

# **ROMANTIC-GOTHIC SEPULCHRES**

## **Intersections of Death, Memory, and Mourning in Film (1907-1958)**

A thesis submitted in candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I, Joana Rita de Amil da Costa Jacob Ramalho, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## Abstract

In this study, I explore the representation of death, memory, mourning, and oneirism in specific transnational cinematic works from 1907 to 1958. Looking beyond psychoanalytic theories, I revise current theorisations of the Gothic through a formal-aesthetic methodological lens and propose new, cross-cultural avenues that have been heretofore neglected. I suggest that Romanticism and the Gothic have become catch-all terms whose usage may seem convenient to speak and write about film, but that nonetheless overlook the unique way the Gothic and Romantic doctrines meet and meld on the screen. I work towards an assessment of this singular relationship in cinema—which I describe as the Romantic-Gothic mode—by providing analyses of both US and European works. In so doing, I propose an interpretive strategy that highlights and investigates the implications of moving the afterlife out of the graveyard and into the space of the cinema.

I endeavour to map the geographic, temporal, and psychological dislocations of the characters, which, I argue, are structured upon the contact between the sensing human body and the circumambient life. I examine the mediation of pastness by certain places and objects that insistently actualise gone-by events and thus question the notion of the past as an unequivocal cause for the present and future. I suggest that the encounter of the dwellers with what I call memory-objects in their lonely walks through the foreignness of private and outdoor spaces re/creates identity. A nodal point in the project concerns the idea that the Romantic-Gothic mode is a map of sensory memories where mourning, forgetfulness, and the annihilation of the self in time, space, and mind germinate. Finally, in broad outline, my work offers a starting point for a critical reappraisal of Romantic and Gothic art in film.

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## INTRODUCTION: The Romantic-Gothic Mode

The Gothic has been around for over two centuries. Its stories and preoccupations have been adapted, retold, revised, and analysed countless times. In recent years, there has been a significant proliferation of Gothic texts in film, television, literature, and social media. This burgeoning of interest in Gothic themes has produced, particularly over the last decade, a proportional increase in scholarly reflection on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, academic publications in general concede special attention to literary forms of the Gothic, whilst its cinematic sibling frequently appears as a collateral topic inserted into a narrow problematic, specifically that of genre, gender or adaptation.<sup>2</sup> In fact, despite the ever-growing academic output of journal articles and essays that attend exclusively to the presentation and investigation of the Gothic in cinema, when we consider monographs on the subject the numbers decrease substantially.<sup>3</sup> In many of these volumes, the research scope revolves around tracing or commenting on the adaptation of Gothic fictions from book page to celluloid, stressing the intimate connection between literary and filmic forms of the Gothic. Such relationship is indisputable, and the vast majority of films I analyse reflect this. Acknowledging the direct linkage of the Gothic to an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary genre based on hauntings, death, and obsession recognisable for its

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include the publication of *Globalgothic* edited by Glennis Byron (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); *The Gothic World*, edited by Byron and Dale Townshend (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); and *Gothic Evolutions: Poetry, Tales, Context, Theory*, edited by Corinna Wagner (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2014). The BFI's four-month Gothic season (October 2013 - January 2014), also attested to the rising fascination with Gothic imagery. Important as well have been the online networks 'The International Gothic Association' (<http://www.iga.stir.ac.uk/>) and 'The Gothic Imagination' (<http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/>).

<sup>2</sup> Some titles that analyse Gothic film in terms of genre, gender, and adaptation are, respectively: Paul Meehan's *Horror Noir: Where Cinema's Dark Sisters Meet* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010); Helen Hanson's *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007); and David J. Skal's *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Recent monographs on Gothic cinema comprise James Bell's (ed.) *Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film* (London: BFI, 2013); and David Huckvale's *Touchstones of Gothic Horror: A Film Genealogy of Eleven Motifs and Images* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010).

moral ambiguity, guilt-haunted heroes, and horror-tainted imagery is vital to produce any kind of informed study of Gothic formations.<sup>4</sup> This notwithstanding, one should not be boxed in by a description of Gothic films as adapted versions of Gothic novels, tales, and poetry.

To be sure, it is important to note at the outset that ‘Gothic’ is a particularly elusive term that resists concision and has been employed with regard to an amalgam of different (albeit overlapping) social, historical, political, aesthetic, literary, musical, cinematographic, architectural, and psychological issues. Having assumed a vernacular ascription, the Gothic is, as such, a concept perhaps too loosely and broadly applied, as both noun and adjective.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the task of defining the Gothic, even solely within the art milieu, is a tenuous academic endeavour. As Dennis L. White summarises, ‘if a film has anything to do with the supernatural, cults, monsters, mad scientists, graveyards, old castles or uncharted islands it is classified as a work of horror. ... Any genre whose assumed characteristics are so superficial’, he continues, ‘is easy to affect and easy to abuse’.<sup>6</sup> This statement furthermore points to the general consensus amongst academics in labelling the Gothic a subgenre of the horror film, widely known as ‘Gothic horror’.<sup>7</sup> This terminology, however, exposes a crucial

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<sup>4</sup> I am considering as classic Gothic novels those written in the period dating from 1764 to 1820: roughly from the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* to Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*. This encompasses the so-called ‘Romantic period’ in European literature (see Jerrold E. Hogle’s introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> David Punter is aware of the complexity of such a word and claims that there is a set of characteristics that are readily identifiable as Gothic, like the use of archaic settings, the supernatural, stereotyped characters, ghosts, vampires, and the like (David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, London: Longman, 1980, p. 1).

<sup>6</sup> Dennis L. White, ‘Poetics of Horror: More than Meets the Eye’, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Spring 1971), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, many Gothic productions have been inserted into subcategories of the horror film or the fantastic, genres that have been as prolific as they have been undervalued. Guy Barefoot proposes a different term - ‘gaslight melodramas’ - for certain Gothic productions (Guy Barefoot, *Gaslight Melodrama: From Victorian London to 1940s Hollywood*, London: Continuum, 2001). In spite of the usefulness of such approaches, they are generally too limited in scope and choice of films, focusing on only one or two cinematographies or filmmakers, and therefore fail to capture the bigger picture, the undercurrent that ties together the films I call Romantic-Gothic. Additionally, those works rarely ever attempt a careful description of what they mean by cinematic Gothic.

weakness in the conceptualisation of the so-called subgenre it designates, for its frontiers seem extremely limited when considering the wide range of representations and styles that Gothicism has come to encompass. The Gothic is not cannibalistic gore, and the uncanny, so often used to adjectivate Gothic narratives, is not intrinsically horrific. In reading Robert Mulligan's *Inside Daisy Clover* (1965) as American Gothic, Stephen Farber suggests that the macabre exists primarily in style, rather than being restricted to genre or content.<sup>8</sup>

The classification of films generally considered Gothic as 'horror productions' has tended to dramatically restrict criticism to the strand of horror films made in Germany during the 1920s, like F.W. Murnau's Expressionist-inspired *Nosferatu* (1922) and Fritz Lang's *The Testament of Dr Mabuse* (1933), as well as to the Universal horror/monster pictures made in the US in the 1930s, like *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931) and *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933).<sup>9</sup> The above denomination therefore excludes certain prominent Danish films, of which Benjamin Christensen's *Häxan - Witchcraft through the Ages* (1922) and Carl Th. Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932) are two of the most representative examples. Gothic themes of entrapment, animism, and the uncanny are also present in a short comedy from 1911, *Christian Schrøder i Panoptikon*, in which a visitor falls asleep in a wax museum and gets locked in overnight. On the other hand, many critics identify a Gothic sensibility with works like Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940) and Robert Stevenson's *Jane Eyre* (1943). These productions have been designated as Gothic romance films or, more frequently, as 'female Gothics', thus named after the description Ellen Moers elaborated of the literary work that women writers had done in the Gothic style in the eighteenth

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Farber, 'New American Gothic', *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Autumn 1966), p. 23. This statement raises the problem that genre is often closely aligned with style (and vice-versa).

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Alison Peirse, *After Dracula: The 1930s Horror Film*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

century.<sup>10</sup> Transposing this term to the cinema might mistakenly suggest that certain films would be categorised as Gothic simply because they were based on or inspired by novels written by female authors.

It should be noted that the polysemic way in which the word has been employed over the centuries has brought along some positive aspects, not the least of which is the understanding of the Gothic as multifaceted; incidentally, this calls our attention to the fact that the Gothic travels, acquiring as a result various related meanings according to subject-area, time, and place, which, in turn, make it richer and more appealing.<sup>11</sup> Mieke Bal's notion of 'travelling concepts' is useful in understanding the Gothic as a concept that migrated from history and art history to literary criticism, film studies, and beyond.<sup>12</sup> In this respect, I echo Robert Miles' description of the Gothic as 'a site crossing the genres' and Michael Gamer's claim that it is 'a site that *moves*, and that must be defined in part by its ability to transplant itself *across* forms and media: from narrative into dramatic and poetic modes, and from textual into visual and aural media'.<sup>13</sup> I would add that the notion of 'Gothic' not only travels between theoretical academic fields and media, but also moves geographically and transatlantically.<sup>14</sup> The European roots of the Gothic have at times led to its study as a local—or, at least, 'localisable'—phenomenon circumscribed to a few specific countries in a determined

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<sup>10</sup> Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers*, London: Doubleday, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Where cinema is concerned, the definition of what Gothic is becomes even more complex when we take into account films produced during the 1940s and 50s. There is some overlap of motifs and general aesthetics between Gothic and film noir—a style or genre that has its own history of elusiveness. On this, see Richard Brody, "'Film Noir': The Elusive Genre", 23 July 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/film-noir-elusive-genre-2> (accessed 30 July 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 11. Bal claims that travelling concepts 'constitute the essence of the interdisciplinary study of culture ... because of their potential *intersubjectivity*' (p. 11).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 189. Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Mobility in the Gothic and its transnational qualities have been the focus of recent debates. Two important works among the yet sparse bibliography devoted to exploring the Gothic transnationally and transculturally are Avril Horner's (ed.), *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange: 1760-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), which does not mention cinema, and *Globalgothic* (2013).

moment in history. When discussing cinema, this resulted in a particular compartmentalisation of films into British Gothic (and its mid-nineteenth-century strand, the Victorian Gothic), American Gothic, German Expressionism, French fantasy films, and Nordic noirs, for instance. It should not however be neglected that although most of the so-called Gothic films made during the 1940s and 1950s were, ultimately, products of the Hollywood studio system, European filmmakers (like Jean Cocteau) and émigrés (like William Dieterle) directed the large majority of them; consequently, not tracking their movements transnationally would be a serious oversight. Granted, the Gothic and Romantic traditions and American film art interacted in a particular way that was not duplicated in Europe or elsewhere, but this was due, in large measure, to the powerful convergence of different cultural backgrounds and ways of approaching cinematic art that took place on US soil. Susan Hayward calls attention to the distinctive *foreignness* of Gothic films shot in Hollywood, claiming that, because of its European heritage, the Gothic, which the author classifies as a genre, is not considered a ‘particularly Hollywoodian one’, unlike the westerns.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, given the preponderance of Gothicism qualities across so many films directed by various filmmakers in such diverse temporal and spatial contexts, narrowly construed genre categories do not seem to ever accommodate such a wide array of works.

I argue that the main issues addressed in the films reframe a series of themes that are woven together in such a way that the Gothic in cinema could be said to have evolved from the coalescence of several genres, namely horror, romance, the fantastic, the melodrama, and the musical. In this respect, a Gothic mood or quality is displayed, for instance, in British, American, and French melodramas of the late 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, like Max Ophüls’ *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) and Marcel Carné’s *Juliette ou la clef des songes* (1951). This cross-generic mood is also apparent

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 187.

in Expressionist productions, like Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919), in certain fairy tale films, like Jean Renoir's *La Petite Marchande d'allumettes* (1928), in surrealist tales, like Henry Hathaway's *Peter Ibbetson* (1935), and in a number of so-called 'ghost films', which comprise William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights* (1939), Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (1947), and Dieterle's *Portrait of Jennie* (1948). The collapsing of boundaries between genre categories and their subsequent permeation generates the challenging possibility of exploring the cinematic Gothic through a combination of inter-genre, transnational, and trans-era approaches. In short, the Gothic resists simple, unipolar, definitions, and demands that its movements be tracked across space and generic forms. French sculptor Auguste Rodin wrote that 'the Gothic is not the Gothic because of the period in which it was developed, but because of the manner of seeing of the period'.<sup>16</sup> In agreement with Rodin, I believe that the reasons for considering a work Gothic or not extend beyond the historical delimitations of any one era. In light of this, the question of whether Gothic works belong in the horror genre, the melodrama, or, perhaps, the fantastic, is rendered irrelevant—what matters is to find out how they are connected, that is, how they are linked in the mind (and the eye) of the viewer. The present work therefore expands the discussion beyond the narrow bounds of genre and advocates that the Gothic in film should be analysed as partaking of many Romantic qualities that do not necessarily involve horror, but rather melancholy and the self's creative and aesthetic development.

