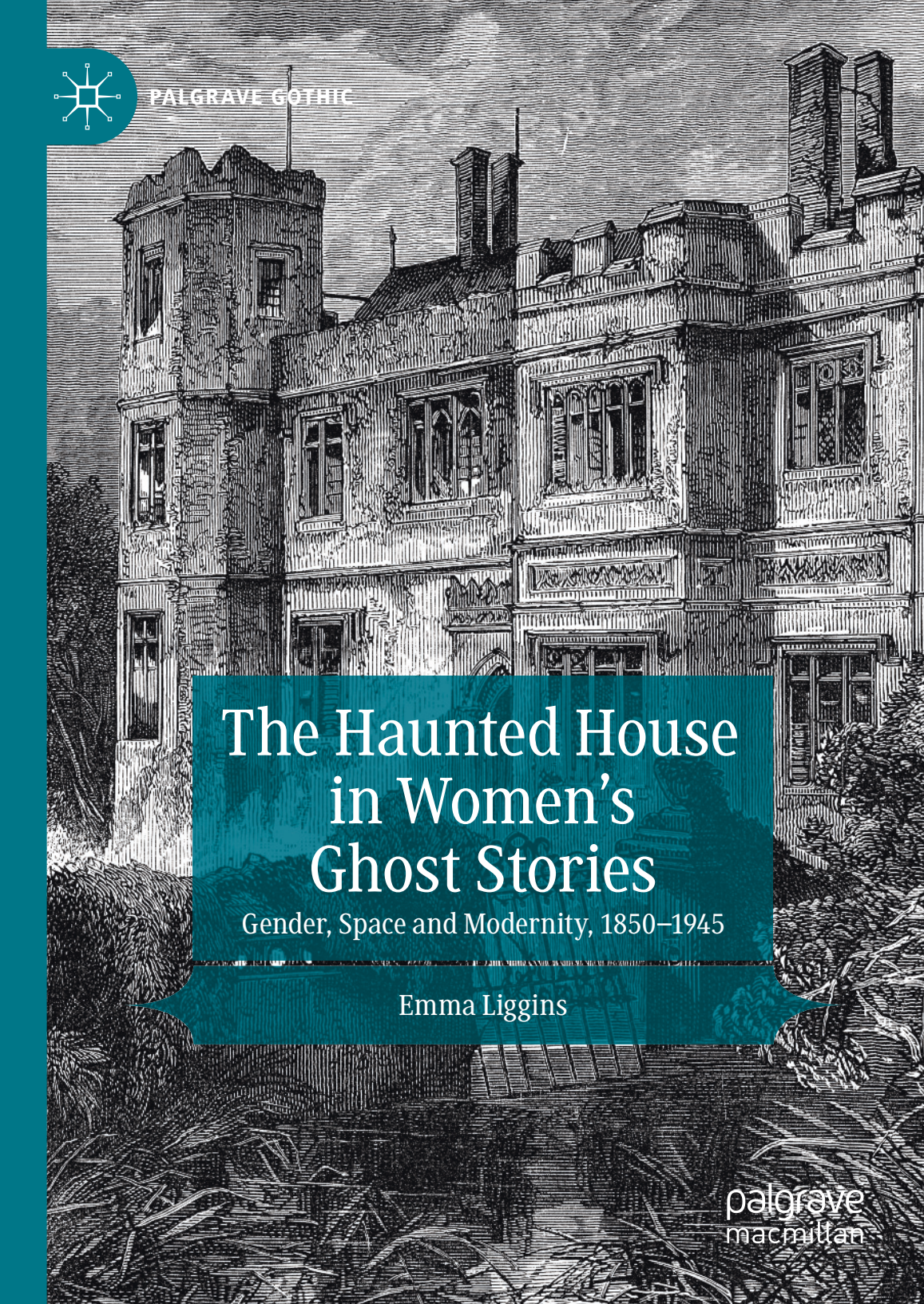
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Emma Liggins

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Emma Liggins
Manchester Metropolitan University
Manchester, UK

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In memory of Richard Jones (1972–2018)
An inspiring friend who firmly believed that research should be fun

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Women in the Haunted House

Edith Nesbit's "The Shadow" (1905), a short story about something which "wasn't exactly a ghost" (173), typically locates the supernatural in relation to women's responses to architectural façades and navigation of domestic interiors.[1] Narrated to a group of young women by a usually silent, older housekeeper, Margaret Eastwich, a "model of decorum and decently done duties" (170), it is framed by the words of the niece staying in her aunt's large country house. The housekeeper's story of her friend Mabel's death, which she tells to "pay" for the cocoa she is sharing as a "guest" in the girls' bedroom after a Christmas dance, questions the invisibility of servants. It prompts the female narrator to admire this "new voice" of a woman whom she had previously dismissed and feared; the housekeeper's silence "had taught us to treat her as a machine; and as other than a machine we never dreamed of treating her" (170). The malevolent shadow that kills Mabel, who is newly married to a man whom Margaret had loved herself, is glimpsed on the stairs, and in dark passages and corridors, and, more unnervingly, at any hour of the day and night. Visible in the in-between spaces occupied by domestic staff, this spectral entity in the story is that "something about the house" that one "could just not hear and not see" (176), like the "comforting" but liminal servants who silently bolster class privilege. The shadow is also produced by the unsettling newness of the nervous couple's "gloomy" house in the London suburbs:

