaks of when she says that ghosts "challenge the physical integrity – the corporeal wholeness – that we require of the human" and

> They also challenge the integrity of the objective world: when ghosts enter, matter becomes permeable and/or porous. Walls and doors no longer divide: rooms no longer occlude; the earth no longer buries. And time too, becomes permeable, volatile, diffuse: ghosts dialogue with, and often dismiss, official history. (118-119)

For Lily, Ambrose is a way of coming to terms with and recovering a past that she was too young to remember, and which is too traumatic to understand. MacDonald's "interplay between magic and reality [. . .] by resurrecting ghosts from the past" (Andrews 14) is of the magical realist political nature that questions our official and objective (his)stories and suggests new ways of "understand[ing] the relationships between those who are dead and their survivors" (Andrews 14). The magical realist nature of MacDonald's work enhances the effect that the "house" has become a space that haunts in its containment; a space in which its dwelling-beings commune with their past; and a space in which the traumatic being of one family has become a dwelling of suspended human reality.

The Piper household has become an indistinct and dreamlike land, where that which was once tangible becomes intangible, and all that is intangible seems tangible. Another example that establishes this is in how the sisters interact and play within the house. Whether it is playing with dolls, or acting out the roles of the characters in "Little Women", or more eerily, their Catholic version of "Little Women Doing the Stations of the Cross" (200), or even eating imaginary food and conversing with each other in the early childhood language of Materia's Lebanese-Arabic (which by now has eroded to a

baby-talk mixed with the vocabulary of their mother's cooking and European fairy-tales), the sisters partake in a game of *playing house* which is uncannily not so different or separate from their real-life roles. This is emphasized by the fact that even when they are grown women, and up until the time of Frances's death at age forty, Mercedes attempts to comfort her sister with pretend "Blancmange, treacle, mead and mutton" (447), and the magically poetic Lebanese baby-talk their mother had always used to demonstrate her love to them. In fact, the last exchange between the grown Mercedes and Frances reveals how strangely they have, throughout their entire lives, played out the roles of *playing house*:

> A cool cloth, Frances your eyes are so pretty --- always so pretty --- feel better in the morning, *Habibti*. . . . "*Te 'berini*.."
> "Mercedes, remember that song?"
> Forgive me, Frances.
> "Sing it, Mercedes?"
> "'Oh playmate, come out and play with me, And bring your dollies three, climb up my apple tree. Shout down my rain barrel, Slide down my cellar door, And we'll be jolly friends, for ever more. . . .'"
> In and out of sleep --- that's right, you rest now.
> "It's all right, Mercedes."
> *Forgive me, Frances*. (557)

The Lebanese-Arabic phrase, "*Te 'berini*", is an endearing expression of a dialect mothers use with their children when they are young. Directly translated, "*Te 'berini*" means "bury me" — as in, "put me in a coffin and bury me under the ground." However, in this Mother's-language context, the meaning expressed is more in the lines of: "I will die before you, I will never leave you alone, I will take care of you all my life."[7] Mercedes

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7

I have come to this translation and those subsequent through the help of a Lebanese-Arabic speaking friend, Youssef El Samra, who currently lives in Montreal.

dedicates her life to taking care of Frances all of Frances's life, and Frances dedicates her life to getting Lily out of the house.

The extent to which the daughters have become "buried" within the No Man's Land of the house, in a hazy fairy-tale-like nightmare in which they have all existed as ghosts, is illustrated in Frances's final conversation with Lily:

> "I don't want to leave you."
> Lily's forehead buckles but Frances insists, "You have to go, little gingerbread boy, 'run away and whatever you do, don't look back.'"
> "This isn't a story, Frances." Anger ignites Lily's grief.
> "Yes it is, Lily. *Hayola kellu bas Helm* ." ["... Okay, as you wish, it is all only a dream."]
> "It is not!"
> "*Taa'i la hown, Habibti*— " ["Come here, My beautiful—"]
> "No!"
> "*Te'berini.*"
> "Stop it!" (450)

Sadly, Frances is right. Their lives have become a fabrication of dreams, fairytales, and traumatic events that they have not yet, nor may ever, come to terms with. The events of their present are continuously and intricately woven with the happenings of the past — the traumatic circumstances instigated by their father's excessive and possessive love for his daughter Kathleen. It does not help that James continues to exhibit his possession by beating Frances, treating Lily like a princess, and being as indiffrent about Mercedes as he was with his wife by casting her into the role of the household's new 'Little Woman'. James's ideal of the "greatness" of the home and of having a family to fill it "with beautiful music and the silence of good books" is rendered false and fictitious when the space within the home becomes a No Man's Land of suspended human reality. This is enforced by how uncannily the sisters' fictitious make-believe roles are played out in a

distortion of "fact and truth", in a real-life play that renders the true nature of their dwelling. As Joyce does through his character Stephen Deadalus, MacDonald's fiction toys with the idea "that the past is an eternally malleable fiction, unknowable and irrevocable" (Kiberd 952). Stephen, who wishes to escape the nightmare of history, is himself a teacher of history. When one of his students has trouble recalling a particular fact in Greek history, Stephen inwardly muses:

> Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it. A phrase then, of impatience, thud of Blake's wings of excess. I hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame. What's left us then? (28)

In a Joycian fashion, Stephen is referring to several different passages in the writings of Blake. He muses on Blake's notion that memory fables history ("Fable or Allegory is Form'd by the daughters of Memory" (Blake 637-8)) and decides that it is not memory that we should blame, but impatience and excess. This is an interesting passage to place next to Macdonald's fiction, because even though the exact facts of the Piper family history are fabled by the daughters within the household (with a jumbling of inaccessible facts and fairy-tale metaphors), it is not merely memory that does the fabling, but their father's overwhelming and excessive need to achieve a notion of "greatness" through a patriarchal possession, that has brought about the fabling of the common ideals of home and family, thus, through her fiction, MacDonald 'topples' the 'masonry' of those very constructs.

borne up through the wound

The "patriarchal power and violence that James used to control his household is finally rendered ineffective by his daughters' agency" (Rukszto 29). MacDonald's text explores

the probability that even though the "prevailing" system is a "fiction that "[e]veryone agrees to", it is also "an imperfect system" (165-6). However, although traditional and common notions of a patriarchally orientated family are rendered dangerously fictitious, the narrative does not efface all values of family and home. Through the interrelations of the sisters within the household, and the relationships established between Kathleen and Rose, between Frances and Lily, and later between Lily and Doc Rose, MacDonald's narrative reveals the potential for a less controlling, more interactive, interdependent, and feminine mode of living and being. It is not only a traumatic story of excessive love, incest, death and destruction that is "borne up through the wound in Kathleen's belly", but also an incredible story of resistance, transgression, re-creation and survival. A story that through the character of Frances, embodies the feminine values of the "triple goddess", thus implicitly signifying the "re-creative world view" of inspiration, preservation, and destruction (Martinez 292). To the extent that Frances is "non-submissive, wildly imaginative, and dangerously eccentric" and thus contributes to "shak[ing] the very foundations of patriarchy", she fits Martinez' description of "the crone", or the "ever-creative goddess" (292). Although Frances embodies the crone, all of the women within the household participate in the intermeshing roles of creation, preservation and destruction — emblematic of the re-creative circularity in MacDonald's aesthetic emphasis on the reality of a more subtle material realm coinciding with and residing within a gross material oriented world. The interactions of the female characters within the household exhibits a dwelling that relies on an interactive creation and preservation. Frances, however, is the 'shit-disturber' of the family. It is she who brings about the

destruction necessary for re-creation. Frances thinks of herself as a "commando in training for a mission so secret that even she does not know what it is. But she is ready. Every night the obstacle course. Manoeuvring behind the lines. Camouflaged to blend with the terrain" (307). And this is a pretty accurate metaphor: The commando position in an army is occupied by those soldiers specially-trained for quick attacks in enemy areas — and this is exactly how Frances operates within her father's home.