The word 'Romantic', in fact, constitutes another complex term that can, by the same token, be analysed as referring to a number of ideas across the centuries.<sup>17</sup> The one that interests us here concerns history; more precisely, it relates to the understanding of

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<sup>16</sup> Auguste Rodin, 'The Gothic in France', *The North American Review*, Vol. 207, No. 746 (January 1918), p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> See Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Romanticism: the social, literary, artistic, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe in the 1770s, partly as a reaction against the cult of rationality of the Enlightenment. Scholars usually approach Romanticism in one of three ways: via poetry (through re-interpretations of the works of Keats, Coleridge or Wordsworth, for instance); via a history of painting (from Renaissance perspectival techniques to Caspar David Friedrich's lonely wayfarers); or via philosophy (particularly Hegelian and Kantian aesthetics). In turn, I suggest an approach to Romanticism via the cinema, so that we perceive one through the other and vice-versa. Succinctly, I am guided by the hypothesis that the way a newly invented medium was appropriated opens up a new path in the study of the relationship between Romantic history and the cinema. Specifically, it is my contention that a re-mapping of the role of Romanticism in cinema will reveal both the centrality of this movement to certain films that originated within a determined time frame and their importance in historical culture and art history. This leads to broader questions: How much does the development of cinema owe to Romanticism? And, conversely, does cinema modify our understanding of Romanticism? How does foregrounding the connection between the visual arts (inclusive of cinema) and Romanticism affect the theorisation and historicisation of particular filmic traditions?

More than descriptive terms, the innovative aesthetics of the Gothic and Romanticism are better defined as philosophies or doctrines, that is, as ways of apprehending life that call upon feelings and intellectual orientation more than technique. If we consider that the vogue for Gothic novels exploded in Britain in the 1790s with the romances of Ann Radcliffe, the Romantic period can be seen as fostering the upsurge and proliferation of Gothic fiction. On this, Linda Bayer-Berenbaum states that the Romantic 'qualities of yearning, aspiration, mystery, and wonder nourished the roots of the Gothic movement', and that 'the child of Romanticism, the Gothic

movement in literature exaggerated and intensified its parent's nature'.<sup>18</sup> Departing from this premise, I argue that there is a particular strand of films where the Gothic refers more accurately to a subcategory of Romanticism—a sub-locale in Romantic aesthetics.

Historically, the Gothic emerged in the context of eighteenth-century Neoclassicism. However, by the time the first Gothic novel was published, in 1764, the age of the Enlightenment was coming to an end, and, as we move into the nineteenth century, history, tradition, and social bonds suffered radical changes. Tales of terror, ghosts, and ancient castles thrived in the newfound fluency that was taking over all sectors of public and private life and cultivated a sense of nostalgia for a certain (imagined) past. From this moment, the literary field has been perceived as the Gothic's preferred niche, which justifies the contemporary propensity to immediately associate that same term with literature. This is relevant because it makes us question the adequacy of this term to designate a set of particular *mise-en-scène* techniques, narrative conventions, style of lighting, overall mood, an easily recognisable plot, and a specific use of music, ambient noises, and dialogue, all of which are created and conveyed by the cinematic medium. In other words, it is important to question whether it makes sense to import the concept of 'Gothic' to talk and write about particular forms of cinema. What is the practical usefulness of transmedialising the term? All in all, the unquestioned reliance of film scholarship on already existing terminology to examine a different medium (the cinema) as well as a distinct mode of expression seems insufficient and, what is more, counterproductive. I believe that the repeated usage of the concept and its subsequent saturation has at times impeded critics from observing the uniqueness that both Romanticism and the Gothic disclose on the screen, a uniqueness that stems directly from the foundational characteristics of the medium—

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<sup>18</sup> Linda Bayer-Berenbaum, *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art*, London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982, p. 20.

technical, technological, and artistic. With this in mind, my work tries to find a way out of that semantic impasse by using a different term as a primarily methodological tool.

I shall henceforth use the term ‘Romantic-Gothic mode’ to address the singularity that Romanticism and the Gothic have achieved in cinema. In the nineteenth century, the line between Gothic and Romantic qualities blurred as poets, painters, and novelists stressed the affinities between the two. These are expressed, for example, by the use of similar motifs (such as graves, bare trees, and ruins) as well as by their branching out onto non-literary cultural forms (like theatre, music, painting, and sculpture). The Romantic-Gothic mode is more than the bringing together of Romantic and Gothic signifiers. The hyphen that brings these two terms together points to the need to think about them as intertwined transcultural phenomena that coalesced in the late 1700s and extended into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In so doing, it furthermore highlights the place of the oneiric in the Gothic and the darkness in the Romantic tradition. The pairing of Romantic and Gothic under that particular epithet discloses as well the tight interrelationship between the visual and the verbal or, rather, between a distinct aesthetics and a particular use of sonorous space in both practices.<sup>19</sup> The Romantic-Gothic appears when the dystopian world of Gothic doubles, mirrors, ghosts, enclosing buildings, monstrosity, grotesque, extremes, excess, externalised emotion, and the supernatural meets with the utopian imaginary of the Romantics, filled with forlorn yearning, nocturnal scenery, twilight, fog, superstition, ruinous settings, dramatic silhouettes of solitary outcasts, oneiric landscapes, inner turmoil, and a fondness for mythology. Botting states that Gothic writers in the nineteenth century gave ‘Romantic themes of individualism and naturalism an atmosphere of strangeness and mystical distance’.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the love of medievalism that drives Gothic

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<sup>19</sup> This idea will be explained in Chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> Fred Botting, *Gothic*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 65.

plots can be found in the clothes of Friedrich's Romantic wanderers, for instance, just as Henry Fuseli's infamous Gothic nightmares can be studied alongside Coleridge's Romantic thinking on dreams and dream life. Another matter that brings Gothic and Romanticism together concerns the understanding of nature. Nineteenth-century Gothic reveals a strong affinity with nature and the elements, a relationship on which Romanticism also drew. To the spiritual and cathartic possibilities of Romantic nature, the Gothic added a physically asphyxiating atmosphere of decay, hauntings, and irreparable punishment. A careful study will demonstrate that not only are Romantic themes frequently exposed through Gothic aesthetics, but also that, oftentimes, their very principles overlap. This occurs, namely, in the preponderance of emotions over reason, in the apperception of love as ambivalent, life altering and death defying, and in the understanding of dreams as conveyors of truth, which in turn emphasises irrational inspiration as the only way to fully experience life and create art.

My debate here originates in the need to regroup and reconsider a set canon of films according to those determined common principles that not only unite and reinterpret Gothic and Romantic features, but also make the frontiers between the two at times indiscernible. I am particularly interested in how issues of sensorial travelling, physical mobility, mourning, and memory are treated stylistically, thematically, and sonically within the narratives. The films I discuss are all formulaic, for they draw on recognisable formal and aesthetic patterns. I am therefore linking typically disconnected films by using a specific critical construct in the hope of revealing the deep impact of Romantic and Gothic heritage on film. In sum, I argue that the Romantic and Gothic legacies are embedded in the cinematic medium since its birth and that they subacently fuel the aesthetic sensibilities on which the particular forms of cinema are based. To put it otherwise, I claim that specific film techniques, styles, settings, plots, and storytelling strategies emerge out of the broader formations of Gothic and Romanticism. In addition,

such staple cinematic themes as death and dreams grew out of this relationship and are still nowadays the fundamental tenets of many film narratives. Therefore, I argue that the Romantic-Gothic showcases a direct reciprocity of influences on a narrative, thematic, stylistic, and ideological level. Importantly, because I am using the concept of Romantic-Gothic to address qualities that pertain to cinematographic images, employing this term additionally stresses the strong link between art and technology from the final years of the nineteenth century. My project will pursue this mode from the early history of film and re-chart its steps down cinematic history until the late 1950s.

Let me now clarify the use of the word ‘mode’ I appended to ‘Romantic-Gothic’. This is a key concept to my arguments and is used here to convey a very precise meaning, as I find that, besides escaping the rigorous categorisation of the term ‘genre’, it also captures the non-stability of the Romantic-Gothic, that is, its temporal and spatial adaptability. Drawing on Wolfhart Gotthold Klee’s words about Expressionism, I consider the Romantic-Gothic a movement of transformation, of ‘becoming’, and not of ‘being’.<sup>21</sup> In other words, I argue that it should be understood as a mode of seeing and feeling that changes, adapts, and evolves over time.

Considering all of this, my primary aim across the chapters is to isolate, trace, analyse, and explain the main traits of the Romantic-Gothic as both cinematic creation and embodied aesthetic.<sup>22</sup> I argue that, since the inception of cinema, certain films have communed in their representation of diverse elements of narrative, style, and sound to

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<sup>21</sup> Wolfhart Gotthold Klee, *Die charakteristischen Motive der expressionistischen Erzählungsliteratur*, Berlin: M. Lichtwitz, 1934 (quoted in Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, trans. Roger Greaves, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 13, 15).

<sup>22</sup> Theories of embodied aesthetics refute the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy and advocate that cognition is bodily mediated (See Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007; Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin, ‘Art and Embodiment: Biological and Phenomenological Contributions to Understanding Beauty and the Aesthetic’, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. 3 (2005); and Francisco J. Varela et al., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

create a unique combination of visual, formal, and sonic elements that results in a distinct mode of cinematic expression. My purpose is to explore the ways in which these elements brought something new and aesthetically daring to the art of film. The Romantic-Gothic uses a singular visual vocabulary or, rather, it possesses a specific style that entails the creation of a distinct atmosphere. Indeed, from very early on, certain films imbued quotidian life with funereal iconography, presenting subversive images—images that did not fit the mould—and where the fallibility of human reason is highlighted. In Romantic-Gothic cinema, the tormented characters willingly accept forlornness as an integral part of life, and the macabre rapidly overshadows traditional moral values. Succinctly, I am interested in the epistemology of exploring aesthetics through a technological medium (the cinema), all the while developing a transcultural, trans-geographical, and trans-periodic investigation of the continuities between Romanticism and the Gothic in film.

### **Tracing Definitions of the Gothic**

Before I focus the discussion on the Romantic-Gothic mode, it is important to analyse in more detail another fundamental way in which Gothic narratives have been traditionally addressed in literature and film throughout the twentieth century. Besides regarding it generally as horror, many authors have posited the social engagement of the films as one of the defining features of the cinematic Gothic. Over the years, a multitude of scholars have proposed that the Gothic be understood beyond its fantastic façade and analysed as always masquerading crucial political issues. There is, indeed, the widespread idea that Gothic novels and films facilitate a wider cultural discourse, being often read as supposed comments on either or both the social reality of a given nation and the core values that shape human life. This socio-political validity would justify and

even forgive its excesses and supernaturalism. To be sure, the construction of a parallel between the social context in which Gothic novels were originally written and the twentieth-century experience has long captivated authors, critics, and readers. From the early 1900s—and most notably from the 1920s to the 1950s—filmmakers too have relied on ghosts, vampires, witches, demons, and other figures of the supernatural as metaphorical representatives of universal problems, like alienation, the victimisation of women, the perils of scientific research, homicide, class conflicts, homosexuality, marginality, the changes to the American home caused by the Second World War, the objectification of women, the loss of identity, and, more recently, AIDS.

Heidi Kaye observes that Gothic tales ‘seem destined to be continually reborn to suit the fears and desires of each new period’, whilst Dani Cavallaro employs the term ‘Gothic’ to refer to ‘a cultural discourse that utilises images of disorder, obsession, psychological disarray and physical distortion for the purposes of both entertainment and ideological speculation’.<sup>23</sup> Expressing the view that the narratives comment on the state of contemporary American culture are Steven Bruhm and Teresa A. Goddu, for instance.<sup>24</sup> Kamilla Elliott eloquently takes up most of these preoccupations and synthesises standard academic commentary on the Gothic as follows:

Gothic films are read as manifesting ‘cultural anxieties’ about World War I in the 1910s; xenophobia and immigration in the 1920s; American isolationism and the Great Depression in the 1930s; World War II in the 1940s; sexual repression, changing gender roles, communism and the Cold War in the 1950s; gay and women’s liberation, civil rights, drugs, nuclear disarmament and the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 70s; new-wave feminism, alternative sexualities, AIDS, incest, sexual harassment and child abuse in the 1980s and 90s; and capitalism,

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<sup>23</sup> Heidi Kaye, ‘Gothic Film’, in David Punter (ed.), *A New Companion to the Gothic*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 250. Dani Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear*, London: Continuum, 2002, p. vii.