E. Liggins, *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories*,
Palgrave Gothic, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-40752-0_1

> there were streets and streets of new villa-houses growing up round old brick mansions standing in their own grounds … I imagined my cab going through a dark, winding shrubbery, and drawing up in front of one of these sedate, old, square houses. Instead, we drew up in front of a large, smart villa, with iron railings, gay encaustic tiles leading from the iron gate to the stained-glass-panelled door and for shrubbery only a few stunted cypresses and aucubas in the tiny front garden. (172–73)

When Margaret pronounces the house "homelike – only a little too new" (173), the unnamed husband replies, "We're the first people who've ever lived in it. If it were an old house … I should think it was haunted" (173). The "too new" house without a past, lit by modern gas lights, becomes uncanny, as the glare of technology and its excessive newness render it disturbing. Even though "the gas was full on in the kitchen," the husband agrees that "all the horror of the house" (175) comes out of the open cupboard used to store empty boxes at the end of a dark corridor. The dazzling light of modernity cannot blot out the darkness and emptiness that shadows it, for "the future … seemed then so much brighter than the past" (176).

Published on the cusp between the Victorian and modernist periods, this haunted house narrative exhibits some of the key conventions that I address in this feminist history of the ghost story between the 1850s and the 1940s. It transforms domestic space into a place of terror that threatens marital relations and women's lives and sanity. The supernatural seems to be activated by, or take the form of, a visitor, guest or intruder. It directly addresses the complex mistress-servant relationship and includes a female servant narrator, both key components of the stories written by women in this period. Moreover, the story is saturated with architectural description that renders both old and new architectures, the country house and the modern villa, uncanny. What makes the house haunted cannot be separated from women's experience of the "homelike," what is homely but also unhomely and therefore uncanny. If, according to Anthony Vidler in *The Architectural Uncanny*, architecture can demonstrate the "disquieting slippage between what seems homely and what is definitely unhomely,"[2] then this slippage becomes apparent not only in supernatural manifestations in the home but also in the unsettling transformations in domestic space which span this period.

Freudian notions of the uncanny and the familiar/unfamiliar distinction have become essential to our understandings of the nineteenth-century ghost story and the haunted house.[3] In his examination of the definitions of the German words *heimlich* and *unheimlich* and their correlates in other languages, Sigmund Freud notes that in English the uncanny is glossed as "*uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly,* (of a house): *haunted,* (of a person): *a repulsive fellow.*"[4] The German definitions of the adjective *heimlich* begin with "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, dear and intimate, homely, etc." before indicating that it shades into its opposite, also denoting "something secret," "mysterious," "concealed, kept hidden," used in relation to the "ghostly," the "gruesome" and the "eerie," or to modify the word "horror."[5] One definition glosses the meaning of *heimlich* as "intimate" in the sense of "a place that is free of ghostly influences."[6] The uncanny can be an experience of disorientation, or the feeling of being lost in an unfamiliar environment. These contradictory meanings of the term cluster around notions of space and spectrality, as if, paradoxically, intimacy and homeliness both incorporate and exclude the ghostly. In his reflections on the relationship between dwelling and the uncanny, Julian Wolfreys has emphasised the necessary "undecidability" of inhabiting the border between homely and unhomely, suggesting that haunted locations invite a disturbing "interaction between person and place" which underwrites "the uncanniness of dwelling" itself.[7]

This uncanniness of dwelling underpins but does not fully explain conceptualisations of the haunted house. Theorised in terms of "the familiar turned strange," the unlivability of the haunted house, according to Vidler, can be mobilised by the insecurity of the newly established middle classes, so that the uncanny operates as "the quintessential bourgeois fear," the underside of material comfort.[8] It is a place of dark and sometimes unfathomable secrets; as Nicholas Royle points out, the uncanny is not only about what is hidden and secret which comes to light, but also, "at the same time, about what is elusive, cryptic, still to come (back)."[9] The notion of the haunted house, for Freud, is annexed to emotional responses to the dead: "to many people the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts."[10] The return of the dead may destroy the intimacy of the home by revealing its secrets, what is "kept from sight" in the ostensibly comfortable interior. This study is in dialogue with these Freudian framings of the haunted house in terms of death,

disquiet and estrangement, the terrors of dwelling. Missing from these readings, though, is any recognition of the particular terrors of home for women, an omission borne out by the male authors and theorists used as evidence for Vidler's arguments. Re-examining the resonances of the architectural uncanny for women writers is important in order to extend our understandings of gendered space in a transitional period, when the modernisation of the home, the growth of tourism and the veneration for the past as figured through the "old house" all seemed to call up the ghosts.