As a sister, Frances takes the 'rap' for anything that goes wrong within the household, which provokes numerous "talking-to['s] from Daddy" (212), making her all the more endearing to Mercedes and Lily. As a character, Frances embodies the witch or crone figure of the triple goddess — symbolically she owns a black cat and tells Lily that she's "the Devil" (270), and on a more metaphorical level, through the values she stands for and the extent to which she goes to defy her father, her character embodies all that is grotesquely absurd within the patriarchal realm in which she dwells. For example, she upsets her sister with numerous pranks, causing Mercedes to think that she really may be the devil — with her "arcane" ways that are "often spiced with the absurd. Some would say funny. [the narrator intervenes] Mercedes would not. [. . .] Funny is not a crippled black cat got up like a devil baby in the family christening gear at midnight" (212). Or, in her "job" entertaining at the run-down makeshift bar run by her uncle, Frances's routine is ironically indicative of the horrific fate of her sister Kathleen (or the miner-forty-niner's darling daughter Clementine for that matter): "[f]or example, she may strip down to a diaper, then stick her thumb in her mouth. '"Yes my heart belongs to daddy, so I couldn't be ba-ad. . . ."'" (293). Boutros describes Frances as a "diamond": "[h]ard, helpless,

buried", "passed from filthy paw to paw but never diminished" (361). And although his metaphor correctly labels the nature of her character, his patriarchally-orientated reasons for doing so do not ("she is waiting for a strong and fearless miner to go way down and rescue her up to the surface where she can shine for all she's worth" (361)?). Frances is, however, a "diamond". Not the type of diamond that her father James saw in Kathleen, when at eighteen months she revealed her musical talent, nor the type of diamond that anyone can control or own through excavation for that matter, but the real *stubborn-chunk-of-identity* diamond that Bhabha speaks of which "emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present" (219). (Amidst all that compressed turmoil, some sort of hardness must form.) Unlike Lily, who is actually born from the wound in her mother's belly, Frances is "borne" up out of the wound that transformed the dwelling of her familial home into a traumatic No Man's Land.

Kathleen dies confined to the attic space or "non-room [of] the house" (258). In *Fall On Your Knees*, the attic, as the space of stereotypical secrecy in many master narratives — the space that confines Rochester's "mad" wife for example — is "empty" except for the "hope chest" (258), a box within which all that is intimate and secret, special yet restricted, and all that is too painful for plain sight is buried: "*Put it in the hope chest, James. Yes. That's a good place for it. No one ever rummages in there*" (144). The full meaning of what Frances tells Lily — that they "all died the same time as Kathleen and [have] been haunting the house ever since" — can only be fully realized by the reader, who, text in hand, is able to see both inside and outside the Piper family home, who has the option of comparing this home to other familial homes of his or her textual

and actual past, and who notices that the daughters, in their current state of dwelling, have become buried in their father's house along with everything else that is intimate, special, and esoterically *heimlich.* Although it is precisely because this burial of the *heimlich* is condoned, that the *unheimlich* has been allowed to occur. For the characters in *Fall On Your Knees*, a wholesomeness of being and of dwelling entails the necessary transgression of a patriarchally structured realm through the embracement of a more self-empowering mode of building and dwelling. Through the assistance of her sister Frances, Lily embarks on her own "Hejira" (453)[8]. She puts on her new ruby-coloured-boots and unlike Dorothy who clicks her heals together in the manner shown to her by the great wizard Oz and claims: "There's no place like home, there's no place like home . . .", Lily leaves the family home in her mother's adventurous green silk dress, "closes the door behind her [. . .] looks back once. And keeps walking" (451). Later, on a ship bound for New York, "[s]he takes her last scent of salt island air, harsh, coniferous and cool, the indescribable grey that contains all things" and formally thinks to herself, "Home. Farewell." (502)

In order to escape merely the canonical classification of the master narrative tragedy, MacDonald's fiction necessitates that one or more of the sisters leaves "home" – the wood-frame structure of a possessively confining father, *and* the patriarchal and classicist world or "home" their father represents. In New York, Kathleen writes in her diary: "I think this is an enchanted city where you hear with different ears and see with

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The word *Hejira* which titles the eighth section of MacDonald's text, is most likely a Frances-and-Lily-hybrid-version of the Lebanese-Arabic, *Houjra*, which means *"immigration to another country"*. For the purposes of my interpretation of the text, I am using this word here in the connotative range of "a journey or immigration to another country, land, or realm".

different eyes. I feel like I've been living in a graveyard till now. Reading dead books, listening to dead music, singing dead songs about dying" (473). However briefly, Kathleen, who "is truly and utterly and completely Kathleen in New York" (122), experiences the ecstatic fusion of emotion, art and thought that allows her to really *live* her music as not something which is separate from her person — as though she were wandering around in a graveyard, picking her way through "dead music", "dead books", and a formalist-elitist "dead" art — but as though the music and the art encompasses all that is alive around her, a beauty that exists *within* her person, just waiting to be released. Through Rose, she learns that "music is already out there floating around and it's up to us to give it an opening into the world so we can hear it" — to not just "sing the song, [but to] release it" (479). As MacDonald's craft suggests, art is a way of building and bringing form to that magic which exists all around us, of creating a "boundary" "from which something *begins its presencing*" (Heidegger 105). Besides acting as a means to create the magic and beauty that already exists, Macdonald's art also politically brings into awareness that which is too often left unsaid, or unexamined. Through the haunting images of a family housed in trauma, *Fall On Your Knees* becomes an entreaty to the outside world, asking earnestly (praying) that we re-examine our "boundaries': "For the first time it occurs to him that the little Girl Guide may be a ghost. What is she saying to him with her eyes? 'Here is how I died. . . . Pray for me'" (324).

Kathleen's re-establishment in New York is a process of leaving behind the roles and world her father had trained her for and is thus an emblematic transgression of her father's home — of the patriarchal modes of seeing and being that James encompasses —

an existence that, as is proven through the Piper family saga, has become a traumatic No Man's Land, a graveyard of buried secrets, ghosts, and abuse. This theme MacDonald likewise explores in her play *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. In a comic scene situated in an "unhallowed" boneyard, the graveyard that contains the clues to the complete works of the *anxiety-of-influence*-father of all literature[9], not to mention the "buried and condemned" "bones of [his] actors, whores and pedants" (72), MacDonald's main character, Constance (an assistant Professor from Queens University, who until this point has blindly idolized Shakespeare's heroines) confronts the very emblems of the great bard himself, accusing both Desdemona and Juliet for their narrow-minded and stereotypical antics:

> Nay nay!! – Nay. Just . . . nay . . . both of you. I've had it with all the tragic tunnel vision around here. You have no idea what – life is a hell of a lot more complicated than you think! Life – real life – is a big mess. Thank goodness. And every answer spawns another question; and every question blossoms with a hundred different answers; and if you're lucky you'll always feel somewhat confused. Life is – ! . . . Life is . . .
>
> a harmony of polar opposites,
> with gorgeous mixed-up places in between,
> where inspiration steams up from a rich
> Sargasso stew that's odd and flawed and full
> of gems and worn-out boots and sunken ships – (86)

When Lily arrives in New York, she arrives as a crone-figure wearing worn-out boots (as the three older ladies who live in the building testify: "That red-haired devil who ruined our Miss Rose has come back to life as a shrunk-down raggedy cripple", and, the narrator concedes, "It's true" (540)), and she arrives as both a creator and a preserver figure of

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9

In his book, *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom proposes that we are all "pragmatically reinvented by Shakespeare" (17), and that all of literature is influenced by his works.