<sup>24</sup> Steven Bruhm, ‘The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It’, in Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, p. 259. Teresa A. Goddu, ‘American Gothic’, in Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 63. See also Caroline Joan Picart and Cecil E. Greek (eds), *Monsters in and Among Us: Toward a Gothic Criminology*, Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007.

consumerism, science and technology throughout the twentieth century into the twenty-first.<sup>25</sup>

In my view, all of the above are, undoubtedly, compelling ways of looking at the Gothic (as a historical, literary, and artistic movement); nonetheless, I believe they fail to grasp the intricacies of its manifestation on the cinematic medium. David Bordwell once asked whether or not cinema is important and valuable solely as a barometer of broad-scale social changes.<sup>26</sup> Whilst many scholars, as we have seen, appear to readily acquiesce in the need to answer that question affirmatively (at least when it comes to the Gothic), I believe that view of cinema to be alarmingly myopic. My project moves beyond that understanding of cinema in general and of certain film forms in particular, and is based on the belief that the Gothic should also be investigated on its own, that is, as a mobile formation that needs no displaying of social implications to claim its value.

On these matters, my thinking is more aligned with Bayer-Berenbaum, who claims that the Gothic ‘is not merely a style; it entails a philosophy, and as a philosophy it speaks to the twentieth century’.<sup>27</sup> In choosing the word ‘philosophy’, the author does not read the Gothic as an allegorising genre, questioning whether or not it stands for something else or is symptomatic of specific social moments. Rather, she attributes its enduring force throughout the centuries to the philosophy its images convey. Accordingly, I claim that Romantic-Gothic stories still captivate and seduce audiences today and have, in fact, gone from margin to mainstream because of a singular quality that permeates their images: a quality that is formal as much as thematic. The philosophy that subtends the mode relates to a clearly defined outlook on memory, remembering, identity, mourning, and death.

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<sup>25</sup> Kamilla Elliott, ‘Gothic-Film-Parody’, in Spooner and McEvoy (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, p. 228. Another work that addresses the use of Gothic tropes and aesthetics to expose major social issues is, for instance, Joshua David Bellin’s *Framing Monsters: Fantasy Film and Social Alienation*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Bayer-Berenbaum, *The Gothic Imagination*, p. 12

Another vital characteristic of the Romantic-Gothic pertains to the replacement of the world of actuality for either a psychic reality (one that defies everyday logic) or an uncanny realm, where surreal creatures wander about. In *Peter Ibbetson*, for instance, the protagonist couple chooses to stop living in the narrative reality of the present time and prefer to meet each other in dreams, day after day, never to part. They have thus decided to let their minds effect their Platonic union whilst their bodies wither away in the real world. In Browning's interpretation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the existence of vampires and otherworldly creatures adds a layer of eeriness to the whole film. Both these examples reveal that stories in the Romantic-Gothic mode are permeated by an overall insistence on the portrayal of explicitly supernatural themes or of aspects the characters (and the audience) believe to be supernatural—the feeling of a ghostly presence, for instance. Instead of supernatural events or creatures, in some films the source of the terror is purely human. As two cases in point, we have Browning's *Freaks* (1932), with its cast of real-life carnival performers, as well as the many versions of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, particularly Dieterle's version, dating from 1939. Both of these films show human cruelty towards physical abnormality as the most terrifying element of the plot.<sup>28</sup>

### **Death, Memory, and Oneirism**

Given that my point of departure is, as I have stated, to explore the convergence of death, memory, and the oneiric in the Romantic-Gothic, it is vital to explain how these notions are connected, that is, to inquire how these concepts meet and to what extent they permeate each other. How, in fact, do the characters remember dreams?

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<sup>28</sup> On the otherness of bodies that deviate from the norm, see Ruth Bienstock Anolik (ed.), *Demons of the Body and Mind: Essays on Disability in Gothic Literature*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2010.

And, considering the profusion of revenants in the narratives, one could also ask whether or not death can be remembered. Issues of remembering and memories are not the province of Romantic-Gothics only, but these films introduce those and other related issues as a major part of their narratives, inviting us to conceive of subjectivity as something that moves beyond everyday experience. From here, other questions arise with respect to the dynamic remembrance brings to narrative economy and to our general understanding of the films. With this in mind, I chose to approach the Romantic-Gothic from three ubiquitous components of its narratives: death, memory, and dreams. Although frequently touched on by academics, these classic but complex themes are seldom the primary focus of literary or film discussions.<sup>29</sup>

The taking up of those three concepts in particular has a twofold advantage. The first one relates to the contradictory fact that, although the ability of the camera to offer depictions of memory, oneirism, and the act of dying has been displayed since the very beginning of cinema, the analysis of this dialoguing triad in so-called Gothic films is rarely ever explored. Secondly, by structuring my project on the Romantic-Gothic variations of the categories of dying, remembering, and dreaming, I am able to filter these same categories through a specific lens. In associating the cinematic presentation of these key matters with issues such as insanity and artistic creativity in the nineteenth century, I hope to uncover the centrality of a Romantic-Gothic mode to cinematic practices worldwide from their roots in the last years of the 1890s to their development into the twenty-first century.

Given the breadth of the subject at hand, an initial challenge is defining such vague, debated, and travelling concepts as the above. I will now proceed to a brief

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<sup>29</sup> For a detailed discussion of the role female dreams in eighteenth-century literature, namely in Radcliffe's novels, see Margaret Anne Doody, 'Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel', *Genre*, Vol. 10 (1977), pp. 529- 572. For an analysis of death, see, for instance, Coral Ann Howells, 'The Gothic Way of Death in English Fiction 1790-1820' in Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (eds), *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, London: Routledge, 2004.

explanation of how I understand these three concepts in the context of my work. It is important to remark beforehand that there are very cultural-bound descriptions of what each word means. Each is tied to a specific national context, temporal framework, and religious belief. Moreover, such concepts are not immutable, even within these categories; in other words, they change historically. So, if death, for instance, does not have the same connotations in mid-eighteenth-century England as in mid-eighteenth-century Japan, it is also not understood in today's England in the same way as it was four centuries ago. In this work, I am looking at the general characteristics that define each of the three concepts, and will not, unless noted, discuss the nuances (cultural and otherwise) that they have acquired over the centuries.

Death has been often used as an investigative principle to aid in the comprehension, study, and explanation of human activity and behaviour, from the medical sciences to law and film studies. Bayer-Berenbaum states that 'death is attractive ... for the absence of limitation it implies, for its absolute finality, for the mystery of its void, and for its primeval chaos'.<sup>30</sup> She claims that the attraction to death is visible in the 'need to prove life forces, to test them'.<sup>31</sup> Particularly central to the Gothic imagination, the presence of death in life as indicative of the sublime was later inherited by the Romantics, who lent feelings of longing and peaceful transcendence to it. In the Romantic-Gothic mode, death borrows from both doctrines and its appeal lies not in its 'absolute finality', but in the fact that it is apprehended and experienced as continuance, not as an ending. This means that the characters do not usually envision and face dying as a permanent condition. On the whole, death is not even regarded as something purely negative, but, conversely, it is often considered a rather desirable event, a sort of rite of passage to which to look forward. The figures of revenants

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<sup>30</sup> Bayer-Berenbaum, *The Gothic Imagination*, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

populating Romantic-Gothic works support this conviction. The way different films portray dying and the idea of death varies. In films like *Peter Ibbetson*, death acquires peculiar contours that borrow more from Romanticism than the Gothic, in the sense that the protagonists equate death with spiritual love, serenity, and blissful disembodiment. Other productions, like James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), disclose a tighter connection with Gothicism in their treatment of death through themes of vengeance, obsession, perversion, degeneracy, and the macabre. Although we cannot consistently categorise representations of death according to the country of origin of the films or the filmmakers, we can uncover a greater tendency towards Romanticised death in the works of German and French directors, whereas their British and American counterparts veered more towards a Gothicism approach. In this project, I will analyse death mainly from the standpoint of its reversibility, whether actual or imagined/desired. Dying in the Romantic-Gothic is a happening that will not bring with it ultimate oblivion, but will instead enhance recollection. In death, the dead do not forget: they remember and are remembered. A pivotal example is the ghost of Captain Gregg dictating the memories of his life as a seaman to Lucy in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*.

Memory, in turn, will be examined as something concrete that is emplaced in objects and, as such, susceptible to a sensorial approach on the part of the characters. I argue that processes of assembling the memory of the Other through persistent dwelling propel Romantic-Gothic narratives forward. We can draw a direct link to Romanticism here, one that connects the strange voyages of the film characters inside a house or into nature with the Romantic drive to test the limits of the self by foraging into unknown places and engaging in introspective explorations of the natural world. Furthermore, memory is very much a part of Romantic ideology, which made mysterious forces and/or emotional hauntings the backbone of its sensibility, with the act of remembering functioning 'as a kind of aesthetic trance ... that enabled the Romantic *oculis*

*imaginationis* to look into the past as a way of simultaneously peering into the soul and filtering the impressions rising from it into consciousness', as Victoria Nelson comments.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, I base my analysis of dreams on the notion of psychological space or dwelling, which is not constricted to the actual process of sleeping. Rather, it corresponds more accurately to the broader category of oneirism or 'dream states', like imagining (daydreaming) and sleepwalking. Two staples in Gothic and Romantic art and literature, dreams and nightmares are also an integral element of Romantic-Gothic plots. My project studies how the meta-reality dreams create interacts with narrative time and space, and how dreams do not, as a rule, constitute a pause within the film, but are instead seamlessly blended into the diegetic world. Moreover, I assess the weight that temporality and spatiality carry in the relationship between imagination and memory, and how the process of mourning is intimately linked to dreaming and remembering.

It is relevant at this moment to underline the idea that, whilst imagination is typically associated with the notion of futurity (with desired experiential events), the concept of memory, on the contrary, points towards anamnesis, that is, towards the recalling of things past and of lived experiences. This is the way Edward S. Casey apprehends each term in his works *Imagining* (1976) and *Remembering* (1987).<sup>33</sup> Imagination, he writes, 'projects us out beyond ourselves while memory takes us back behind ourselves'.<sup>34</sup> I read Romantic-Gothic imagination as interfering directly with memory and, consequently, as affecting the way in which the characters form new memories. Furthermore, this also means that the future can influence their perception of

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<sup>32</sup> Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> See Edward S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976 and *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

<sup>34</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, p. xvii.

the past just as much as the past has the power to influence their future. As I will argue, memory and imagination are interlocking, complimentary dimensions that subtend Romantic-Gothic texts. The shared discourses of death-forgetting, space-remembering, and time-oneirism will constitute the basis for a transdisciplinary and trans-temporal approach across the chapters. In short, my work involves an inter-generic, intertextual, and inter-art vantage point that combines interpretative strategies stemming not only from screen studies, but also from cultural studies, art history, geography, philosophy, and literature.

### **Timeline**

The chronologies of Romanticism and the Gothic are a much-debated subject. Being confined to neither a single time nor a particular country, these movements travel across different eras and are hard to pin down historically. Geographically, the Gothic inclination towards the inexplicable and the temptations that lure humankind into never-ending darkness were most noticeable in Britain, where the Gothic prospered. On the other hand, Romanticism as a historical period might have ended during the second half of the 1800s, but many early films incorporated the remaining vestiges of the Romantic movement, dealing with the oneiric, the supernatural, and the tragic pathos of death. Germany comes through as especially significant here because of its important role in developing early cinema whilst integrating nineteenth-century Romantic qualities into its narratives, which delve deep into the realms of shadows, tortured minds, and dark fairy tales.