The gendering of space has not been fully explored in debates about haunting and the haunted house. If Gothic writing, with its emphasis on location and setting, is "a spatially articulate mode," as Minna Vuohelainen has claimed, it is surprising that "critical attention to Gothic spatiality is only slowly gathering pace."[11] An examination of the spatialities of women, of the ways in which they inhabit and navigate space in the Gothic mode, opens up new understandings of gender and modernity. This project provides a taxonomy of the specific rooms or areas of the house and garden in which ghosts were sighted in Victorian and modernist ghost stories by women writers, and maps this against the movements of both live and dead women around the haunted house. As this book argues, such a mapping of spectral encounters enables an examination of women's changing roles in the domestic economy as servants, mistresses, female householders, second wives and unmarried daughters in a transitional period that witnessed significant transformations in domestic space. The 1850s marks the beginnings of organised feminism and debate about the Woman Question in Britain and America, which gathered force in the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth century, with the suffrage campaign and women's involvement in war work for the First World War. Despite political changes granting women more rights, women were still very much associated with the private, domestic sphere. The unease in domestic space highlighted in many ghost stories of this period can be read in terms of female fears about modernity and the ways in which this private realm was being transformed. As Royle reminds us, "there has to be a sense of home and homeliness within and beyond which to think the unhomely."[12] Women were often responsible for, as well as resistant to, new technologies, such as electric light, telephones and labour-saving devices, that transformed the domestic space. Set in both ancestral mansions and newly modernised households, haunted house narratives exposed women's feelings of insecurity and dread at a time

when Victorian gendered divisions within the home and mistress-servant hierarchies were being questioned.

Preoccupied, as they are with space, spaciousness and the navigation of the home, women's ghost stories in the Victorian and modernist period borrowed from the architectural language of discourses on domestic etiquette, tourism, servants, design and homemaking. Haunted spaces are usually described in meticulous architectural detail, as if the reader had picked up one of the new guidebooks rather than a collection of stories. Like key works of Gothic fiction from the 1790s and the early nineteenth century, the titles of ghost stories often contained the word "house," the specific name of a dwelling or an architectural style or feature: "The Fall of the House of Usher," *Wuthering Heights*, "The Open Door," "The Mystery of the Semi-Detached," "Walnut-Tree House," "The Yellow Wallpaper." Working on the interface between spatial theory and Gothic Studies, Ilse Bussing has explored the dynamics of haunted space in Victorian Gothic, reading authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Charlotte Riddell and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu in relation to spatial segregation, secrecy and the illicit crossing of boundaries in the nineteenth-century household. She argues that "an excessive concern for privacy and concealment translate[s] easily into Gothic texts in the form of spatial anxiety and infiltration."[13] Illuminating the "spatial characteristics" of the home in Gothic texts by comparison with representations of space and privacy in Victorian architectural manuals, she argues that "Victorian households demanded spaces of seclusion," often sealing occupants into such spaces by means of symbolic closed doors.[14] Bussing's impressive spatialisation of the Gothic has been influential on my own approach, which concentrates specifically on the ways in which forbidden or enclosed spaces and restrictions impacted on women's navigation of the home and their encounters with ghosts.

In his analysis of the concept of "home," the philosopher Michael Allen Fox emphasises this construct as a "problematic notion … an almost undefinable thing, a *je ne sais quoi*. Home is somewhere definite; anywhere; I'm-not-sure-where; somewhere-yet-to-be; or an imaginary and distant somewhere."[15] Home may be a sacred place, a site of security and shelter, but also a prison-house, where women in particular are bound by the rules of domestic mythology or constrained by boundaries and limits. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei identify the home as a challenging concept, which "implies a space, a feeling, an idea, not necessarily located in a fixed place," as well as its adaptive ability to be "shelter and

labyrinth, vessel of desire and of terror."[16] Arguing for the complexities of the "homeplace" for women, Iris Marion Young writes that "despite the real dangers of romanticizing home … there are also dangers in turning our backs on home."[17] The problematics of home, both as an imaginary realm and as a material reality, underpin the concept of the haunted house. As Vita Sackville-West argued in her nostalgic vision of *The English Country House* (1940), "the soul of a house, the atmosphere of a house, are as much part of the house as the architecture of that house or as the furnishings within it."[18] In the Victorian and modernist periods, haunted houses were incessantly talked about, visited, discussed in the press and in fiction, investigated and ridiculed as fake. To bring together notions of haunting and the house was to mesh together two extremely potent areas of the cultural imagination. Haunting in its broadest forms not only denotes the appearance of ghosts but a sensation of being troubled, discomforted and trapped in the past. As most of the haunted houses that appeared in women's ghost stories were domestic spaces, concepts of home and domestic organisation are crucial to understanding the haunted house narrative, as if in this period what is most haunting is domesticity itself. In *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place*, Shelley Hornstein considers the ways in which architecture captures memory and the importance of imagined sites, urging us to reconsider our perceptions of the domestic: "When we think of a house or the furniture elements that are requisite to it, we are hard-pressed to consider a house for its houseness. Rather, we are deadened by its convention in our everyday lives."[19] Briganti and Mezei suggest that we should pay attention not only to "how humans … inhabit domestic space, but also to how domestic space inhabits us."[20] Ghost stories remind us of the "houseness" of the haunted house, how it inhabits us and play on the diverse meanings of new and old houses in relation to cultural investments in the home, modernisation and the fascination with the past.