"newness" to renew the spirit of Kathleen and start a new life with Doc Rose. Rukszto claims that MacDonald's fiction is about "exceeding prescriptive means of belonging" through a fashioning of one's identity "in the context of, but not being determined by, the existing sexual, cultural, racial and gender [and, I would add, historical] norms" (19). Bhabha tells us that it is such "borderline work of culture" that "demands an encounter with 'newness' [. . .] refiguring [the past] as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (7). In this way, "[t]he 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (Bhabha 7).

Thus it is not simply "nostalgia" that brings Lily to New York. Kathleen had told Rose that if she died before her, she would "come back" as her "guardian angel" (517) and this is exactly the role Lily fulfills. And so by the end of the novel, it is not so uncanny that Frances too, in the presencing power of narration, "comes back" through Lily's recounting of the family history to Frances's son, Anthony ("sit down and have a cuppa tea till I tell you about your mother" (566)). The story Lily recounts to Anthony is absent in the text unless the reader dares to flip to the beginning of the novel and start the process of re-reading. Anthony's arrival has been instigated by Mercedes' will, and he brings with him the real version of the family tree which is emblematic of Mercedes' final acknowledgement of the true history of the family. Mercedes' act of "naming and locating [the] various familial lines, regardless of sexual orientation, race, or paternity", putting it down on paper and designating it to Lily, creates a document that "offers a model of empowerment and potential resistance" (Andrews 15) that allows, through the "founding and joining of spaces", not only space for the "presencing" (Heidegger 107), of

the Piper family story, but also a means of connecting Anthony to Lily and bringing together the only remaining kin of the family. Thus through the arrival of Anthony, the ghost of Frances is released: the future is no longer "specified by the fixity of the past", but has become "(once again) an open question" (Bhabha 219) — or if one chooses, an *open and re-opened book.*

Confronting the Ghosts of Excess: Raising *BELOVED*; Being Loved

I need to find a place to be the air is heavy I am not dead I am not there is a house there is what she whispered to me I am where she told me I am not dead

Who is Beloved? Or, moreover, *what* is she? These questions haunt the literary criticism of Toni Morrison. The answers are varied: Beloved, the baby-ghost who furiously inhabits 124; Beloved, the full-grown and returned "crawling already?" daughter; Beloved, "the incarnation of Sethe's guilt" or an embodiment of the sixty-million-and-more *disremembered and unaccounted for* who died on the slave ships in the Middle Passage (Phelan 226); and, Beloved, the psychokinetic collective fury of "black America's relationship with its enslaved past" (Keenan 48). Morrison's image of seven letters, B-E-L-O-V-E-D, engraved on the headstone of a baby girl murdered by her mother's protective "safety with a handsaw" (193) is also, in block capital letters (like those one would find engraved in stone), the title of her text. Morrison's *BELOVED* invites her readers to dwell not only within a text, but within a past that is *disremembered and unaccounted for* and is as minutely represented as the names and descriptors carved in graveyard stone monuments. The conflation of this gravestone image with the "multiple signifiers" of a ghost, a house, a character, a metaphor for the past, a "final address to her readers" (Phelan 232, 239), and the title of the text itself, is certainly loaded. Overwhelming? Perhaps. But that's the point. BELOVED is the reification of all kinds of excess: a mother's excessive need to spare and protect; an excessive "too thick" love (193); excessive pride; excessive arrogance; excessive fear; the dominant culture's excessive need to control and label; the inundating excess of inadequately

represented past. Entire graveyards of man-kind's excess. Stephen Dedalus's insight that perhaps it is not so much memory, but "impatience" and "excess" that "fables" history and renders all of time "one livid final flame" (Joyce 28) is a concern of Morrison's as well. When asked by Bill Moyers to explicate Paul D's comment to Sethe that "You're love is too thick" (193), Morrison responds that love "can be excessive" and it's "a big problem" because "[w]e don't know when to stop" (*CM 268*). The ghost that haunts Sethe's house *is* livid and its demand for attention is also excessive for the inhabitants of 124. This is evident in the fright of "two creeping-off boys" (4) who "would [not] let go of each other's hands" (216), and in the image of Sethe and Denver enslaved by fury: Sethe, housed-in by her own guilt, held fixed by social and psychological walls she herself has erected, and Denver, too afraid to venture out of her mother's house or into any world that has the potential to make her mother *do what she did.* History, for the inhabitants of 124, is not only a "nightmare" (Joyce 41), but a greedy and outrageous presence that swallows one up just as Beloved's need for attention swallows-up Sethe, drains her of her power, her strength. Beloved herself is terrified of "being swallowed", though not by another's over-consumption of her love or attention, but swallowed in another way, piece by piece — a "tooth", "her arm, her hand, a toe" (157) — into oblivion, swallowed till she no longer exists or is remembered: "she chews and swallows me I am gone" (252). As Sally Keenan notes, Beloved is "a story that embodies a particular historical contradiction" in the nature of how we dwell: "the desire and necessity to remember and honor the past and the dangers of becoming locked in it" (74).

Beloved's return from the graveyard materializes the "uncanny" of Sethe's house.

Unburied, she can no longer be regarded offhandedly as a label or descriptor on a gravestone. As a woman who is approximately the age Sethe's daughter would have been had she lived, and as one who needs Sethe's care, she is both familiar and intimate: "She is [for Sethe], in Freud's words, 'something repressed which recurs', something supposedly 'dead' returning painfully to life, through the supernatural at work in the world of common reality', yet 'in reality nothing new or alien [. . .]'" (Ferguson 158-9). From her appearance on the doorstep, Beloved is no longer an intangible alien or dead baby ghost, but a corporeal, tangible, and alive full-grown woman. Her insistence that "I am not dead I am not *there is a house*" (my emphasis, 252) is valid. The house does exist. And it is a house of excess. The excess that Beloved represents as a baby poltergeist (her jealous destruction: "turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air" (4)), and as a fully-grown woman (her craving for "sweet things", her need to be fed with stories from her mother's past) is indicative of the nature of Sethe's dwelling within 124 — a house which she never leaves except to go to work, a house which, she thinks, will "keep the past at bay" (51). However, 'keeping at bay' and forgetting completely should not be conflated. Beloved's presence indicates the extent to which Sethe has not forgotten, *cannot* forget. Sethe is very much a being who dwells within her past. To *dwell*, Heidegger points out, "signifies: to remain, to stay in a place" (101). Thus, "man *is* insofar as he *dwells*" (101). However, the old word for the verb *to dwell*, he specifies, is *bauen*, which "*also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine" (101). Sethe believes that the only way that she will not re-live the horrible experiences of Sweet

Home, schoolteacher, and the excessive extent to which she was pushed at the sight of the men "coming into her yard [. . .] coming for her best thing" (308), is through containment, by keeping all that is dear close within her walls, and by keeping all those other "places", the "places [that are] still there" (43), out.