In this regard, I am arguing that it was via the new medium of cinema that Gothic and Romantic heritage survived and again flourished. More specifically, Expressionist works like *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and Paul Wegener and Henrik

Galeen's *The Golem: How He Came into the World* (1920) gave continuance to and accentuated the Gothic legacy of British and German Romanticism in film, closely following thematic and stylistic patterns most often identified with these movements—movements predicated on the emancipation from both the unbearable constraints of commonality and restrictive aesthetic conventions. Exaggerated shadows, stylised camera angles, low-key lighting, distorted non-realistic sets, and the need to represent the world subjectively (that is, as one experiences it, rather than how it is perceived by one's senses), revealed new conceptual possibilities for the portrayal of the characters and their anguished struggles against themselves and the world.<sup>35</sup> Barry Curtis attributes the visual 'distinctiveness' of German films to 'an attempt at product differentiation', that is, to an effort 'to better compete with the well-established French and American cinemas'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Expressionism was more intensely developed during and immediately after the Great War, due to the isolation of the German market from the rest of the world and to the fact that the government was banning foreign productions from theatres, which consequently increased the demand for more domestic films.<sup>37</sup>

Demarcating this particular historical timeline allows me to analyse the distinctive inflections of the Romantic-Gothic mode in roughly fifty years of cinema history. Paradoxically, my ultimate goal is to show that this mode transcends any delimited historical moment and that, as a trans-formation, it breaks period boundaries, lingering on throughout the centuries. I sustain that Romanticism and the Gothic depend on flows of motion, on moving interfaces of exchanges between ideas, knowledge

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<sup>35</sup> The importance of German Expressionism is frequently written about over-proportionately, possibly because of its proximate relation to fascism. Despite the undeniable relevance of its cycle of films, I consider it to be part of a broader shift in filmmaking practices worldwide, and, whilst nevertheless remaining a vital example of how Gothic iconography melded with Romantic ideology, I argue that the Romantic-Gothic exceeds that delimited cinematography and socio-political context.

<sup>36</sup> Barry Curtis, *Dark Places: The Haunted House in Film*, London: Reaktion Books, 2008, p. 157.

<sup>37</sup> Lang's *M*, released in 1931, was one of the last Expressionist films shot in Germany. A couple of years later, with the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933, filmmakers and technicians working in the German-speaking world resumed their experimentations with the cinematic medium in American soil.

fields, and cultural practices. Additionally, I argue that they have managed to persist and transmute themselves from the late 1700s through to the twentieth century and into the present by means of an extraordinary ‘metamorphic resilience’, to use Cavallaro’s expression.<sup>38</sup> I claim that this presence, this ‘resilience’, is noticeable in the film medium in the productions I call Romantic-Gothic.

I propose the study of works from 1907 to 1958 specifically, because I consider this timeframe to encompass the most representative manifestations of the influence of Gothicism and Romanticism on film. I believe that in order to clearly mark out the focus of the present investigation—cinema—it is important to start in a year when film has been more firmly established as both a commercial product and an art form.

This time interval is, on the one hand, wide enough for me to analyse the way the Gothic and Romantic movements have been studied over the course of several decades and to examine the transmutations the Romantic-Gothic mode underwent as it travelled. On the other, it is restricted enough to allow for a careful reflection on the resilience of the Gothic and Romantic legacies. Having argued that cinema emerges out of Romanticism and Gothicism, one may wonder why I did not choose to begin with an earlier canon. Drawing on Charles Musser, I argue that the year 1907 marks the emergence of cinema as opposed to film, and that it also marks the development of particular forms of narrative.<sup>39</sup> I contend that, when film moved away from photography, a particular cinematic experience derived from the integration of poetic elements—of spectres and necromancy—into the narratives via the *mise-en-scène*

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<sup>38</sup> Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision*, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907, Vol. 1: History of the American Cinema*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. See also Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915, Vol. 2: History of the American Cinema*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1991.

(inclusive not just of the sets, but of camera angles and movements).<sup>40</sup> More specifically, I start my investigation at a moment when cinema begins to adopt modern narrative techniques.

From 1907, the steady development toward an increasingly narrative medium began: the cinema was no longer just a curiosity that presented everyday happenings or variety performances with a stationary camera.<sup>41</sup> Tom Gunning calls this a change from a ‘cinema of attractions’ to a ‘cinema of narrative integration’, which means that the cinema gradually stopped depending so heavily on theatre techniques or photography and invented its own way of telling stories visually.<sup>42</sup> A distinctive aesthetic style created an easily identifiable cinematic form, which now made use of intertitles, shot-reverse-shot techniques, and different camera angles and movements.<sup>43</sup> Attesting to the growing interest and investment of capital in cinema, *Variety* published its first film review on 19 January 1907 and, later that year, Michel Carré directed Europe’s first feature-length motion picture, *L’Enfant prodigue*, which opened in Paris on 20 June. In November, across the Atlantic, a Russian immigrant, Louis B. Mayer, was preparing to open his first movie theatre in Massachusetts. He was one of many entrepreneurs, artists, writers, and technicians who, mostly for political reasons, left their home

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<sup>40</sup> In the 1900 Paris Exposition, film was categorised under Photography (See Emmanuelle Toulet, ‘Le Cinéma à l’exposition universelle de 1900’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, Vol. 33 (April-June 1986), pp. 179-209.

<sup>41</sup> See Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994, pp. 38-47; Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991; and Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (eds), *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, London: BFI, 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Tom Gunning, ‘“Now You See It, Now You Don’t”: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions’, in Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (eds), *The Silent Cinema Reader*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 47. The term ‘cinema of attractions’ was first introduced in a paper by Gunning and André Gaudreault in 1985, titled: ‘Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l’histoire du cinéma?’, published in 1989 (see Jacques Aumont, André Gaudreault, and Michel Marie (eds), *Histoire du cinéma: nouvelles approches*, Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, pp. 49-63). See also Tom Gunning, ‘An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator’, *Art & Text*, Vol. 34 (Autumn 1989), pp. 114-133.

<sup>43</sup> Although intertitles were present from the beginning of the 1900s, it was only in 1907 that they were placed directly in the moving image, in Edwin S. Porter’s *College Chums*.

countries for American soil from the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> Sound technologies, which played a central role in later Romantic-Gothics, registered incredible progress at the time as well.<sup>45</sup> One year later, in 1908, Camille Saint-Saëns and Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov composed the two first full scores for a film (*The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* and *Stenka Razin*, respectively).

The new approach to cinema was built on the principle of continuity editing or invisible style, as noted by David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, who also claim that this classical narrative form derived from advancements in the mode of production, like the rise of studio productions and changes in film language.<sup>46</sup> Most of the films in the canon I have selected are studio productions that draw on continuity editing. Charlie Keil, who likewise investigates the period between 1907 and 1913 as a crucial moment in film history, argues that one way the cinema changed from mere novelty to a more complex way of telling stories was by standardising the scriptwriting process.<sup>47</sup> Thematically, many films turned to the narrative traits of the nineteenth-century novel for inspiration. Adaptations of Gothic works and close literary genres, such as crime and horror, were greatly favoured as plot material at the time. Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, for instance, was taken up by a series of filmmakers from the beginning of the twentieth century. The oldest known adaptation of the novel dates from 1905.<sup>48</sup> Film adaptations enjoyed much success and, by the mid 1920s, films like Arthur von Gerlach's *The Chronicles of the Gray House* (1925) and Rupert Julian's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) were being shown in European and American screens.

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<sup>44</sup> See the documentary *The Movies Begin: A Treasure of Early Cinema: Volume Two: The European Pioneers, 1894-1913* (2002).

<sup>45</sup> Sound will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, London: Routledge, 1985.

<sup>47</sup> Charlie Keil, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001, pp. 36-39.

<sup>48</sup> *Esmeralda* (Alice Guy-Blaché and Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset, France).

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the case of *Ben-Hur* (1907), whose shooting and exhibition were decisive in the implementation of copyright laws for the film industry in the United States. This is significant for my investigation because it stresses the connections between novelistic and film practices in early cinema, whilst also signalling the creation of rules by which the newly formed studios had to abide. In other words, the cinema was starting to expand as both a business and an art form that had a very real economic, political, judicial, and social impact. As Lee Grieveson explains, ‘the shaping of classicism ... was a consequence both of economic decisions internal to the film industry, and of a regulatory policing of the public sphere external to that industry’, which means that ‘the study of regulation enables us to think carefully about cinema as the confluence of aesthetics, commerce, and politics/power’.<sup>49</sup> As it happened, the producers of *Ben-Hur* had failed to ask permission to film the story, which had first appeared in 1880 and was still very popular during the first decade of the twentieth century. As a result, the author’s estate filed a suit against Kalem studios for copyright infringement. Four years later, in 1911, the Supreme Court decided against the film company and ruled that all motion picture companies should henceforth request permission to use previously published material.<sup>50</sup> This would prove determinant in the case of *Nosferatu*, an unauthorized adaptation of Stoker’s *Dracula*.<sup>51</sup>

My reasons for choosing 1958 as the year marking the end of the present research are less complex and more practical. They stem from two main ideas: that, by 1958, most of the émigré and refugee directors discussed in this project were nearing

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<sup>49</sup> Lee Grieveson, ‘Woof, Warp, History’, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Autumn 2004), p. 123.

<sup>50</sup> Further to film rights, a well-known example of the introduction of regulatory institutions for the cinema dates from 1907 as well, when the Chicago City Council enacted the first movie censorship ordinance to protect audiences from immorality and obscenity (see Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, pp. 8, 22-26 and Matthew Bernstein (ed.), *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Early films that I classify as Romantic-Gothic, like *Freaks* (US) and *Häxan* (DK), were censored for the same reasons.

<sup>51</sup> See Lotte H. Eisner, *F.W. Murnau*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1973.

retirement and that, from the late 1950s, especially due to the societal changes registered in the aftermath of the Second World War and the generalisation of the colour strip, Romantic-Gothic productions became more sporadic and were progressively incorporated into a wide variety of genres and styles of filmmaking. In more detail, the travelling directors, who had come from traditions rooted in the Romantic and Gothic doctrines, were not making many films by the end of the 1950s and there was no one left to carry on the artistic legacy that underpinned their sensibility and shaped their films. One of the last Romantic-Gothics, Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, dates from 1958, which prompted me to select this date as the symbolic end of my chosen timeline.

There is another relevant aspect about the final years of the 1950s that should be mentioned here. Despite its importance, however, this situation did not dictate the plummeting in production of Romantic-Gothics at the time, but certainly contributed to it. I am referring to the vertical disintegration of the major Hollywood studios (e.g. Universal, Paramount, MGM, Fox, Warner Brothers, RKO), which had by then lost commercial orientation and had to greatly reduce their output. Most studios were forced to sell their theatres and declare bankruptcy. Nevertheless, as Jean-Pierre Esquenazi remarks, some films were closer to author works than studio products, in the sense that they came from nonconformist individuals who used the system but were not completely beholden to it.<sup>52</sup> In agreement with Esquenazi, I too believe that there is no need to analyse filmmaking practices from the angle of the stereotypical brilliant artist who struggles against the evil producer, quite the opposite: these artists benefited immensely from the hierarchy of the system and its production strategies.

Moreover, by the end of the 1950s, the Romantic-Gothic tone of European and American productions started to be cast out as obsolete and replaced by modern action-

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<sup>52</sup> Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, *Le Film noir: histoire et significations d'un genre populaire subversif*, Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012, pp. 341-342 (note that Esquenazi's arguments refer specifically to film noir).

packed science-fiction productions. The precarious situation of the Romantic-Gothic mode was further complicated by the rapid ascendancy of television. When full-scale commercial television broadcasting began in the US in 1947, the studios started to see a decrease in audience numbers and fought back with 3D, wide screens (Cinemascope, VistaVision), stereophonic sound, and alternative (which usually meant more violent and sexually explicit) subject matter.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, in studying the period from 1907 to 1958, my aim is twofold. On the one hand, close attention to the films brings the focus to individual works of various filmmakers whose careers, from Georges Méliès to Billy Wilder, span the most representative years of the Romantic-Gothic mode. This kind of reading is especially relevant in that it encourages further discussion of the Romantic-Gothic as a movement whilst also inviting exploration from distinct topographies and eras. In addition, by choosing close analysis to discuss exemplary works and sequences in detail, specific theoretical and aesthetic concerns emerge, such as how dying, remembering, and dreaming have been represented artistically on the screen. Individual texts will thus serve to illustrate my main arguments and will then be inserted into the larger Romantic-Gothic tradition, which, I claim, underlies the cinematic practices.

## **Methodology**

In asserting that the cinematographic Gothic needs a new consideration—a new aesthetic and conceptual framework—I suggest alternative cross-cultural and transdisciplinary avenues that have been previously overlooked. The methodology I have adopted engages in both theoretical and practical discussions. It is theoretical in its

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<sup>53</sup> It is estimated that, by 1955, half of all US households had a television set (see Gary Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 107).

focus on textual analysis, which includes the film text and, oftentimes, its pre-text (the script) and it is also practical, in that it applies the theory (the arguments I will formulate) to selected case studies. Furthermore, the Romantic-Gothic mode and its themes of death, memory, mourning, and imagination will be explored synchronically as well as diachronically. To this effect, for instance, not only does the thesis inquire about the representation of and symbiosis between death and remembering in certain countries in specific time periods; it also discusses the topic as part of a determined chronology or historical timeline (1907-1958).