My own contribution to debates about women's ghost stories in this book centres on the distinctions and continuities between different and diverse representations of the haunted house between the 1850s and the 1940s. Comparing the hauntings in the Victorian ancestral country house with hauntings in the suburban villa or new town house powered by technology is revealing of cultural anxieties about tradition and modernity, the old and the new. By analysing the preoccupations of women writers of the ghost story with architectural design and old and new houses, it becomes possible to trace a genealogy of the haunted house narrative centred on

explorations of the past as well as shifting attitudes to the domestic interior. How does a gendered approach transform our understandings of the architectural uncanny? What does a mapping of spectral encounters in haunted rooms reveal about women's troubled occupation of the home? By examining the changing roles of mistresses of the house and female servants, and the possible impact that these changes had on the architectural dimensions of the ghost story, I offer a new genealogy of women's developing vision of haunted space in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the following sections, I locate women's ghost stories in relation to debates about Female Gothic, spatial theory, the haunted house and modernity in order to frame my analysis of the gendering of the architectural uncanny.

Women Writers, the Ghost Story and Female Gothic

Female Gothic has traditionally been associated with women's terrors at confinement within the home, with heroines kept behind locked doors, in dark places where they are preyed on by unknown men or their movements circumscribed. Following Ellen Moers's well-known identification of the 1790s heroine as "simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine,"[21] feminist critics have framed Female Gothic as a subversive genre, "articulating women's dissatisfactions with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body."[22] Ann Radcliffe famously claimed the category of terror for her particular brand of Gothic in her posthumously published essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" of 1826, arguing that "the great difference between horror and terror [lies] in the uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the [latter], respecting the dreaded evil."[23] Uncertainty and obscurity are also both key characteristics of the Freudian uncanny, which operates in a climate of scepticism and ambivalence about the supernatural. Kate Ferguson Ellis, in her important study *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (1989), has traced the relationship between the idealisation of the home and the popularity of the Gothic novel, showing how the Gothic becomes "preoccupied with the home," particularly "crumbling castles as sites of terror."[24] Her emphasis on the home as "a place of danger and imprisonment" rather than a haven of security is particularly relevant to the haunted castle of the early Gothic tradition, with its malevolent and

violent patriarchal villain.[25] The groundbreaking work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) also paid attention to architectural terrors, showing how the oppressive "male houses" in the fiction of Jane Austen and the Brontës operated as dark inversions of the domestic ideal, with "dramatizations of imprisonment and escape" becoming "all-pervasive" in nineteenth-century women's writing.[26] In focussing exclusively on women writers in this book, I reconsider this association of terror with the feminine, tracing the development of the haunted house narrative across the work of six female authors in order to explore the relationship between the home as site of terror and women's perceptions of gendered space.

Theories of the explained and the unexplained supernatural are an important aspect of discussions of the Female Gothic, which I explore in relation to a developing tradition of women's writing. Women's uncanny stories, Diana Wallace argues, "use the Female Gothic to push at the boundaries of the traditional ghost story, and vice versa … work[ing] on the ambiguous edge between the explained/unexplained supernatural."[27] According to Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, "Many women authors have used the Gothic mode to critique … the systems of power that effect the hierarchy whereby women are devalued,"[28] challenging the patriarchal inheritance. If Gothic texts by women sometimes simultaneously "mimic the polarisation of women in Western society … [and] challenge damaging stereotypes and constricting practices,"[29] the ghost story plays on contradictions and tensions about the constricted movement of women and the domestic rules that help to confine them. As the ghost story began to reflect new understandings of psychology, trauma and repression, women writers of the ghost story increasingly made use of the unexplained supernatural to address their fears about modernity. Whilst the avoidance of closure was one of the organising principles of the ghost story, an advancing modernity could only find expression in the unexplained supernatural. There were no easy answers to the irruption of ghostly disturbances into the ancestral or the modern home.

Late eighteenth-century female-authored Gothic fiction often depicted the heroine as terrified of ghosts, believing ominous noises in the night or the mysterious openings of doors and windows to have supernatural origin. In Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793), Monimia, the persecuted servant of Rayland Hall, is locked into her turret bedroom at night by her cruel aunt and frequently expresses her terror at the strange noises she hears. She believes the stories that the chapel is haunted by the