With the exception of the spiteful tantrums of a venomous baby ghost, for eighteen years Sethe is pretty successful at keeping all those *places* — places from the past, present, and future — "closed down, veiled over and shut away" (101). That is, until the arrival of Paul D, "the last of the Sweet Home men" (7). Paul D scares the baby ghost off. However this does not mean that 124 is no longer a haunted house. The housed inhabitants of 124 are also haunted. And the reader soon finds that he or she is too, for that matter. Bhabha is right, Morrison does introduce her readers to that which is "unhomely" (445). What is most uncanny about *BELOVED* is how its characters dwell not just within 124, but within this image of the "house" as a place that can become *unhomely*. I suggest, and a number of other critics have insinuated this as well, that *BELOVED,* the text, is also a house. A house that "need[s] to find a place to be" (252). To carry on from a previous image, if novels can be seen metaphorically as bricks which a writer 'carries' or puts forth to indicate to the world larger forms, structures (such as houses), and constructs (such as "home"), then it does not seem too much of a stretch to imagine Morrison's novel as a metaphorical house; representative of other structures and constructs in which we all dwell. A house in which its readers experience not only the particular dwelling of Sethe and Denver, but are brought to experience being and dwelling within the "unhomely" and *haunted house* of the present; a house that has been inscribed

by the past and has risen from the dead, within which we need now, more than ever, a means of (re)creating felicitous space. And, perhaps, as Morrison suggests, by facing the past instead of battling it out or pushing it away, we not only remember it, but in remembering, we speak about it and we enunciate its existence in the time that is now: "All of it is now it is always now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too" (248). The voice of Beloved the ghost, Beloved the real live woman, and *BELOVED* the text gathers in a communal cry to represent the wounds of the past, and the haunting of our houses, of our homes. Morrison's *BELOVED* is a clear reminder that in the process of enunciation, of telling our stories, our wounds, to others, *rememories* are created which allow for a continuous (communal and individual) re-building of the present, thus allowing space — the space of our thoughts and dwellings and constructs — to be inhabited in new and variable ways.[10]

there is a house

The "unhomely" "house of fiction" Bhabha speaks of is not just Morrison's *BELOVED*, but the fiction of "today" in which one hears "the deep stirring" of a world where one's dwelling is perpetually affected by history (445). According to Bhabha, both the world and the home have become "unhallowed" places, where "the intimate recesses of domestic

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Rememories: This is a term Morrison introduces in *BELOVED* when Sethe tells Denver: "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world" (43). This term has been explicated by numerous critics, most coherently in Maya Hostettler's explanation: "[For Denver] To bring meaning into her life is to imagine a narration that is about the past. While imagining the narration about the past, the narration also becomes part of the past. A memory (the mother's first narrration) and its rememory (all following narrations, imitations, alterations, repetitions) that will come forth at times to make itself known" (410).

space have become sites for history's most intricate invasions" (445). It is no wonder he uses the example of *BELOVED* to expound this impression. What is *heimlich* about the past for Sethe — the "shameless beauty" of "Sweet Home' (7), the antics of a "crawling already?" baby girl — become the *unheimlich* haunting of the present. The multiple signifiers that Beloved as a ghost and as a real-life-woman represents are the exact conflation of past and present, "private and public", "home and world", "the world-in-the-home" and "the home-in-the-world" Bhabha refers to as having created an "unhomely" and "estranging sense of relocation" in our present being (445). James Phelan describes his experience of reading *BELOVED* as that of stepping into a house: "I AM IN *BELOVED* AND *BELOVED* IS IN ME. Like Stamp Paid, I enter without knocking. For days I live at 124. I become Sethe. Paul D. Denver" (225). However, Phelan admits that he does not feel entirely at home in his readerly transference: "But *Beloved* also eludes me. Like Stamp Paid on the threshold of 124, I cannot enter. Parts of Morrison's world won't let me in" (226). And it is exactly Morrison's intention to create this type of unease in her readers, to create an experience that is both familiar and strange, to bring the estrangement of black America's enslaved past into the lives of her readers, white or black, and in this way (in Bhabha's sense) to *unhome* us. Speaking of the opening words of *BELOVED*, Morrison asserts that by their very abruptness the reader is snatched into the "novel's population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, from any place to another, without preparation and without defense. No lobby, no door, no entrance — a gangplank, perhaps (but a very short one)" (*Unspeakable* 396). Morrison's intention seems to be to "rock" her readers off the security of their foundations (by

recreating the experience of the *unhomed* in an *unhallowed* yet familiar and intimate place such as the haunted twentieth century house) thus re-creating for her readers, an experience just as shocking and brusque as the one in which the once free people of Africa suddenly found themselves piling up on slave ships headed for the Americas. Morrison declares that "the house into which this snatching — this kidnapping — propels one, changes from spiteful to loud to quiet, as the sounds of the body of the [slave] ship itself may have changed" (*Unspeakable* 396). She is speaking here of 124, but on another metaphorical level, she speaks also of her novel.

According to Bhabha, "literature haunts history's more public face" (454). Beloved's immutable claim of "I am not dead" and "I need to find a place to be" (252) forces, to use Morrison's term, the process of "rememory" by reminding her readers that the past is still "out there", that no matter how long ago it has occurred, it still exists, "waiting for you", and since "nothing ever dies" (43-4) we are forced to create and re-create our narratives about it. Through this process, "a silence [is] broken, a void filled, an unpeakable thing spoken at last" (Morrison, *Unspeakable* 387). Morrison, like MacDonald in *Fall On Your Knees*, examines the fact that even though that which has past is often kept in utter silence and concealed from public sight, it must not be assumed that it is not there, nor that it does not affect even those who do not know about or fully comprehend it. Utilizing the theories of sociologist Kai Erickson to come to terms with Morrison's fiction, Jill Matus remarks that

> trauma must be understood as resulting from 'a constellation of life experiences as well as from a discrete happening, from a persisting condition as well as from an acute event'. He [Erickson] also notes that the 'traumatic wounds inflicted on

> individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture, almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up. Trauma, that is, has a social dimension.' (Matus 28)

The *rememories* Morrison creates force her readers to confront their own haunted and *unhomely* being. Just as the black community of Cincinnati had to gather together in the broad daylight of Sethe's yard to confront and exorcise the "unleashed and sassy" (302) ghost-incarnated-woman possessing Sethe's present, and thus confront their own grown-up grudges, "[t]he past has to come out of the closet" (Hostettler 415). As Bhabha claims, "the house of slave-memory is not a resting place" (450). It is not a place to dwell in for long.