My canon of films is structured to reflect those parameters and was chosen according to several factors. To begin with, this project has been organised to range beyond texts that have been widely studied: I am interested in looking into film works that have rarely been the target of critical scrutiny, such as Terence Young's *Corridor of Mirrors* (1948), *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, and *Portrait of Jennie*, along with other, more famous, productions, like *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *Vertigo*. Dealing with both well-known and lesser-known cinematic works helps to build a more comprehensive study of how cinema portrays the Romantic-Gothic vision, whilst at the same time interlacing close readings with broader questions regarding film and art history.

Additionally, a key point behind the selection of my corpus of films lies in the choice to investigate films from various decades and different countries that I consider to be paradigmatic in their treatment of specific themes, sonorous space, and mise-en-scène, which will allow for a better understanding of how the Romantic-Gothic mode is displayed. My strategy has been to pick carefully those exemplary films that foreground certain interlinked conceptual problems or puzzles that centre on the relation between dwelling bodies, memory, and surrounding space. This approach highlights the fact that neither Romanticism nor the Gothic are culture-specific and are therefore not bound by

geographical borders. Originally thought of as very locus-specific, Romanticism and the Gothic have, as mentioned, travelled from place to place and cannot be hemmed in. As mentioned, most works on Gothic cinema tend to be deliberately limited to American, British or German films, and they rarely mention Romantic traits at all. I however believe that our vision of specific forms of filmmaking will be much more complete if we take into consideration how different countries and cultures have adapted and combined Gothic and Romantic features over the years. Therefore, I examine diverse European as well as US works, like *Rebecca* (USA), Jean Cocteau's 1946 *La Belle et la Bête* (France), *Corridor of Mirrors* (UK), and Helmut Käutner's 1955 *Ludwig II: Glanz und Ende eines Königs* (West Germany).

The theoretical background I employ draws most markedly on film history and phenomenology. I opt for this approach to filmmaking practices primarily because I want to re-focus the discussion on the screen (rather than on the disembodied gaze of the audience) through an analysis of the sensate bodies of the characters. This opens up new potentialities for investigating the connections between film and pre-cinematic arts such as painting, sculpture, music, and architecture.

Throughout my research, I noticed that in most available books and articles on the Gothic in film and literature, authors inevitably centred on psychoanalysis as the indelible basis for their discussions.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, ever since the emergence of post-structuralism and psychoanalytically inflected theories in the 1970s, and especially after the publication of Laura Mulvey's influential essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', some of the films I identify as Romantic-Gothic, like *Vertigo*, have been dealt

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<sup>54</sup> On this, see Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, 2007; Stephen Neale, *Genre*, London: British Film Institute, 1980, and Robin Wood's introduction to Robin Wood and Richard Lippe (eds), *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979.

with primarily in terms of ways of looking.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the male gaze and the gaze of the spectator have been used recurringly to analyse representational and narrative models in vogue in 1940s Hollywood melodramas.<sup>56</sup> It is my belief that these studies have been conducive to the development of critical and theoretical discourses whose main concerns lie in outlining general narrative conventions and in analysing the films as one might the novels. Noel Carroll points out that a psychoanalytic methodology has become the ‘unavoidable’ framework to understand and comment on both the literary and filmic facets of the horror genre. Take, for instance, Bruhm’s allegation that the contemporariness of present-day Gothic productions stems from their awareness of and dependence on Freudian theories, namely on the question of loss.<sup>57</sup> It is my opinion that equating the study of loss (or mourning) with psychoanalytical principles and the appeal of a particular cinematic mode is consequential of a lack of historical perspective. It disregards, for example, how mourning practices and funereal rituals have been performed and experienced across the ages.

While I do agree that psychoanalysis has been valuable to the exploration of Gothic themes, I also believe it has increasingly become more of a convenience than an original, innovative contribution to the exploration of Gothicity.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the amount of works founded upon psychoanalysis makes it difficult for an alternative hermeneutic to emerge. There is one specific aspect about using psychoanalysis as a

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<sup>55</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18. Another landmark was the publication of Linda Williams’ *Figures of Desire: a Theory and Analysis of Surrealist Film* in 1981.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Susan Felleman’s *Art in the Cinematic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), where the author employs art history, feminism, and psychoanalysis as theoretical strategies for analysing gender and identity in post-war and contemporary cinematic productions. See also Mary Ann Doane’s *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Film of the 1940s*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

<sup>57</sup> Bruhm, ‘The Contemporary Gothic’, pp. 262-263.

<sup>58</sup> Some recent works have commented on the preponderance of psychoanalytical methodologies in Gothic criticism, remarking that there nonetheless remains unexplored territory within the field of psychoanalysis, like the Gothic’s underlying pathologies (see Ed Cameron, *The Psychopathology of the Gothic Romance: Perversion, Neuroses and Psychosis in Early Works of the Genre*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2010).

methodological strategy that is worth singling out here because it is important to my exploration of the Romantic-Gothic canon: the fact that, according to the Surrealists, the ultimate goal of psychoanalysis was not to cure patients, but rather to show that abnormality and insanity can be exceptional modes of perception and of understanding quotidian life.<sup>59</sup> To the extent that it highlights disordered behaviour and a damaged mind as alternative modes of perceiving both reality and oneself (often through the oneiric), an approach to the Romantic-Gothic via psychoanalysis could still provide an original contribution to its study. In proposing a fuller definition of the Romantic-Gothic that is not grounded on psychoanalytical principles, my broader aim is also to fill a bibliographical lacuna in cinema studies.<sup>60</sup> In this sense, I follow in the footsteps of a series of scholars who, from the late 1980s, found a straightforward psychoanalytical approach to be unsatisfactory and have deliberately tried to counter this analytical tendency by broadening the critical contexts in which the Gothic can be understood.

One way this has been accomplished has been by historicising readings of novels and films. Whilst earlier works focus primarily on the self rather than on large historical developments, Victor Sage's *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (1988), for instance, offers a historical reading of Protestantism and its clash with Catholicism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England.<sup>61</sup> E. J. Clery, in turn, explores the connection between fictions of the supernatural and the growth of consumerism.<sup>62</sup> More recently, other scholars have explored new thematic paths in

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<sup>59</sup> On Surrealism and insanity see David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. It is my contention that there is an interesting, yet understudied correlation between Surrealism and Romanticism, especially where cinema is concerned. As with Expressionism, Surrealism strikes at the time when cinema is a new and steadily developing technology, and is one of the movements associated most with images of dreams and death in cinema. For reasons of length constraints, I will not be delving into these issues here.

<sup>60</sup> I would nonetheless like to stress here that although I set out to examine the conflation of death and dreams outside psychoanalytically informed theories, it is not my intention to conduct an anti-psychoanalytical study.

<sup>61</sup> Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

<sup>62</sup> E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762-1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

writings on the Gothic and have led discussions through other methodological routes, treating Romanticism and the Gothic in innovative ways. Michael Gamer claims that the Romantic movement developed as a response to the critically ambiguous social context in which the Gothic was received; Catherine Spooner historicises Gothic fashion and investigates the ways in which clothes shape the bodies that wear them; Marina Warner takes readers on a historical journey through the human attempts at understanding supernatural and psychic phenomena in relation to imagination and memory; Sara Wasson and Emily Alder have compiled a collection of essays on Gothic science fiction; and Charles L. Crow's edited volume explores the American appropriation of the Gothic through a plurality of approaches.<sup>63</sup>

Over the past decade, phenomenology has enjoyed an increase in attention in cultural and film theory.<sup>64</sup> Yet, film phenomenology and embodiment theories usually refer to how the viewer of a film is physically affected by its contagious sensorium. In contradistinction to this theoretical framework, my research breaks with the methodological tradition of looking at the sensing body of the viewer and at how it is affected by the moving images, and instead concentrates upon the circulating bodies on the screen. Put the other way around, I look at the way the human figures on the screen move and feel. Furthermore, in arguing that the phenomenological encounters of the

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<sup>63</sup> Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic*, 2004; Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004; Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-first Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; Sara Wasson and Emily Alder (eds), *Gothic Science Fiction 1980-2010*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011; Charles L. Crow, *A Companion to American Gothic*, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

<sup>64</sup> The new wave of scholars thinks issues of phenomenology under a somewhat different light than before. Some of the key theorists of embodiment theories and phenomenological approaches to film are: Laura U. Marks (*The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Vivian Sobchack (*Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Steven Shaviro (*The Cinematic Body*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Giuliana Bruno (*Atlas of Emotion*, London: Verso, 2002); and Jennifer M. Barker (*The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). More recent publications include Davina Quinlivan's *The Place of Breath in Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Laura McMahon's *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda/MHRA/Maney Publishing, 2012); Jenny Chamarette's *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity in French Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Bettina Papenburg and Marta Zarzycka's edited *Carnal Aesthetics: Transgressive Imagery and Feminist Politics* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013).

characters with objects activate the past of the Other (which is thought through according to how the material spatio-temporality of an object engages with the senses), I explore as well the filmic movements of dwelling via the objects that punctuate the spatial trajectories of the characters.

## **Chapter Structure**

The thesis consists of four chapters, each arranged according to four main pairs of different, albeit overlapping themes: memory-space, place-absence, time-death, and forgetting-identity. In Chapter 1, 'Remembering Memories', I investigate the way the Romantic-Gothic travels as a concept (via the migrations of artists), and, on another level, how the characters travel within the films. I also reflect on how specific conceptions of memory, space, place, and mourning are transformed by this journeying. In trying to assess how the Romantic-Gothic moves through space and how this mode shapes the films, one of my primary goals lies in suggesting that Gothic and Romantic qualities exist in places and under certain forms that critics do not usually explore. Such is the case with objects: in the course of the films, particular objects stand out from the *mise-en-scène* and acquire specific properties that shape the journeys of the characters in the Romantic-Gothic world. This brings drastic implications to the way the characters enact and construct memory (one's own and an Other's). The thematic and aesthetic treatment of memory will be addressed in detail. In doing so, I will examine the presence of memory in space and argue that objects are not simple containers of memory but *are* themselves memories, sensorially summoning the past to the here and now and thus constructing the notion of a future where the past is always present. The major part of the chapter is devoted to the interaction of the senses with the process of re/collecting memories. I explore the skin as a site of sensuous contact and indicate that

the Romantic-Gothic insistently privileges touch as both a motif of separation/spacing and intimacy. Given that a vast majority of scholars elects ocularcentrism as their privileged tool for studying film(s), it is vital to note that my analysis is original in its focus on the hand in particular and on synaesthesia in general.

With the perceptual contact with objects causing the awakening of memories, these key objects are foregrounded as part of another space central to the Romantic-Gothic imagination: the liminal. In the Romantic-Gothic mode, the Gothic boundaries between human and animal, the self and the other or life and death interact with the Romantic frontiers between night and day, love and loss, inspiration and insanity. I claim that Romantic-Gothic characters repeatedly find themselves between spatial and temporal thresholds. With regard to this, I interrogate the complex (meta)physical implications of liminality and of the process of transitioning. In defining the heroes as travellers, it is worth stressing that the act of travelling is in itself a liminal state between two instances of supposed stability. In the films I isolate as Romantic-Gothic, the characters live in this constant state of liminality. An analysis of grieving and mourning as liminal or in-between conditions concludes the readings in this chapter.

The second chapter, 'The Anti-Home and Nature as Forms of Agency', focuses on the relationship between the house, the natural environment, and the human body. The chapter is structured around the question of how certain indoor and outdoor places and spaces convey the narrative concerns described in the previous chapter. The house is highlighted as a singular spatial formation where the minds and bodies of the characters are entrapped and imprisoned in the disconcerting maze of an escalating nightmare. Within the walls of the house, I attend to the spaces and places that capture the confusion of reality, memory, oneirism, and death—a confusion that is further stressed by the fact that neither external nor domestic spaces ever seem to be sites of freedom. The readings in these first two chapters enable a study of Romantic-Gothics as

films about journeys of remembering where memories are researched as topographic occurrences, that is, as *mappable* in the course of the stories. The geographic and psychological dislocations of the characters are traced in films like John Harlow's *While I Live* (1947) and *Peter Ibbetson*, which allow us to understand how sensorial experiences guide the body to reconstruct memories and, conversely, how the intellect creates sensorial experiences out of situations that were never lived or of people whom the characters have never met.