spirit of a previous Lady Rayland, whose ghost "sits every night in the chancel, and sometimes walks round the house, and particularly along the galleries, at midnight, groaning and lamenting her fate."[30] But these night terrors do not have a supernatural source, as Monimia's tale of suffering reveals: "how weak I was to add imaginary horrors to the real calamities of my situation; rather than try to acquire strength of mind to bear the evils from which I could not escape!"[31] More at risk from the men who try to access her room at night through a hidden door, and her aunt's villainous plans, than unhappy ghosts, the heroine's "imaginary horrors" pale into insignificance beside the "real calamities" and inescapable "evils" which threaten women in domestic space. Emily St. Aubert, the trembling heroine of Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), similarly expresses "a sudden terror of something supernatural," as she wanders through her dead father's library at night, though she only fancies that she sees his ghost.[32] Once immured in the castle of Udolpho, in a bedchamber which cannot be locked against intruders, she proves susceptible to the superstitions and ghost stories of her maid Annette, "infected with her … terrors," which she tries to dismiss as "ridiculous," "silly tales."[33] The maid's melodramatic recounting of the "strange stories" of the missing Lady Laurentini, who supposedly haunts the shut-up rooms of the castle, coincides with her frequent claims to have sighted apparitions. Dale Townshend has argued that in Radcliffe's influential novels the Gothic castle is "coterminous not with a splendid, mythical past but with gender-based violence and incarceration."[34] Haunted by the threat of violence, sceptical mistresses and superstitious servants share in the terrors of the supernatural, which condition the ways in which they navigate the patriarchal space of the labyrinthine castle. Both Emily and Annette become frightened of ghosts because of the "remote," "lonely" bedchamber, in a vast, decaying edifice where "every room feels like a well."[35] Famously, the spirits of unhappy ancestors rarely materialised in 1790s fiction, which tended to explain away the supernatural. The strange noises that Monimia hears turn out to be a villainous smuggler hiding his contraband hoard. Neither does Udolpho harbour "real" apparitions. Nevertheless, terror of the supernatural functions as an important way for house-bound women to express their feelings of unease, disorientation and vulnerability in patriarchal space. The telling of lost stories about dead female ancestors becomes inseparable from the expression of fear about haunted space, a key aspect of Female Gothic to be developed in the nineteenth century.

It is in the increasingly popular short story form, with its ellipses, absences and discontinuities, that these spatial fears and lost histories found a fitting mode of expression. The 1840s to the 1940s encompasses the rise and subsequent popularity of the British and American ghost story, and the ghost story collection. Noting the importance in modernist short fiction of "in-between spaces," particularly "the liminal space between what is seen and what is unseen," Claire Drewery has argued that the genre's embracing of liminality meshes with its capacity to render the uncanny and the elusive self, both significant in the related rise of psychoanalysis.[36] In *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917), Dorothy Scarborough recognised that the Victorian and modernist vogue for shorter narratives intensified the terrors of the supernatural: "Brevity has much to commend it as a vehicle for the uncanny."[37] Her belief that representations of the unearthly and "weird effects" were more difficult to sustain in novels was shared by many short story writers.[38] In 1959, Elizabeth Bowen commented that the short story "is not weighed down (as the novel is bound to be) by facts, explanation, or analysis." Moreover, not only is "the moment from which [a story] sprang" inseparable from "longings, attractions, apprehensions without knowable cause," its unknowability is linked to moods, buildings, scenes, "places more often than faces have sparked off stories."[39] Unlike the multidimensional Gothic narratives of Radcliffe and her imitators, the short story, a genre steeped in the apprehensions of place, lends itself to the unexplained supernatural, which increasingly underpins representations of the haunted house and women's perceptions of its unhomeliness.

The connections between spatiality, geography and the unexplained in women's ghost stories, as patriarchal rules and regulations shifted but never disappeared, have been addressed but not yet fully explored. In her genealogy of the ghostly, Scarborough contrasted the "mistaken" or "hoax" ghosts of Ann Radcliffe's fiction with the freedoms of modern ghosts in a transformed haunted house narrative.[40] In this early account of the fictional spectre and its behaviour, place is a key concern:

> The earlier ghosts seemed to be more reserved, to know their spectral place better, were not so ready to presume on unwelcome familiarities as those in later fiction, but spooks have doubtless followed the fashion of mortals in this easy, relaxed age and have become a shade too free in their manners … Modern ghosts, however, have not been taught to restrain

> their impulses and they venture on liberties that Radcliffian romance would have disapproved of … Likewise the domination of the Gothic castles, those "ghaist-alluring edifices," has passed away and modern spooks are not confined to any one locality as in the past. … Yet here are ghosts that do haunt certain rooms as relentlessly as ever Gothic specter did.[41]

Whilst Gothic spectres contented themselves with curses and issued after dark from castles, family vaults and cemeteries, modern ghosts take the liberty of touching the living, operating in broad daylight and, most importantly, moving around within the modern household or more than one locality. Significantly, these new choices of surroundings reinforce the importance of space to the ghostly; despite changes in household organisation, the relentless haunting of "certain rooms" is still a vital feature of the ghost story. The broadening of the notion of "spectral place" is also important, as is the emphasis on the terrors occasioned by the increased invisibility of ghosts, all of which impact on women's experiences of modernity and the gendering of both old and modern homes.