By bringing to life the most intimate trauma of Sethe, the slave-mother who murders her own child, and by illustrating how the trauma of one family is implicated in the lives of an entire community of people, Morrsion taps into the social well of traumatic experience that has originated from centuries of slavery, and in doing so, *rememories*, re-writes, the all-too-commonly assimilated *master narrative*. Maya Hostettler claims that each time we "tell[] the past we do the past", in other words, "[e]ach telling is a doing while simultaneously becoming a part of what it is doing" (407). (Heidegger would similarly say that each building is a dwelling while simultaneously becoming a part of *how* we dwell.) And Hostettler points out that the past, via what we call "history" — as is illustrated in *BELOVED* through schoolteacher's role as a recorder of history — only gets "master-narratively represented" (409). Schoolteacher, in creating his historical record of black Americans, only sees with eyes that grasp the tangible and gross material world: physical features, events as they appear to the naked (judgemental) eye. And his

empirical labeling based on *the gross material world he sees* is biased at that: "He finds what he wants to find" (Hostettler 404). Through literature, Morrison confronts this type of master-narratively recorded history that the "schoolteachers" of the world represent. By taking an actual person and event from the past (an escaped slave woman who did in fact murder her baby to prevent its being reclaimed by slave hunters), and by using a magic realist literature as a strategy of representation, Morrison "offers an introjection into the fields of revisionist historiography and fiction" (Rushdy 568). As Ashraf H.A. Rushdy notes, "[s]he makes articulate a victim of a patriarchal order in order to criticize that order" (568). And she does this while simultaneously recreating a narrative that takes into account an intangible subtle material realm of emotions and magic, trauma and hauntings, that are not just a part of a specific group of people who have lived a very specific tragedy, but are basic concerns and aspects of all living-dwelling beings.

As Hostettler acutely perceives, this is not just "a 'black thing,' or an 'American thing.' On the contrary, it is as much a 'white thing' as it is a 'world thing'" (415). By focusing her most haunting images in the novel around a house and the idea of home (or, 'Sweet Home'), and by using this image as a metaphor for other structures, constructs, and *domains* by which human life orients itself, Morrison toys with the very notions and structures that both establish and haunt our dwelling. In considering the images of house and home in *BELOVED*, Lori Askeland notes how useful "Arthur C. Danto's recent reflection on the linguistic roots of the words we use to describe our dwelling places" (786) are to our conception of what Morrison is doing with her text. According to Askeland, Danto draws to our attention the fact "that the word 'domain' shares a root

with a family of English terms that refer back to the Latin *domus*", and through these etymological links, "'the house speaks to us precisely as the symbol of rulership, ownership, mastery, power'" (786). However, she also notes Danto's reflection on the "all too human need for shelter", as, the Latin root for house,

> *hus*, was 'cognate with *huden* — to hide, shelter, conceal, cover' — which shows us 'the fragile, threatened, exposed side of our self-image as dwellers: beings that need protection, a place to crawl into [. . .]' Thus, by conceiving of a location as being "ours," we cognitively create a domain, an area of power, while in the back of our minds we may have "housed" the knowledge of how arbitrary and fragile that power always is. (786)

Sethe is not only "closed down, veiled over and shut away" (101) within the protection of a house, but it is a *haunted house* — and one that is haunted by a baby-girl-turned-full-woman-"with a grudge" (302) who refuses to stay buried — "the air is heavy I am not dead" (252) — and who "walks in the door and sits down at the table" (*CM* 249). Even though Beloved is a ghost, and is thus not exactly the stuff of ordinary everyday realist experience, her presence is unquestionably acknowledged by the inhabitants of 124 and by the black community who face and exorcize her in the yard. As Morrison comments, the purpose of making Beloved so convincing is one of "making history possible, making memory real"; the past-incarnated forces the present-beings "to think about" (CM 249) the fragility of their structures.

The ghost that haunts Sethe's house is treated by her magic realist style as "both a major incumbent of the narrative and [as a] sleight of hand", thus revealing the political nature of Beloved's "fully realized presence" (*Unspeakable* 396). And, as Morrison notes, "[o]ne of [the] purposes" of her text's magically real representation is political in

nature: "to keep the reader preoccupied with the nature of the incredible spirit world while being supplied a controlled diet of the incredible political world" (*Unspeakable* 396). The haunting of the house and the incarnation of the ghost-daughter, Beloved, creates a *heimlich*-gone-*unheimlich* feeling in the reader while simultaneously drawing him or her into what Phelan in his realist-oriented perspective calls Morrison's "imaginative world" — which purposively "mak[es] us feel off-balance": "in this world, ghosts are not only present but taken for granted; in this world, the past coexists with the present" (Phelan 230). And for this reason, Morrison's novel has been called "apocalyptic" by critic Susan Bowers who states that the naturalizing of the communion with the dead in *BELOVED*, "presents an apocalyptic demolition of the boundaries between the earthly and spiritual realms, an invasion of the world of the living by the world beyond the veil" (211). What is perhaps haunting for Phelan, Bhabha, and most other readers, is the fact that in Morrison's *BELOVED*, the intimate spaces of the home are rocked off their felicitous and nostalgic foundations by a past haunted not even by a remember-me-father or ancestor (as is the case in Hamlet) but by a remember-me-daughter ("You rememory me?" (254)) who demands that she is *not* dead, thus misconstruing our notions of what is past, what is present, and what should or should not be — to use Morrison's term — *passed-on* (as in "This is not a story to pass on" (324)).

I need to find a place to be

Housed-in by a mother's fear of outside places, Denver grows up within the walls and yard of 124. Sethe's belief in "keeping the past at bay" (51) has Denver confined to the

yard by her own fears of what might happen "[o]ut there where there were places in which things so bad had happened that when you went near them it would happen again" (10). Due to her mother's guilt-driven nourishing of a livid baby-ghost's antics, 124 is full of spite and "baby's venom" (3). It is no wonder then, that Denver creates her own (much more felicitous) space within the liminal area of the yard. In an article on the relations between black American culture and architecture, bell hooks speaks of the common notion of the yard as a "continuation of living space" for "rural black folks", as, habitually confined to small living quarters, "the world right outside their housing structure" is often seen as a "liminal space where [. . .] the limits of desire and the imagination" can be stretched (*BV* 149). Located "between the field and the stream", in the woods behind the house, Denver's liminal space between the house and the community consists of "five boxwood bushes, planted in a ring" and "stretching towards each other four feet off the ground to form a round, empty room seven feet high, its walls fifty inches of murmuring leaves" (34). Denver's boxwood bower functions for her in much the same way that 124 allows Sethe to wall herself away from the *places* that are "still out there" (43) — even the murmuring leaves of Denver's self-created world are metaphorically similar to the murmuring "whisper[ing]" "voices [voices from a less tangible realm, but nonetheless voices which Stamp Paid can hear] surrounding the house, recognizable, but undecipherable" (202, 235). Like her mother, Denver closes herself up in a place she herself has created: "First a playroom (where the silence was softer), then a refuge (from her brothers' fright)" (35). The boxwood bower is both a physical and an imagined space, malleable to Denver's own growth, a space which encompasses both the subtle material

realm of feelings, emotions, the magic of the imagination, and the gross material realm of real live trees, murmuring leaves, and the excitement of cologne (a gift from Miss Bodwin and a symbol of the outside world). "Quiet, private, and completely secret" (34), "soon the place became the point" (35). Like Sethe, Denver allows her very being, her very dwelling, to become dependent on a space she has created: "In that bower, closed off from the hurt of the hurt world, Denver's imagination produce[s] its own hunger and its own food" (35). It is a space that requires no interrelations with anyone from either the home-world of Sethe and the baby-ghost, or the world "out there" (43). In her own invented realm, "[v]eiled and protected by the live green walls, [Denver feels] ripe and clear, and salvation [i]s as easy as a wish" (35). Despite its built-in loneliness, Denver's boxwood bower is a much more felicitous space than her mother's house and it's location in the liminal space of the yard indicates a willingness to dwell outside the walls of 124, in a location that is much closer to the threshold between the yard of "a house peopled by the living activity of the dead' (35) and the community realm of the living.