After exploring the concept of space as bound (confined to the house), I analyse it as boundless via an assessment of the amount of agency the built environment and nature are given in the stories. The role ascribed to the natural world extends the rapport between the self and the space of the environment, and it likewise brings to the fore the popular Gothic perception of the latter as reflecting the changing moods of the wandering individual. Specifically, the dialectics of self and nature is patently clear in the common description of these films as fusing horror (physical and/or psychological) with a non-naturalistic *mise-en-scène* where cinematic techniques (like camera angles, framing, and cinematography) are frequently exaggerated or distorted, mirroring the varied states of subjectivity of the characters.

Chapters 3 and 4 draw on the image of the portrait to bring forward the connecting thread between the concepts and arguments developed throughout the thesis. 'Re-Voicing the Past' concentrates on matters of time, temporality, and pastness, and looks into the peculiarities that define the Romantic-Gothic self. I also propose an investigation of the transmedial travelling from canvas to celluloid by stressing its strong aesthetic relationship to cinema and this mode in particular. Romantic-Gothics are often organised around a portrait and/or the process of painting it, as is the case in Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), Albert Lewin's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), and Mankiewicz's *Dragonwyck* (1946). I explore the Romantic ambiguity underpinning the

process of portraiture in relation to how the characters personally negotiate life and art. As a result of the contact between body and memory-object, certain portraits concoct a haunting dream-like quality, which produces a sense that the depicted being (or the portrait itself) will ultimately usurp the lives of the characters. I claim that this awakens an urge for mental and corporeal evasion in the percipient while also producing a paradoxical need for self-effacement.

‘Filming Canvases’ revolves around identity. In general, it describes how portraits, mirrors, and sound manipulate the spatial, temporal, and psychological dwellings of the characters and how these affect their sense of selfhood. Personal identity is investigated as well, particularly in its connection to creativity and artistic production. A related matter is the exploration of the double. In the cinematic field, studies of doppelgängers have been undertaken mainly with regard to German silent films, such as Paul Wegener and Stellan Rye’s *The Student of Prague* (1913), neglecting Danish, American, and French cinema, for instance, of which productions like *Vampyr*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931 and 1941), *Vertigo*, and Cocteau’s *Orphée* (1950) are examples.<sup>65</sup> I endeavour to analyse the integration of doubling patterns into the stories and assess the relevance of the double. A point of originality here is my focus on the female doppelgänger, which, unlike its male counterpart, remains undertheorised. Borrowing the words of Michael Richardson, I question how the characters deal with ‘the irruption of otherness into the realm of normality’ and how identities may be re-secured.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> In psychoanalytic theory, the phenomenon of the doppelgänger is concerned with the several stages of the ego’s development, especially with what is repressed, which, it is argued, can be traced back to infantile sources. In my view, however, such interpretations still leave some issues unanswered when it comes to the Romantic-Gothic. Here, we are not given a proper background story for each character: it is not important to find out what traumatised the subject, but rather the ways in which the past (of the self and of the Other) comes back to the present.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Richardson, *Surrealism and Cinema*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006, p. 67.

## Central Premises

To sum up, my thesis proceeds from three main interconnected premises. I start with the assumption that one must cover the two hundred and fifty years of Gothic imagination and the two centuries of Romantic imagination that, to use the words of Frank D. McConnell, ‘predate and parallel [cinema’s] own development’ in order to show the existence of the Romantic-Gothic and its historical and conceptual evolution.<sup>67</sup> The second premise is directly related to the first: I contend that the Romantic-Gothic is not bound by geographical borders and establishes continuities among texts located at different ends of the historical spectrum: the films are addressed transatlantically, and detailed analyses of case studies from both the US and various European countries will be provided in each chapter. This project is a careful investigation of transnational cinematic traditions from 1907 to 1958 that have shared an interest in representing Romanticism and the Gothic as cultural formations that underpin a technological apparatus (the cinema). The Romantic-Gothic mode delineates, I argue, a particularly rich field for re-examining the work of travelling directors and film artists who used the numinous to convey a personal outlook on the workings of the cinematic medium and on life by addressing eternal questions about life, death, time, and memory. The third premise is that obsolescence, transience, oneirism, and the courting of death constitute the backbone of the Romantic-Gothic and pervade the films of which they are a part. Through this trope’s imbrication with a notion of the past, and due to the ephemerality of the cinematic image, I argue that objects and places have the potential for communicating *deathness* to whomever comes in contact with them. In this respect, the

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<sup>67</sup> Frank D. McConnell, *The Spoken Seen: Film & the Romantic Imagination*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, p. 11.

association of certain objects with the dead foregrounds a strong phenomenological connection between objects, memory, and the senses.

*Romantic-Gothic Sepulchres* diverges from previously published works in that it involves a kind of exegesis that focuses on the triadic relationship between major cinematic themes—death, memory, and dreams—whose mutual implication in particular forms of filmmaking has so far largely eluded extensive critical study. In using a different research framework largely based on film theory (but also drawing on sources outside the field of film studies), one of my goals is to fill a gap in the scarce bibliography on the depiction of the connection between Romanticism and the Gothic on the screen. To this end, my focus on the specific dynamic between oneirism-death, space-identity, and remembering-forgetting as depicted in Romantic-Gothics from various nations seeks to redress what has been a very cursorily observed issue. In the chapters that follow, I consider the manner in which the many facets of the Romantic-Gothic mode are manifested and in what ways they interlace with space, time, imagination, memory, mourning, and death.

Finally, my work offers the reader the tools for a critical reappraisal of Romantic and Gothic art by exploring the dialogue between these movements and the cinema from the moment the new medium of film emerged. With this, I hope to show that the Romantic-Gothic underlies discursive and representational strategies that characterise the history of particular forms of cinema from their inception to the digital age. In other words, I suggest that the continuation of Gothic and Romanticism through to the twenty-first century was made possible, in the first instance, by the development of cinema. As the chapters develop, I advocate the usefulness of the concept of Romantic-Gothic in reading both film history as well as distinct artistic practices. With issues of mapping, obsolescence, sensory aesthetics, and memorialisation now emerging as

important sites of scholarship in a variety of academic fields, this work is a timely intervention and will hopefully encourage future reinterpretations of the mode.

## CHAPTER 1: Remembering Memories

### Gothic Eyes, Romantic Ears

Towards the end of *Corridor of Mirrors*, Paul, a lonely, controlling, and obsessive middle-aged man, decides to make the ultimate grand Romantic gesture to prove his love and throws a majestic Venetian costume ball in honour of his lover, Mifanwy. He believes her to be the reincarnation of Venetia, a beautiful woman in a portrait he owns, and whom he is convinced of having loved (and murdered) in another life, four hundred years before. To prepare for the ball, he transforms the grounds of his ancestral mansion into a sumptuous recreation of sixteenth-century Venice and has all the guests come dressed accordingly. The scenery is set, the past is made at home, and his beloved can at long last complete her journey and fully become the one he wants—and needs—her to be. Shortly after she arrives, they exchange pleasantries, talk for a while and then walk towards a nearby gondola to enjoy a peaceful ride through the canals of Paul's fictitious Venice. As they approach the gondola with their backs to the camera, the absence of contrast lighting and the use of a long shot makes it look as though the couple is embarking on a doomed journey—two black, shadow-like figures, barely distinguishable from their night-time surroundings entering the realm of the dead. Soon after, there is a cut to a close-up of Mifanwy's face. She is wearing a glistening white costume and a white veil. Standing just behind her on the shore, we perceive a black man seemingly melding into the blurred background as he solemnly starts singing an old melancholy folk song—'Black is the Colour (of My True Love's Hair)'. This unusual love song rapidly takes over the whole sequence, and, along with the slow, undulating movements of the small boat, the sound of the waves, the play of light and shadow on the characters' faces, and the close-ups of the two lovers,

progressively transforms that which should have been a Romantic rendezvous into a deeply disturbing cinematic moment. Even when they verbally break the long silence that has meanwhile settled and speak to each other, their voices do not detract from our listening to that other deep, sad voice, as it gently serenades them until the end of the ride. Once their journey is over, so is the party, and they quickly enter the house to escape the freezing cold of which they had just become aware. It is there, in a room saturated with objects and vestigial traces of people and of people's pasts, that the two lovers take each other's hands and start to dance, almost recreating, in a somewhat sinister way, a nightclub sequence earlier in the film. A candlelit room, devoid of human life, where a waltz is faintly heard, now replaces the crowded and noisy nightclub where the lovers had first met. This waltz, however, gets suddenly louder and louder, and soon completely dominates the sonic space of the sequence, as if forcing the couple into a dizzying, maddening, and deadly dance. They abide and take each other's arms. A long take follows, somewhat reminiscent of Emma Bovary's ball sequence in Vincente Minnelli's *Madame Bovary* (1949). As they dance, we realise that they do so not just with each other, but with each other's doubles, for Mifanwy is then dressed as Venetia and Paul as her Italian lover. The costumes they are both wearing serve a specific purpose here: they act as a second skin that signals the final metamorphoses of Paul into Cesare Borgia and Mifanwy into Venetia.

The many flickering candles in the darkened room cast superimposing shadows onto the walls, thereby adding to the music's strange crescendo of emotions. The looming shadows of their bodies bring the walls to life in hallucinogenic frenzy and seem to create a multitude of menacing ghouls, ready to prey on the pitiful defencelessness of the dancers. Moreover, these shadows appear to engulf the characters as the camera zooms to a close up of their disconsolate faces as they dance. At a given point, the camera further enhances these effects of doubling by focusing on an imposing

mirror in the room upon which we see the couple dancing. For a brief moment, this mirror reflection directs the scene, causing space, place, time, and imagination to conflate and meld. Where is reality? Where is the dream? Where is the past? Where is now?

The lack of perspectival depth, caused by the short distance between the camera and the protagonists, in conjunction with both the sombre atmosphere of the *mise-en-scène* and the powerful soundtrack, heightens the claustrophobic effect of a sequence that, more than celebrating romance, seems to mourn it. The whole setting in fact resembles a wake, as Paul forsakes the present and the future for an imagined past, whilst Mifanwy fights for the present to the detriment of the past. Paul has lost all sense of identity and chronology, and has chosen to embrace those that better suit his melancholy disposition. He derives his daily *joie de vivre* solely from the visual pleasures of admiring a mimetic representation—a portrait of Venetia—that he keeps in his living room as his most prized possession. The shadows, the mirror, and the costumes play on mimesis as well, adding the finishing touches to Paul's grand and lavish utopia. Mifanwy, however, is only allowed to be a part of it insofar as she is regarded as Venetia incarnate. Away from the dispersing partygoers, in that secluded room adjacent to the disturbing corridor of mirrors of the title, Paul and Mifanwy carry the illusion further. We know then, even as they go on dancing, that their dance has come to an end.

These two sequences from *Corridor of Mirrors*—the Venetian masquerade ball and the subsequent dance inside the house—owe much to the way filmic space is organised in the Romantic-Gothic. There is a foundational bind between the bodies of the characters, the objects that surround them, and the choreographing of dialogue, music, *mise-en-scène*, and narrative. The spinning bodies and expressionless faces of Paul and Mifanwy are in perfect synchrony with the dizzying sound of the waltz, the

absence of dialogue, the flickering light of the candles, and the sense of impending danger. Spaces and places are therefore not mere repositories of audio-visual embellishments that frame the action, but are essential to the construction of said action. The main subject of the following chapter is space—space as it is perceived, organised, altered, and created in Romantic-Gothic narratives.

There are varied ways in which the issue of space can be discussed, depending on how one chooses to approach the topic. An unavoidable point when studying the Gothic or Romanticism, space is, in the first instance, usually approached as a narrative device that is deeply entrenched in the action and whose powerful force is such that it is at times given the power of agency. The narratives of the films are frequently built upon the interplay between an array of antithetical spaces: spaces that either free or entrap the characters from imminent mortal peril. In most films, though, space is overall regarded as something to overcome at all cost. One might then say that spatial analysis in this context is far from constituting an innovative research framework. Indeed, geographic changes in location and what I will later on describe as psychological travelling or dwelling, both of which stand out as recurring narrative features in Romantic-Gothic plots, are present in a number of other narratives as well, such as musicals or science fiction. So what is it that makes Romantic-Gothic mobility different and in what respects is it worth analysing?