Male authors of the period, including Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Algernon Blackwood and M. R. James, explored the uncanny effects of haunted interiors and landscapes in their stories in similar ways to women writers. Cross-currents are apparent between their work: Dickens' editorial comments helped to shape the stories published in his journals by Elizabeth Gaskell and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, as well as those by Wilkie Collins. Henry James admired Vernon Lee's collection *Hauntings* (1890) for its "bold, aggressive, speculative fancy,"[42] whilst M.R. James singled out H. D. Everett's story "The Death Mask" as among his favourites.[43] With its focus on the dead servants who appears as ghosts or hallucinations to the tormented governess at Bly, Henry James' influential novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) was admired by Lee, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf.[44] Yet male contributions to the haunted house story, and the ways in which they address empire, capitalism, science, spiritualism and history, have been routinely privileged within studies of the genre. Whilst it would be short-sighted to argue that male authors shied away from the domestic uncanny—haunted bedrooms and unquiet libraries were prominent features of stories such as Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," Sheridan le Fanu's "Green Tea" and M. R. James' "The Haunted Dolls' House," among many others—an exclusive focus on women writers' conceptualisations of the unhomeliness of space is revealing of the hauntedness of

domesticity itself, particularly in terms of women's specific experiences of the home in a transitional period. Female servant narrators like James' unnamed governess were rare in male-authored ghost stories but were deployed in complex ways by female authors drawing on direct experience of managing domestic staff. The disintegration of ideologies of sacred domesticity, shifting attitudes to domestic service and gendered understandings of tourism are reworked by women writers of the uncanny in ways which insist on the centrality of gender to understandings of the architectural uncanny.

A number of important histories of the genre have compared the writing of male and female authors. Following in the wake of Julia Briggs's *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (1977), they explore supernatural narratives as expressions of cultural anxieties, colonialism, trauma, alienation and psycho-geography.[45] In *The Ghost Story, 1850–1940: A Cultural History* (2010), Andrew Smith ponders the relationship between spectrality, liminality and economics, as well as colonial narratives of the ghostly. His arguments about women writers of the ghost story, focussing on representative stories by Vernon Lee, Charlotte Riddell and May Sinclair, centre on art, history and money.[46] Whilst the concept of the haunted house in relation to tourism, art and inheritance is discussed in relation to the ghost stories of Henry James, Smith does not elaborate on the gendered implications of haunted space. In *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story* (2011), Simon Hay insists on "social and historical understandings of the trauma that the ghost story addresses," contending that the struggle for class identity becomes a key concern of Victorian narratives organised around property and failed inheritance. His arguments are primarily concerned with the ghost story, class and Empire, as he maps the traumatic transition to capitalism against depictions of the structure of imperialism in both fiction and poetry.[47] In *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism* (2014), Luke Thurston draws out the ghostliness experienced by and embodied in alienated modern protagonists who retreat from the reader's understanding. Writing on the convergence of the living and the undead in the ghostly encounter, Thurston follows Jacques Derrida's later work on hospitality in foregrounding the curious relation between host and guest, arguing that "it is hard indeed to find a ghost story that does not feature … the arrival of a guest or a strange act of hospitality."[48] Scott Brewster and Luke Thurston's excellent *Routledge Handbook to the Ghost Story* (2018), with its comprehensive overview of national and regional settings and contexts

for the ghost story, also includes an important section on "Haunting Sites," which stresses the value of "considering the relationship between ghosts and geography" and analysing the eeriness of haunted topographies.[49] The collection is indicative of the vibrancy of research on women writers of ghost stories, though of the ten chapters on individual Victorian and modernist authors, only three focus on women—Oliphant, Lee and Wharton—suggesting that there is more work to be done to reinsert women into the history of the ghost story.

The choice of women writers for this book has been determined by their output of supernatural short fiction and their interest in architecture and property, as well as in the short story as a form. Elizabeth Gaskell, Margaret Oliphant, Vernon Lee, Edith Wharton, May Sinclair and Elizabeth Bowen are key contributors to the genre of short fiction as well as canonical writers. With the exception of Gaskell, who was writing before short-story collections became popular, they all published collections of Gothic stories, including Lee's *Hauntings* and Sinclair's *Uncanny Stories*. All of these women fall broadly into the category of the middle class. Some owned their own properties or wrote about their experiences of moving house. Edith Wharton took an active role in designing her own home. All employed domestic staff, with the majority of them enjoying close bonds with their female servants, which impacted on their depictions of mistress-servant relations. Lee, Wharton and Bowen were key commentators on the importance of setting to the ghost story. Their publications of essays and journalism on travel, geography and the impact of war on perceptions of place informed their accounts of the ghostly. All of the six writers published non-fictional texts and articles on property, tourism, houses, gardens and/or interior design, or recorded in their diaries and letters their responses to old architecture and the effects of modernisation. Surprisingly, Edith Wharton is often missed out of histories of the ghost story, despite the significance of the story collections and commentaries on the form that she published. Her retrospective preface to her collected ghost stories, written in 1937, is an important framework for considering the transformation of the haunted house in the age of electricity. Like Bowen and Lee, she also reflected on the hauntedness of ruins.