Heidegger's notion that 'space' "contains a sense of 'clearing-away', of releasing places from wilderness and allowing the possibility of 'dwelling'" (Leach 98) is useful in understanding the necessity of Denver's boxwood bower as the only means by which she can cope with the traumatic circumstances of dwelling within a haunted house. Similarly, much before 124 becomes "the plaything of spirits and the home of the chafed" (102), Baby Suggs, who is very much aware of the connection between how a person thinks about or dwells on and within their present or past self and how a person is, turns 124 in to a type of "homeplace" (hooks 42) for the entire community, while every Saturday

afternoon, her speaking of "the Word" (210) in the "Clearing — a wide open place cut deep in the woods" (102) — brings salvation to both herself and the people of the community by "clearing-away" the damages of the past and by creating a liminal space that allows for the existence of both the gross material and subtle material realms. In her article, "HOMEPLACE: a site of resistance," bell hooks speaks of the African-American home as a political means of creating a "community of resistance" by establishing "a safe place" "where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects", and where the "dignity denied [to black people]" in the "public [gross material] world" can be restored within a place of love, affirmation, healing, and mutual respect that acknowledges the more subtle material aspects of being: "We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that 'homeplace', most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits" (42), claims hook. And this is exactly what Baby Suggs does for the black community of Cincinnati when "[u]ncalled, unrobed, unanointed, she let her great heart beat in their presence" (102).

Baby Suggs, who offers up "her great big heart" indiscriminately to "every black man, woman, and child" (103, 102), and who teaches them, too, to love their hearts and to love and care for their flesh, embodies all connotations of Heidegger's conception of 'dwelling' as "the basic character of human being" (101). Baby Suggs is a woman who orientates her being around the Heideggerian question of dwelling — dwelling as both a "building" in the sense of the creating and "raising of edifices" (or constructs, or thoughts) — in that one *forms* through perception, and *builds* through forming, and *dwells* in

building, and *perceives* through dwelling; and as a "building" in the sense of cherishing and protecting, preserving and caring, cultivating and nurturing. Baby Suggs moves into 124 and transforms it into a community haven, a space in which the wayward and *unhomed* of the locale, including those just passing through, can gather together, preserve and cultivate their strength. Conscious of the inherent need all people have to connect the gross material realm of the physical, measurable, world with the subtle material, more intangible, realms, Baby Suggs, upon arriving at 124, architecturally alters its space so that the intimate working tasks of everyday living such as cooking and cleaning, can accompany the more public activities of entertaining guests and taking care of others. In her sermons, Baby Suggs emphasizes the connection between the earthly, sensual, corporeal realm of the "flesh" and the subtle material realm of emotions, imagination, and feelings — especially of "love" (103). Baby Suggs teaches an appreciation of the subtle material realm through a love of the gross material realm. She tells her people 'that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it" (103). She teaches that in order to experience the actuality of a love that exists for all thinking, weeping, laughing, dancing people, it is necessary to acknowledge its being, and then give it the space to exist: "'Here,' she said, 'in this place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard [. . .] *You* got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved" (103-4). Baby Suggs addresses the community to *be loved*, and she does this in the only way she knows how, by opening up her "great big heart" and inviting her people

— friends, family, neighbors, traveling strangers, the old and the young — to dwell there. (Which perhaps explains her sudden and ultimate withdrawal from life itself when the community grudgingly betrays her.) Baby Suggs is not afraid of loving, and the preservation she represents is a renewal through the acts of loving and giving. However, for a community of people unaccustomed to receiving Baby Suggs' type of care, let alone to treating either themselves or others in this way, this type of "reckless generosity" (162) is excessive: "Too much, they thought. Where does she get it all, Baby Suggs, holy?" (161).

Baby Suggs offers the community all that she has and all that she is, creating and building a space for others to gather themselves together, to preserve and renew their strength, and to learn simply to acknowledge, love, and let-dwell. Her weekly celebrations in the Clearing are the glue and the magic that hold the community together. As Iris M. Young notes upon considering Heidegger's conception of building as preservation:

> The work of preservation entails not only keeping the physical objects of particular people intact, but renewing their meaning in their lives. Thus preservation involves preparing and staging commemorations and celebrations, where those who dwell together among the things tell and retell stories of their particular lives and give and receive gifts that add to the dwelling world. The important work of preservation also involves teaching the children the meanings of things among which one dwells, teaching the children the stories, practices, and celebrations that keep their particular meanings alive. (64-5)

In her ability to "build out of dwelling and think for the sake of dwelling" (Heidegger 109), Baby Suggs, holy, by the magic of her celebrations in the clearing, and her calls to the men, women, and children, to *let* — "Let the children come! [. . .] Let your mother's

hear you laugh"; "Let the grown men come [. . .] Let your wives and children see you dance"; "Cry," she tells the women, and "without covering their eyes, the women *let loose*" (my emphasis, 103) — re-creates meaning and significance in the battered lives of her people by bringing their "dwelling to the fullness of its nature" (Heidegger 109).

> It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart. (103)

The preservation of the flesh and the goodness of dwelling that Baby Suggs stands for is much different from the preservation in the sense of sparing that encompasses Sethe's haunted being — leading her to an act of excessive too-thick mother love (as she herself later observes, "[u]nless carefree, motherlove was a killer" (155)); a love which she confuses with "claiming ownership of [her] freed self" (111-2). Baby Suggs' preservation is also much different than the preservation in the sense of containment that leads a community she had mutually loved, counseled, protected, and fed to "step back and hold itself at a distance" (209), or the preservation that compels Sethe to keep herself and Denver confined to the walls of 124. Until her collapsed-heart defeat, Baby Suggs' preservation is a preservation of renewal and of gathering strength for others. Even in the utter disappointment at the withholding community she had opened up her heart to, Baby Suggs refuses to brood over the bad: she dies dwelling on the only "harmless" good her world can allow her for the moment: color (211).

In the way that Baby Suggs was skilled at bringing forth the underlying subtle material realm of love and human validation, which, present all along, is tangible for the

black community once the people learn that all they need is an ability to *imagine* grace (103), to clear a space for it, and to bring it into "presencing" (Heidegger 105), Paul D enters 124, clears it of the baby ghost, and brings Sethe the support to "feel the hurt her back ought to", to "[t]rust things and remember things because the last of the Sweet Home Men was there to catch her if she sank" (21): "he had become the kind of man who could walk into a house and make the women cry. Because with him, *in his presence, they could.* There was something blessed in his manner. (my emphasis, 20). Paul D's presence opens up space for Sethe to be, to let go of the past and dwell in the present: "Would there be a little space, she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, to push busyness into the corners of the room and just stand there a minute or two [. . .]" (21). Like Baby Suggs, Paul D grounds his love in the bodily, sensual and tangible realm. In the narration's end, after Sethe and the community have exorcized Beloved, Paul D returns to the house and tells Sethe that "[h]e wants to put his story next to hers" (322). He offers to bathe her and Sethe wonders if he will "do it in sections", as Baby Suggs used to, rubbing each part of her into existence: "First her face, then her hands, her thighs, her feet, her back? Ending with her exhausted breasts? And if he bathes her in sections, will the parts hold?" (321). Keenan points out that this idea of Paul D bathing Sethe "images a process of healing for both the man and the woman" (77). Paul D, in wanting to place his story next to Sethe's, to bathe her and put "the fragmented pieces of her body together expresses his acceptance of her history and her 'rough solution,' her refusal of slavery's inscription" (Keenan 77). In this process of "joining" (a

word used both by Morrison and Heidegger), joining spaces, joining stories, joining lives, Paul D and Sethe allow the room for a creation of new boundaries in which to *begin* the *presencing* of their lives together (Heidegger 105).