In order to capture the extent to which the Romantic-Gothic depends on and feeds on mobility, I will examine it according to certain specific interconnected perspectives, for the myriad ways in which spatial complexities can be addressed in these films have not yet been exhausted. For instance: whereas Romanticism and the Gothic have been traditionally understood as circumscribed to a handful of stereotypical settings, such as cemeteries and isolated castles, the Romantic-Gothic is not space-bound, but rather transnational and multi-spatial. Its mutability, its pervasive and all-

encompassing travelling across space, time, and mind, is, in fact, one of its most vital dimensions. In this respect, one of my chief goals lies as well in suggesting that the Romantic-Gothic exists in places that critics do not often explore—locales that are Gothic or Romantic, yet not in the classical sense. Although it would no doubt constitute a very small challenge to map all the most frequently recurring locations where the action takes place in any one Romantic-Gothic narrative, there are various places (places of memory) that are central to these stories that do not figure in the average list of general Gothic or Romantic locations.<sup>68</sup> Living rooms, city parks, and private backyards are, in my chosen canon of films, as simultaneously frightening and inviting, claustrophobic and liberating, as a mouldering tomb or a churchyard. In this respect, whilst cemeteries, old houses, monasteries, and castles form part of the typically investigated ensemble of Gothic places, other elements just as pivotal as those—namely portraits, household objects, trains, and even sea waves and the shoreline—are seldom acknowledged as such. When they are researched, it is usually as either items around which the action develops or as Gothic/Romantic motifs that do little more than add to the suspense or to the composition of the *mise-en-scène*.

Another aspect that interests me is to provide a careful tracking of the influences that informed the appearance of the cinematographic medium; one that simultaneously takes into account both the notion of ‘Gothic’ as well as the content of the Romantic stories linked to it. To trace the travels of the Romantic-Gothic from the historical context of the second half of the eighteenth century to the cinema screen is indeed the underlying principle behind my project. In this particular chapter, I will examine the importance of space through an investigation of the specific kind of intrinsic mobility

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<sup>68</sup> Authors such as Giuliana Bruno, Laura U. Marks, and Tom Conley have explored the associations between memory and places/spaces. Such works, however, focus mainly on the ways in which memory relates to a specific space, particularly that of the city, and to how cinematic images have helped shape urbanity.

that characterises the Romantic-Gothic and its places. It is essential to investigate the question of how all these spaces and places convey central narrative and aesthetic concerns within the films. Some clarification is needed here with regard to my understanding of these two words: place and space. The former, in the context of my work, is always indexical, and refers to a real location in the real (narrative) world. Space, in turn, is analysed as either a mental construct or an aggregate of places and objects whose precise topography cannot be clearly pinpointed. This is to say, then, that space does not necessarily implicate place. In fact, some Romantic-Gothic spaces are without place.

The dream village in Marcel Carné's *Juliette ou la clef des songes* is perhaps one of the best examples of a space that is un-placeable. Let us briefly outline the plot of the film. One day, Michel decides to steal some money from his employer to be able to take Juliette, the colleague with whom he has fallen in love, on a Romantic weekend. However, things do not go according to plan: he is caught and subsequently arrested. In prison, he dreams of a strange village, whose no less strange inhabitants have all lost their memory. Once there, he starts asking about Juliette and eventually finds her. Nonetheless, the dream quickly turns into a nightmare when she does not remember him, and, what is more, he has to compete with another man for her love. Chronology and any sense of spatial belonging have been lost in the Land of Oblivion where Michel dwells. Another characteristic of spaces is that they are free from the immobility on which any one place is anchored. Spaces benefit from the mutability of their interstices and from an astounding power to adapt to a variety of places. I will reflect with particular insistence on the objects that populate these spaces. Concretely, I will investigate the close and interchangeable relationship between film characters and the objects on the screen, especially where objects intersect with memory and the senses. In the Romantic-Gothic, as we shall see, objects often contain spaces within themselves.

The analysis of objects brings forward the dependability of the Romantic-Gothic on the specificity and singularity of its places and spaces. Romantic-Gothic narratives are very much about going from place to place, and, particularly, from spaces to places. That which concerns me most here is the way space and place affect oneirism, death, memory, and the body. In this regard, the readings in this chapter will also hopefully enable a study of the Romantic-Gothic mode as being ultimately a map of memories where mourning, forgetfulness, and the annihilation of the self in space germinate.

### **Gothic Travels**

Forms of representing the Romantic-Gothic, be they artistic, literary, cinematic, or musical, invariably engage with questions of ‘where’: where is now? Where is then? Where is home? Where are the characters going? Where have they come from? Where is memory? Studying the Romantic-Gothic is to study its many voyages—its translations from one cultural world into another, from one time into its adjacent temporality, and from one personal sphere into another. I will begin my inquiry into space and travels by giving a brief overview of the travels of the Romantic-Gothic as a critical and historical concept. It is important to tease out the many uses of the words ‘Gothic’ and ‘Romantic’ throughout the centuries in order to understand my employing the term ‘Romantic-Gothic’ as more than a simple hyphenation of historically co-related concepts.

The word ‘Gothic’ was originally a noun, used to designate the East Germanic tribe who contributed largely to the fall of the Roman Empire. It meant ‘rude’ and ‘barbaric’. Along its way, across national frontiers and a variety of cultural traditions, the term absorbed a host of different meanings, more or less related to the original term. Since the Renaissance, the word ‘Gothic’ has been most commonly used as an adjective

that refers to a European architectural style dominant from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Initially known in the Middle Ages as the ‘French style’, as opposed to the Romanesque church architecture from which it had evolved, it rapidly spread to all Western Europe, where it thrived until the latter half of the sixteenth century, when tastes again changed back to the rational geometry of Greek and Roman Classicism.<sup>69</sup> It becomes evident that, in this context, Renaissance artists and builders gave the term a negative connotation, using it to designate the overtly decorated buildings of the previous period. Nevertheless, as the centuries went by, the growing will to escape hierarchical feudalism, the blind rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the neoclassical revival in the arts caused moods to shift again. The rising interest in the study of the past, the writings of art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), and the formation of History as a discipline brought along a revival of Gothic architecture. As Paul Frankl writes, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gothic style was said to possess ‘a picturesque quality, a quality of infinity, ... a Romantic quality’, attributes which were then bound into one unified concept.<sup>70</sup> Given that those qualities were applicable to painting and sculpture as well as buildings, the Gothic widened to include the fine arts.<sup>71</sup> It was not long before the concept stretched to literature and poetry, too. Literature, in fact, had a major role in the fight for the rehabilitation of Gothic architectural works, as we can see by the unabashed praises of Notre-Dame de Paris in Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831). As a literary style, the Gothic also travelled first within European borders, flourishing in Great Britain and Germany, and only then to the rest of the world, gaining and re-gaining new

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<sup>69</sup> Paul Frankl, *Gothic Architecture (revised by Paul Crossley)*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural interpretations. Throughout the twentieth century, it expanded yet again to encompass music and film.<sup>72</sup>

What we learn from these travels and transformations is that, from barbarism and darkness to the innovative light inside medieval cathedrals, and from the morbid nostalgia that plagued mid-nineteenth-century poets to the bloodthirsty vampires that have haunted cinema screens since the 1920s, the Gothic is filled with antinomies. Academically, this ‘travelling concept’ has equally spread across a vast range of knowledge fields, from art history to geography and tourism studies, and is nowadays so dispersed that interdisciplinarity seems to have become a pre-requisite, or at least a staple methodology, for anyone interested in researching the Gothic.

Likewise, the concept of what is considered ‘Romantic’ has followed a similar social, cultural, and academic trajectory. A noteworthy detail, however, is the attempted change of the name ‘Gothic’. Frankl explains that, from the 1840s, many tried to find a better term for it, such as ‘*style ogival*’ and ‘Germanic style’, but none stuck.<sup>73</sup> The Romantic-Gothic would be, in my opinion, a more adequate name to define a movement that has branched out from the plastic and literary arts to film. The idea of a connection between the visual and the sonic in the Gothic and in Romanticism respectively, already present in the title of the chapter, will be developed in the pages that follow.

The Romantic-Gothic has absorbed all of the disparities I mentioned above and is, in turn, characterised by those same dichotomies; by the ways in which it congregates the fear/horror generally connected to the trail of destruction of the Goths and the overwhelming visual and sonic experience of standing in a Gothic cathedral. What follows is a closer look at certain specificities of those that I consider to be some of the defining traits of the Romantic-Gothic, namely movement. Mobility affects the

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<sup>72</sup> For a wide-ranging study of Gothic music, see Isabella van Elferen, *Gothic Music: The Sounds of the Uncanny*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012.

<sup>73</sup> Frankl, *Gothic Architecture*, p. 264.

whole of the Romantic-Gothic, whichever way we choose to examine it, that is, whether we decide to focus on its historical/cultural/artistic travels or on the movements of the characters within the narratives. I will begin by investigating the former, although most of the work in this project revolves around the story world presented in the films.

### **Travelling Directors**

One of the ways the Romantic-Gothic travelled was through the movements of its promoters: the artists, filmmakers, painters, set directors, and screenwriters who, usually for political reasons, left their home countries to work in a different cultural environment. Most of the directors of Romantic-Gothics travelled from countries where the Gothic and Romantic traditions were most intensely developed, as was the case in Britain and Germany. The work of some of these pivotal filmmakers who travelled across cultures would deeply influence and shape cinematic practices worldwide. Importantly, I call these filmmakers ‘travelling directors’ to stress not only their mobility (as people moving across national borders), but also the fact that they draw on movement (physical and psychological, spatial and temporal) as the driving force behind the actions of the characters in the films. Throughout this work, I explore what it was that made their films stand out from all of the others being produced at the same time.

The heightened visuality of Romantic-Gothic works owes much to a series of German films made during the 1910s and 1920s. These decades exhibited a special keenness for very specific subject matter, markedly showcasing cinema’s origins in fairground attractions and magic shows, as well as its proclivity, from the very beginning, to engage in images of hauntings, death, spiritualism, and necromancy. From the following decade, however, everything changed. The first third of the 1930s was a

difficult one for German artists, and was marked by the rise of fascism. In the years that followed the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933, many European artists, especially those living in Germany and nearby countries, emigrated en masse to the United States.<sup>74</sup> In 1938, Paul Kohner, together with Dieterle and his wife Charlotte, Liesl Frank, and others, created the European Film Fund: an institution dedicated to assist the ever-growing number of refugees.<sup>75</sup> Among the most famous German exiles and émigrés, we find the likes of Murnau, Lang, Ophüls, Dieterle, Paul Leni, and Robert Siodmak, each bringing his own Germanic heritage to bear on 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s Hollywood films.<sup>76</sup> Cases in point are also those of Austro-Hungarian Otto Preminger (born in today's Ukraine) and Billy Wilder (born in today's Poland).<sup>77</sup> Dieterle emigrated to the US in 1930 and was followed in 1935 by Preminger who had accepted an invitation from Joseph Schenck (a Russian émigré himself) and Darryl F. Zanuck, the co-founders of Twentieth Century Pictures, to work for Fox.<sup>78</sup> In 1934, Max Reinhardt, with whom both men had worked (and learned from) in Germany, left for the United States as well. Whilst in American soil, Dieterle remained faithful to his style, which he had displayed in early German films like his 1930 *Ludwig*, and directed a handful of Romantic-Gothics for major studios, most importantly *Portrait of Jennie*, a disenchanted fairy tale of love and loss between a painter and his dream. Ophüls, in

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<sup>74</sup> There had been a few notable filmmakers leaving Germany to work in Hollywood during the 1910s and 1920s, like William Wyler (who left native Alsace in 1920), but the numbers were not comparable to the wave of emigration that followed the end of the Weimar Republic.

<sup>75</sup> On exile directors and the EFF, see Esquenazi, *Le Film noir*, p. 348; Martin Sauter, *Liesl Frank, Charlotte Dieterle and the European Film Fund* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick, 2010); Saverio Giovacchini, *Hollywood Modernism: Film and Politics in the Age of the New Deal*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001; and J. R. Taylor, *Strangers in Paradise, The Hollywood Émigrés 1933-1950*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983, p. 146.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Marc Cerisuelo (ed.), *Vienne et Berlin à Hollywood: nouvelles approches*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006; Tim Bergfeld (ed.), *Destination London: German-speaking Émigrés and British Cinema, 1925-1950*, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> See Gerd Gemünden, *Continental Strangers: German Exile Cinema, 1933-1951*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014; and Gene D. Phillips, *Exiles in Hollywood: Major European Film Directors in America*, Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1998.