The 1860s to the1880s have been identified as the "golden age of spiritualism" when séances, mediumship and communication with the dead attracted public attention, though a resurgence of belief in ghostly communications in response to the losses of the First World War also

affected the development of the ghost story.[50] Luke Thurston suggests that this was partly to do with an "insistent demand" for "decisive hermeneutic closure on certain fundamental ontological questions [about the ghostly] that were becoming ever-more insistent in the course of an accelerating, disruptive modernity."[51] Jen Cadwallader concurs that conceptualisations of spirits and spirituality had changed by the end of the nineteenth century as theological frameworks for belief gave way to more scientific understandings of the unknown.[52] Oliphant and Sinclair were particularly influenced by contemporary debates about spiritualism, the afterlife and the possibilities of communication with the dead. The spiritualist resonances of ghost stories will inform my analysis of the spatial dimensions of communication and the specific locations of visitors/guests when they receive ghostly messages. In *The Victorian Supernatural*, Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell argue that the Victorians both mocked and believed in the supernatural, which was "both feared and terrible and ardently desired … an important aspect of [their] intellectual, spiritual, emotional and imaginative worlds."[53] Freud too recognised the importance of scientific uncertainty to an experience of the uncanny in his discussion of the return of the dead. The fear of the uncanny can be activated by residual or repressed beliefs about the supernatural: "as soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to support the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny, as if we were acknowledging: 'Then the dead do continue to live and manifest themselves on the scene of their former activities!'"[54] To write about ghosts was to address both fears and desires about the ghostly and the dark possibilities of communication with the dead in an ostensibly sceptical age.

Feminist approaches to the woman's ghost story have identified the genre's interest in the invisibility of the Victorian woman, in repression and secrecy, in women's handling of money and in colonial identities, domestic interiors and women's forgotten histories. Vanessa D. Dickerson's pioneering account of Victorian women writers and the supernatural was one of the first studies to consider the invisibility or "inbetweenness" of the ghost as a paradigm for Victorian femininity in patriarchal culture. Echoing the belief in women as simultaneously powerful and peripheral, she argues that "the ghost corresponded … particularly to the Victorian woman's visibility and invisibility, her power and powerlessness, the contradictions and extremes that shaped female culture."[55] Her point that women writers seized on supernatural stories as not only a lucrative but

also a rewarding genre because it allowed them "more license" to experiment and challenge taboos echoes some of the sentiments of women writers themselves.[56] But Dickerson's argument that the Victorian woman was "robbed of place, of space, of substance" in a society organised around men needs to be revisited in the light of new understandings of space and place.[57] The recent collection *The Female Fantastic: Gendering the Supernatural in the 1890s and 1920s* (2019) is indicative of new ways of thinking about space, gender and the occult, putting "into conversation" writers across the Victorian/modernist divide. Nicholas Daly argues in the foreword that it is unsurprising that, in a period of gender inequality, women were "drawn to the fantastic as a mode of writing that seemed to offer an opportunity to imagine a world whose contours were less definite and whose ways of life were less reified."[58] Tracing correspondences across decades and genres, the collection's methodology allows for comparison of elements of the ghost story such as "supernaturally loaded objects" and "transformative and uncanny spaces" in the work of different authors.[59] By putting my chosen six women writers into conversation, I hope in this book to trace some of the correspondences between understandings of space and the supernatural in the different decades examined, rather than simply constructing an artificial opposition between the Victorians and the moderns. Despite being structured around the writing of individual authors, the chapters identify links between women writers of the supernatural by cross-referencing stories or essays written by each other. Some of the writers knew and commented on each other's work: the influence of Lee's vision of Italy on Wharton's Italian ghost story "The Duchess at Prayer" is clearly apparent, whilst Oliphant's representations of the haunted garden anticipate the travel writing of Lee. The shared characteristics of the Victorian stories produced by Gaskell and Oliphant, and the modernist stories of Wharton and Bowen, has meant that the readings of Oliphant's "The Open Door" and Bowen's "The Demon Lover" have been placed in chapters focussed on the work of their fellow authors.

Recent studies have tended to situate women's ghost stories in relation to the maternal, mourning, material culture and formal innovation, exploring Female Gothic as a protean form and a slippery generic category. Arguing for the distinctiveness of women's writing in the Gothic, Diana Wallace notes the ways in which the ghost story as a form, from Gaskell to Bowen, has offered women writers "special kinds of freedom to critique male power," often in potentially radical ways.[60] She argues

that "women writers have developed the language and imagery of Gothic – spectrality, live burial, the haunted house, the womb-tomb recess, the murdered mother – to symbolise the fact that they … have been denied a matrilineal genealogy."[61] Her emphasis on buried female histories is particularly apposite to readings of the haunted house in terms of its lost female inheritance. Paying attention to the material culture of the spectral encounter in American women's ghost stories, Dara Downey argues that such stories "dramatize both the intimate bond and the vicious struggle between the overwhelming plethora of commodities that crowded the nineteenth-century home, and the woman enjoined by social structures to keep them in check."[62] Supernatural tropes, in her compelling readings, can be employed "to literalize the contemporary association of women with things, so that domestic objects act as substitutes for female spectres," haunting their owners. The everyday then becomes problematic, dangerous, as materiality, display and privacy play central roles in the ghost narrative.[63] In her important examination of women's short supernatural fiction, Victoria Margree argues that the woman's ghost story between 1860 and 1930 "presents a case study of how twentieth-century writers could innovate within existing narrative forms, taking the conventions of a popular Victorian genre and adapting and revitalising them to interrogate the modern present."[64] By the 1920s, according to Margree, "we encounter women's ghost stories that question just how much the Victorian past has really been left behind,"[65] as the new freedoms women had begun to enjoy still left them haunted by the dark shadow of an outdated Victorianism. Both Downey and Margree offer readings of neglected woman writers such as Madeleine Yale Wynne, Alice Perrin and Eleanor Scott. In order to create new genealogies of the woman's ghost story, we need to continue to explore the links between women writers in ostensibly different periods and across national borders.