Being a "Sweet Home man" Paul D represents the nostalgia of a time and place in Sethe's life when she had her husband and all her children next to her, when all the Pauls and Sixo and the Garners and her and Halle and the children had formed a community, a place "where [they all] were" – "together" (16). But despite the innocent, "shameless beauty" (7) of Sweet Home, and the longing to 'return home' to it, Sethe and Paul D know all too well that the belief in Sweet Home as a "home" was a hollow one, that Sweet Home "wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home" (16). In her contrasting of images between Sweet Home and 124, Morrison refutes the common idyllic notion of the "greatness" of home and exposes the nostalgic yearning as that which allows the past to hold onto and control one in the present, thus preventing any dwelling or existence in the 'here and now'. Speaking of her intention to give 124, as a house, an identity that could be compared and contrasted with the identity of Sweet Home, Morrison says

> it was [her] intention to give the house an identity separate from the street or even the city; to name it the way "Sweet Home" was named; the way plantations were named, but not with nouns or "proper" names — with numbers instead because numbers have no adjectives, no posture of coziness or grandeur or the haughty yearning of arrivistes and estate builders for the parallel beautifications of the nation they left behind, laying claim to instant history and legend. (*Unspeakable* 395)

As a haunted house, 124 does not add up to the grandeur of preconceived notions of home. In fact, its identity changes as the people who dwell within it change. According to Morrison's narrator, it changes from "spiteful" (3) to "loud" (199) to "quiet" (281) as

the narrative progresses. The adjectives that describe 124 do not precede the place, as the superlative "Sweet" in Sweet Home does, nor do they misrepresent what it is: with Baby Suggs, 124 is a community haven and resting place; after Sethe's murderous act of protection, 124 is haunted and sad; and, when Paul D decides to put his story next to Sethe's, 124 is a place for joining, for allowing *presencing* to be.

At first Paul D's presence in *BELOVED*, seems to be that which solely represents nostalgia, "a longing for the return of a lost home" (Young 54). Marjorie Garber observes that the Latin root of nostalgia, the *nostos*, represents "the classical figure of return": "[a]s the heros of romance beginning with Odysseus know . . . . to attempt to go home is to go the long way around, to stray and separate in the hope of finding completeness in reunion" (26). And Young explains nostalgia as the "recurrent desire for return, which is unsatisfiable because the loss is separation, birth, mortality, itself. Nostalgia is the flight from having to come to terms with this loss, by means of a constant search for a symbolic substitute for lost home" (54). Howard W. Fulweiler points out that there seems to be "a hint of the traditional return motif as it appears in *The Odyssey*" in Morrison's narrative, as, "[w]hen Paul D finally comes back to Sethe at Bluestone Road, he finds the ancient dog, *Here Boy*, now feeble, as Odysseus finds his dog on his return to Ithaca" (122). However, as Keenan points out, although Morrison's "story assumes the power of myth, it pursues neither a Utopian nor universalizing trajectory [. . .] [o]n the contrary, it is a tale that speaks of the dangerous power of the myth to rigidify meanings and fix identities" (75). In *BELOVED* "Sweet Home" is exposed as a hollow construct, as a false fantasy or myth. And Paul D, who signifies that place where they all were together, reminds Sethe,

and the reader right along with her, how powerful the nostalgic yearning can be — for despite all of its associations after the arrival of schoolteacher, Sweet Home was in Sethe's mind, a "pretty place": thus the irony of her concern that "it never looked as terrible as it was" and so perhaps "hell was a pretty place too" (7).

The character of Paul D introduces the difference Young speaks of between nostalgia and remembrance, namely:

> Preservation entails remembrance, which is quite different from nostalgia. Where nostalgia can be constructed as a longing flight from the ambiguities and disappointments of everyday life, remembrance faces the open negativity of the future by knitting a steady confidence in the pains and joys of the past retained in the things among which one dwells. Nostalgic longing is always for an elsewhere. Remembrance is the affirmation of what brought us here. (65-6)

When Paul D first appears at 124 and clears the house of its ghost, he has just returned from an eighteen year journey in search of a place to be. He is well aware of his inability to "abide" in "one place" for long, but he also recognizes that Sethe is "not a normal woman in a normal house" (49). However, when Paul D arrives, what he is initially looking for is a place to assuage his sense of nostalgia. It takes quite some time before he recognizes the importance of "remembrance" in preserving the self and others whom one loves and lives with. Young's distinction between nostalgia and remembrance is effective in discerning the process Paul D must go through to be able to enter Sethe's house and offer to join his story with hers, take care of each other, and create together "some kind of tomorrow" (322). What brings Paul D to 124 is his nostalgic journey; however, what makes him stay is not nostalgia, but love. Bhabha's claim that 124 "is the unhomely, haunted site of the circulation of an event not as fact or fiction but as an 'enunciation,' a

discourse of 'unspeakable thoughts unspoken'" makes it clear that Paul D is not just facing Sethe and Denver and the house they live in, but he is also facing "the uncanny voice of memory" within his own haunted dwelling (450). In order to love and "join" Sethe, Paul D first must go through a process of affirming not only his and Sethe's "unspeakable" and "unspoken" past, but the emotions that deal with that past. Beloved's presence as the incarnation of Sethe's guilt (which Paul D must discover in order to understand Sethe), and Beloved's demand that he acknowledge her very real presence ("touch [her] on the inside part" and call her by her "name" (137)), helps Paul D to loosen up the rusted old "tobacco tin" that has his "[r]ed heart" (138) "lodged [and sealed tight shut] in his chest" (133). In the philosophy of Eastern poetics, particularly in the poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi, *the Beloved* is that which refers to the innermost and highest part of the self (Breton & Largent). In order to dwell within 124, Paul D (and the others) must confront Beloved as the "enunciation" of his (and their) innermost fears and thoughts.

I am where she told me

In Morrison's *BELOVED*, *rememory* becomes a process of enunciation that allows *presencing* and, thus, new forms of dwelling. I use Heidegger's term *presencing* here, in the sense that the process of re-telling, or, re-creating our narratives about that which has led to our current state of dwelling, is a process of "yield[ing] up" or bringing form to "a kind of truth", to use Morrison's words (*Site of Memory* 112), which has always already existed in an intangible subtle material realm and must be acknowledged, or called into being by enunciating it into a more tangible form, such as a spoken idea, or a *rememory*,

or a ritual, or a story, or a text. In the process of enunciation *rememory* is then also a form of healing and of bringing together (*joining*) in both an individual and collective way. As Morrison's character Amy Denver says, "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" (42). Remembering what has passed *does* hurt. As in the image of Paul D with all his memories jammed up in the tobacco tin within his chest — it is a human thing to want to hold it all in, to keep things to oneself. But, as Morrison notes, "when they do say it, and hear it, and look at it, and share it, they are not only one, they're two, and three, and four, you know? The collective sharing of that information heals the individual — and the collective' (*CM* 248). bell hooks speaks of the fact that it is the "homeplace" where this type of healing is most likely to occur: "home is a place where one is enclosed in endless stories. Like arms they hold and embrace memory. We are only alive in memory" (*where we stand* 16). In other words, we are always, always in a state of dwelling, even as we create and build new memories, and so "[t]o remember together is the highest form of communion" (hooks, *where we stand* 16). Beloved's plea to Sethe, "Tell me, [. . .] Tell me your diamonds" (69) is this type of communion. What Beloved means, is for Sethe to tell her the *story of* her diamond earrings. And the "profound satisfaction Beloved [gets] from storytelling" (69) illustrates an inherent need for the enunciation of what has passed — most evident in the pleas of a dearly-beloved-baby-ghost who appears in an incarnate form to commune with the living and to remind them that she *is*, and she exists, *where* they "tell" her.