Domestic Space and the Architectural Uncanny

The relevance of spatial theory to nineteenth-century and modernist Gothic has been evidenced in a number of recent studies. Yet the gendered dimensions of haunted space, specifically in relation to property ownership and transformations of the architectural uncanny by Victorian and modernist women writers, have not been fully explored. The work of spatial theorists such as Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980) can be

productively read alongside contemporary commentaries on space and architecture such as Edith Wharton's *The Decoration of Houses* (1898) and Vernon Lee's "In Praise of Old Houses" (1897). Such non-fictional texts and essays are indicative of women writers' cultural investment in the aesthetics of the country house and garden as well as in modern interior design. They offer another perspective on what Bachelard calls "the intimate values of inside space," described in his nostalgic vision as "eulogized space."[66] Throughout this period, both women and servants were encouraged to occupy particular rooms or spaces, or to cross thresholds, at particular times of the day and night. Their movements were circumscribed in ways that were rendered uncanny in women's non-fictional writing. Developments in architecture, the property market, technology and interior decoration all impacted on women's accounts of the domestic economy, often less eulogised than seen as a site of claustrophobia and the invasion of privacy.

Spatial theorists have drawn attention to the cartographic organisation of the domestic space and the house as a site of memory. Bachelard's highly influential account frames my readings of women's ghost stories, particularly his conceptions of memory and loss in terms of the spectral. Houses of the present exist in relation to other "lost" houses or the house of the past: "We consider the past, and a sort of remorse at not having lived profoundly enough in the old house fills our hearts, comes up from the past, overwhelms us" (77).[67] Oriented towards "*felicitous space* … the space we love," Bachelard's celebration of the ways in which intimacy has been imagined stresses the importance of secrets, dreams and the hidden to our appreciation of domesticity.[68] He asks, "how can secret rooms, rooms that have disappeared, become abodes for an unforgettable past?"[69] For Bachelard, a house often functions as a "house of memories," so that for each of us there exists "an oneiric house, a house of dream-memory, that is lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past."[70] Yet what is lost in the shadows may be a repressed nightmare, intimately connected to the specific rooms and corners which have disappeared. It is not only the childhood home that becomes a lost house, "this house that is gone,"[71] but phantom versions of the marital or family home, inhabited by other ancestors and other families. The "extraordinary discrepancy" for feminist critics between Bachelard's topophilic notions of "felicitous space" and "the negative space" apparent in nineteenth-century women's writing has been noted by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.[72] They read women's representations of space as always already

confining, tomb-like, "anxiety-inducing,"[73] making the connections to spatial phobias which Bachelard leaves unsaid. "Hostile space" is "hardly mentioned" in his account.[74] Yet the unlocking of the treasure boxes of the past by women, servants and visitors/tourists suggests that the home does indeed become a "negative space," with women's sensitivity to shifting spatial configurations shedding light on forgotten and menacing secrets.

Prohibition, denial, repression and fear constitute key elements of the dynamics of space, all of which feature prominently in women's ghost stories in relation to female inhabitants. In his influential *The Production of Space* (1974), Henri Lefebvre makes the important distinction between spatial practice, representations of space and what he calls "representational spaces," which "embody[] complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life."[75] Representational space, further glossed as "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users',"[76] is clearly of direct relevance to conceptualisations of the haunted house, which can be understood in terms of the gendering of its inhabitants and their "living through" of its complex symbols and codes. Prohibited spaces and the bourgeois desire for privacy in the nineteenth century are key components of Lefebvre's analysis of the livability of space. Conceptualisations of the livability (or not) of the haunted house need to acknowledge the gendering of the inhabitants which spatial theory has often ignored. In "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Martin Heidegger reflects that "*in dwelling* [mortals] persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations. And only because mortals pervade, persist through, spaces by their very nature are they able to go through spaces."[77] This notion of pervading and persisting through space is significant in terms of movement around the house, as the movement from one room to another is only possible by a knowledge of both spaces: "we always go through spaces in such a way that we already experience them by staying constantly with near and remote locations and things."[78] To recognise that forbidden spaces and spaces of desire might operate in tension with, or collapse into, each other within the domestic interior, that women might "pervade" space in different ways to men, or that women might (re)appropriate spaces which have previously been patriarchal, allows for a rethinking of the positioning of women within the "spatial world"[79] of the ghost story.