Within the realms of Morrison's narrative, the reader can take Beloved's plea for diamonds to another level of significance — as a metaphor for stories themselves, in the

manner that David James Duncan calls the indelible moments and stories of his life, *river teeth*. This metaphor corresponds to Morrison's idea of her writing as a type of "literary archaeology" in which "on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply" (*Site of Memory* 112). Morrison claims that what makes her work fiction as opposed to the 'fact' of recorded history is "the nature of the imaginative act: [her] reliance on the image — on the remains — in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of a truth" (*Site of Memory* 112). Like the time-defiant *river teeth* Duncan speaks of, Morrison's image of artefacts found in excavated ruin sites, represents the most durable and concrete moments of being. Beloved's plea for Sethe's "diamonds" along with a stream-of-consciousness thought of hers the reader witnesses later on — "we are in the diamonds which are her earrings now" (251) — illustrates how intricately entangled our dwelling is with the diamonds, or stories, of our past, whether or not that which has passed is called recorded history, story, truth, *riverteeth* or *diamonds*, and whether or not it exists in the presence of an enunciation, or is still confined to the silence of "unspeakable thoughts".

Morrison's text is an enunciation that builds in much the same fashion as the voices of the women that surround 124 build "voice upon voice" to create the most essential, primal, sound that breaks over Sethe in "a wave [. . .] wide enough to sound deep water" which exorcizes a past that has grown pregnant with an excessive greed for attention, and then "baptize[s] [Sethe] in its wash" (308). "Like the singing of Paul D's chain gang and that of Sixo just before he is shot to death," David Lawrence points out

the power of the women coming together and exorcizing the ghost with sound, in that "the human voice in song is a potent material force" (241). And so is the storytelling voice of Morrison's narration. The enunciation of the sound that was powerful enough to "break the back of words" (308) by the community of women outside 124, echoes and reverberates within the walls of Morrison's text, enunciating much of what has for so long been relegated to the realms of a horrified silence. "Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down." (101) Baby Suggs tells Sethe. And this is exactly what Morrison's novel does. It lays down, a story of love and of pain and of all kinds of excess, and asks us, as Baby Suggs asks Denver (to whom she repeats, "Lay down your sword" (287)), to recognize that "This ain't a battle, it's a rout" (287). In other words, the present must be recognized as a decisive defeat, because after so many dead and ruined, there is no way anyone can possibly 'win'. She, Denver, and we, the readers, must "Know it, and go on out the yard. Go on." (288); and, as in the text's final address, we must go on out and "Beloved [*Be loved*]" (324). Once Beloved is gone, the house is unpacked of its excess: "Unloaded, 124 is just another weathered house needing repair" (311). But repair is a natural process we are used to by now, and so is weather. Our houses are always in need of maintenance and repair, the nature of our dwelling entails this cyclical process of preservation, destruction, and re-creation; and the "rest is weather [. . .] [j]ust weather" (324). Every form of dwelling is an accommodation; an accommodation to weather and an accommodation to the fact that our houses will always be somewhat haunted. However, "as literary creatures and political animals", as Bhabha stresses utilizing Morrison's own words, "we ought to concern ourselves with the

understanding of human action and the social world as a moment when 'something is beyond control, but it is . . . not beyond accomodation'" (450). And, in Morrison's fiction, "[t]his act of writing the world, of taking the measure of its dwelling, is magically caught" in her description of her text, *BELOVED*, as "'the fully realized presence of a haunting' of history" (Bhabha 450). Unburied, confronted, and exorcized, *BELOVED* is now an acknowledged part of our past. As critics and readers we dwell on and in linguistic images, in narratives, in texts, and we do this in a way that each text evokes for us a *presencing*, each reading is a *rememory* of what that telling means to us in its temporal-cultural moment. Each text, or as Bhabha would have it, *house of fiction*, evokes in us a re-*presencing* and an opening-up of boundaries in which to allow the space to question, and to begin, and begin again.

Letting Dwell

When a forest springs up in Max's room and his ceiling becomes hanging vines and his walls expand to "the world all around", it is not a game to him. This is his reality. It is a magical reality in which oceans tumble by with private boats to take Max wherever he wishes. Sendak's illustrations do not depict a child playing make-believe in his bedroom. And the words he chooses are careful to depict only Max's view of what "wild things" are: of how the world is made for play; of how Max is in control of his own dwelling being; and of how the best way to express one's love is to exclaim, "I'll eat you up!". When Max wishes, he sales back to the realm of his mother and his bedroom where a still-hot dinner awaits him. Sendak's book is not merely about fantasy, it is about allowing the *wild things* that are there to exist within us. It is about eating things up; about allowing the things we love to reside deep within our bellies. It is about breaking down walls, or simply allowing them to vanish; and about letting ourselves romp and play with that magical wilderness that exists within and all around us, whenever we choose to give it presence. Heidegger's idea of the *techne* inherent in our building as the process of making "something appear, within what is present" is a useful way of thinking about what it is we do through our physicality and through our creation of metaphor. Allende's ever-changing magically embracing *Casa*, MacDonald's *moving pictures* in which the paint never does quite dry, and Morrison's *rememories* which remain where we tell them — until each time we re-tell them, all emphasize how we are occupied by our metaphors, how we build and dwell within a universe that inhabits us. Emily Dickinson says: "I dwell in Possibility—" (51). And don't we all, if we choose to? There is a multiplicity to

being; there exists multiple and simultaneous means of dwelling. I have specified the simultaneous and reciprocal nature of how we dwell within both subtle and material realms — though there are many other means of distinction. As readers, we dwell within each experience, each text, and in turn, each experience, each text, dwells within us. We become what we create as our own *stubborn chunks of identity* (to use a few of Bhabha's words); we become those indelibly diamond characters we create: Alba, her grandmother Clara, Frances, Kathleen, Beloved, Baby Suggs. We begin to understand Allende's emphasis on the importance of the task of the writer to illuminate dark corners. We discover that the only means to build a more gentle world is to focus on the hidden aspects along with the obvious, and to let the more subtler aspects of being exist within our materializations. If space is that which we create for settlement and lodging, that which we have released from the "wilderness" all around; and if we "clear away" in order to create places from which to begin building, then, as Heidegger surmises, it is easy to see how our "boundaries" are "not that at which something stops", but in actuality, "that from which something *begins its presencing*" (105). The murdered baby-ghost and full-grown women Beloved claims: "we are in the diamonds which are her earrings now", in other words; we are the diamonds that she wears now; we are each time we begin again; we are the stories we tell, and even do not tell, of our dwelling; we are what we eat-up; we are our *river teeth*, our *casas*, our *moving pictures*, and our *rememories*. And so we are how we dwell within what we allow presence to: Our universes constantly change and are changing according to how we dwell.

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