<sup>78</sup> After the merger with Fox Film Corporation, in 1935, the company's name changed to Twentieth Century-Fox.

turn, went to France in 1933 and, for eight years, also worked in the Netherlands and in Italy. In 1941, he moved to the US where, seven years later, he would direct *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, a story set in Vienna about a woman who has been in love with a renowned concert pianist all of her life, but who, every time they meet, does not remember her. As for Wilder, he emigrated first to Paris to escape Nazi Germany, and later went to the US to work as a screenwriter. The list is long and, as I mentioned, in no way limited to directors. Particularly important were also Romanian-born John Houseman, producer of *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and writer of *Jane Eyre*; Russian composer Dimitri Tiomkin, responsible for the score of *Portrait of Jennie*; and cinematographers Franz Planer and Karl Freund, both born in what was then Austria-Hungary. Planer was director of photography in Ophüls' aforementioned film whereas Freund was involved in the production of *The Golem* whilst employed at UFA in Germany, where he collaborated closely with Murnau, Lang, and Carl Mayer. From 1929, he worked as a cinematographer and director for Universal and, later on, for MGM.<sup>79</sup>

Glancing over at all of the names I have mentioned, it is clear that the choice to leave one's home country came about mostly as a consequence of political turmoil.<sup>80</sup> Many of those artists experienced identical trajectories of social and/or artistic oppression, and eventual artistic rebirth in a foreign industry. Although my aim in this thesis is not to map the socio-political movements of the Romantic-Gothic across European and American cultures, it is essential to highlight that certain historical events have deeply affected its cinematic development from the second decade of the twentieth century. Most of the travels that implicated the filmmakers and artists during that time

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<sup>79</sup> Freund moved to MGM in 1935. That same year, he directed *Mad Love* (1935), a remake of Robert Wiene's *Orlacs Hände* (1924).

<sup>80</sup> Not all travelling directors left their country for political reasons. Dreyer, for instance, left native Denmark to work in Germany, Scandinavia, and France because of the instability of the Danish film industry. Between 1920 and 1926, he directed seven films in five countries (David Bordwell, *The Films of Carl Theodor Dreyer*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 9-17).

were, indeed, geo-political: those were movements away from fascism, principally, and were made possible by a liberal capitalist world system where people and goods could more freely and easily cross cultural and political borders. The background of all these artists, that is, their cultural roots and the work they had done in their respective countries before they emigrated (the subjects they had chosen, the camera techniques they had employed, and so on) comes through in their productions away from home. Only it comes paired, frequently, with a greater sense of nostalgia, melancholia, and loss.

This last remark brings with it the question: if the directors were working with themes and techniques identical to those they had developed in Germany and elsewhere, how exactly—and to what extent—did those geographical movements of migration actually influence the work of expatriate filmmakers? Or, to phrase it differently, how much of a change is perceptible from the films shot in one's home country to those directed in another? I am arguing that this type of (forced) mobility created a particular kind of mourning for the distant *Vaterland*, which, in turn, translated into a characteristic *mise-en-scène*. These directors remained faithful to the Germanic Romantic tradition and re-invented the *Vaterland* in light of their experiences in a new and foreign country. Through their journeys, this group of émigrés brought to its host country various forms of interpreting and representing Romanticism and the Gothic. On the screen, their works emphasised feelings of uneasiness, like the sense of forlornness in a new city, the pain of being away from the security of home and loved ones, the feeling of abandonment and displacement, and the unimaginable horrors of gratuitous violence. Take, for instance, the several long shots that frame Eben (of *Portrait of Jennie*) walking through Central Park at night whilst his thoughts, verbalised in voice-off, express his constant insecurity towards his work, or the close-ups of Lisa listening to Stefan's music, night after night, in *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (a music that, as

a haunting lullaby, stays with her long after she has moved away from home and into a different city). Sequences such as the above—their *durée*, the lighting, the proximity/distance of the camera, and the use of sound (speech/verbal silence)—are filled with the sense of yearning and nostalgia that characterises the Romantic-Gothic mode.

At first glance, there is another major aspect that stands out from these transnational journeys: the fact that American cinema was more influenced by the works of these travelling directors than the reverse.<sup>81</sup> The émigrés effected the material transportation of the Romantic-Gothic to the US in a complex negotiation of studio control, Hollywood filmmaking practices, and transnational heritage.<sup>82</sup> Despite the much-discussed interference of the studios on the work of their employees, most foreign directors managed nonetheless to navigate or even overcome such constraints and to use their cultural legacy creatively.<sup>83</sup> There were multiple complexities involved in the process of adapting one's work to a different cinematic industry where different rules applied, particularly one with such a demarcated structure and hierarchy as Hollywood studio companies. In comparison to the freedom of the German art scene, the American studio system imposed a multiplicity of creative restraints to the filmmakers. In this regard, Noël Herpe remarks that there was a certain 'overexpressionism' in the American productions of foreign directors. He identifies what he calls a 'carte de visite' effect, which means that the filmmakers supposedly emphasise their trademarks,

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<sup>81</sup> H. Chevalier claims that in Hollywood, 'the American, British, German, Chinese, French, Indian or Swiss all work together amicably, and whatever ability they show they are allowed to use' (H. Chevalier, 'What's Wrong? An Involuntary Symposium', *The Ciné-Technician*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (June-July 1937), p. 51).

<sup>82</sup> Chevalier reminds us that there were also many foreign artists and technicians who came to work in Britain in the 1930s. The sudden development of the British film industry led studios to draw 'on outside sources, chiefly Hollywood, although the internal national troubles in Germany made available other highly-qualified technicians', he writes (*Ibid.*, p. 50). The Ministry of Labour tried to counteract this tendency of employing increasing numbers of foreign workers. For dates and figures on this, see 'Foreign Workers in British Industry: Report of the Ministry of Labour', *The Ciné-Technician*, Vol. 3, No. 10 (June-July 1937), p. 72.

<sup>83</sup> See Lutz Bacher, *Max Ophuls in the Hollywood Studios*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

namely the reliance on artifice and human darkness, much more than they would if working in their home countries. These trademarks, he adds, also became a means of asserting a European identity, often through caricature.<sup>84</sup> Whilst I agree that Romantic, Gothic, and Expressionist heritage is foregrounded in the works of travelling directors, I contrariwise do not find it is generally expressed over-emphatically.<sup>85</sup> There is, in actuality, an impressive consistency between the pre-American and the Hollywood films of Dieterle and Ophüls, for instance, in terms of content as well as style, particularly in the fluidity of camera movements and the use of long takes. It becomes apparent, in this regard, that politics or financial issues alone do not automatically make the Romantic-Gothic qualities in these films stand out more.

The influence of transatlantic movements is particularly noticeable in the so-called ‘monster’, ‘horror’, ‘Gothic’, ‘fantastic’ or ‘noir’ films, many of which, given their singularities, I am including here as part of the Romantic-Gothic canon.<sup>86</sup> These are, respectively, the genres usually attributed to *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931), *The Mummy* (Freund, 1932), *The Queen of Spades* (Thorold Dickinson, 1949), *Peter Ibbetson*, and *Sunset Blvd* (Wilder, 1950), for instance. Incidentally, British filmmakers James Whale and Thorold Dickinson were travelling directors as well. Whale arrived in the US in 1930 to work for Universal Pictures, whilst Dickinson (who had already worked in Paris in the 1920s), stayed in New York from September to November 1929 to visit the studios and learn about the latest developments in film techniques.<sup>87</sup> British

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<sup>84</sup> Noël Herpe, ‘Le Drôle d’expressionnisme du cinéma français’, in Jacques Aumont and Bernard Benoliel (eds), *Le Cinéma expressionniste: de Caligari à Tim Burton*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes/ La Cinémathèque Française, 2008, p. 127.

<sup>85</sup> On this, see Hervé Dumont, *William Dieterle: un humaniste au pays du cinéma*, Paris: CNRS Éditions-Cinémathèque Française, 2002; and Dumont, *Robert Siodmak: le maître du film noir*, Lausanne: L’Âge d’homme, 1981.

<sup>86</sup> Please note that the ‘singularities’ to which I am referring are the core of this project and will, as such, be discussed throughout, which is why I have refrained from summarising them here.

<sup>87</sup> For a more detailed account of Whale’s work in Hollywood, specifically the way he and other UK professionals brought British qualities to bear on American cinema, see Barry Forshaw, *British Gothic Cinema*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. On Dickinson, see Philip Horne and Peter Swaab (eds), *Thorold Dickinson: A World of Film*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008, pp. 6, 8. On

director George Pearson, a friend and mentor of Dickinson's, had told him beforehand that 'the easiest way to get a job in England was to come back from America'.<sup>88</sup> Dickinson would later cast German emigré actor Anton Walbrook in two films that are part of my canon: *The Queen of Spades* and *Gaslight* (1940).

It is essential now to explain that the continuation of Romanticism and the Gothic in an audio-visual medium owed much to the intervention of directors who were not European émigrés, such as American-born Browning, Hathaway, and Joseph L. Mankiewicz. The inclusion of examples from their films in my thesis does not detract from my argument about the pivotal role of travelling directors and artists, quite the opposite: it heightens the importance of foreign influences, noticeable, for example, in a singular way of storytelling according to which the camera interacts closely with the characters and the situations it films, registering the interplay between (the idea of) sound and the *mise-en-scène* as vital to the action. Such influences were, at times, direct. As a matter of fact, Hathaway worked closely with Josef von Sternberg before making the transition to sound, whereas Mankiewicz (the son of Jewish immigrants from Germany) got a job as a subtitle translator for Paramount in Berlin during the 1920s.<sup>89</sup> The transnational collaboration between cinema professionals worked both ways: its impact was due to the hand of American filmmakers who had worked in Europe or with European directors and to the hand of European directors who had travelled to the US or elsewhere. With the help of close readings of specific sequences

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émigrés in British cinema, see Cheryl Buckley and Tobias Hochscherf, 'Introduction: From German "Invasion" to Transnationalism: Continental European Émigrés and Visual Culture in Britain, 1933-56', *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2012), pp. 157-168.

<sup>88</sup> George Pearson quoted in Frank Sainsbury (ed.), 'Close-Ups: No. 7 - Thorold Dickinson', *The Ciné-Technician*, No. 27 (August-September 1940), p. 67.

<sup>89</sup> Even Frenchman Cocteau, who did not film outside of France, was very much influenced by the cosmopolitan avant-garde (of European, Jewish, and Yiddish roots) that found a home in 1910s Paris. Cocteau was well aware of the way his art was shaped by foreign personalities (see James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau*, London: Reaktion Books, 2008, p. 41). Writing on *La Belle et la Bête*, he draws on Goethe to describe the way 'truth and reality contradict each other' in the film and on Vermeer to describe the work of costume designer Christian Bérard (Jean Cocteau, *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film*, trans. Ronald Duncan, New York: Dover, 1972, pp. 7-8).

throughout the chapter, I advocate that a transnational thinking, or, in other words, the awareness of these movements of travelling, allows, on the one hand, for a deeper questioning of the bonds that develop between place and space in the films, and, on the other, for an understanding of how these concepts relate to memory, objects, and mourning practices.

Expressionist *mise-en-scène* techniques, namely low-key lighting, distorted camera angles, subjective points of view, and a very specific spatial use of the human body conferred a distinct and readily identifiable feel to the images in these productions. A certain overacting or theatricality of carefully made-up faces, along with the deployment of symbolic motifs, such as mirrors and staircases, also attest to the travelling of a concomitantly sinister and pathetic way of apprehending and representing both actuality and the oneiric.<sup>90</sup> Lotte Eisner, in her seminal study of German Cinema, *The Haunted Screen* (1952), devotes an entire chapter to the passion of German filmmakers for winding staircases, noting that this was perhaps so because of the way they structure space whilst conveying a feeling of mental instability.<sup>91</sup> In a variety of later Romantic-Gothics, the influence of this expressionistic motif was clearly evidenced in Hollywood films, notably in *The Spiral Staircase*, directed by German émigré Robert Siodmak in 1945. Another unavoidable title here is *Vertigo*, where the use of a staircase plays with the acrophobia of the protagonist, with the double purpose of adding suspense to the narrative by disorienting the main character whilst also symbolising the illusion of love and the ephemerality of life. Hitchcock, it should be highlighted, got his start in film working in Germany during the Expressionist period.<sup>92</sup> Staircases figure widely in his oeuvre, including in the Romantic-Gothics *Rebecca* and

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<sup>90</sup> I am using the word 'pathetic' in the sense that S. M. Eisenstein used it. See Sergei Eisenstein, *Notes of a Film Director*, trans. X Danko, New York: Dover Publications, 1970, pp. 53-62.

<sup>91</sup> Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 1969.

<sup>92</sup> David Schroeder, *Hitchcock's Ear: Music and the Director's Art*, London: Continuum, 2012, p. 33.

*Shadow of a Doubt*. Significantly, the importation of such motifs draws attention to the axial role played by the set designers and photography directors who sought exile in the US in the migration of specific cinematic spaces and places from Europe to Hollywood.

With journeying as one of the most important elements in Romantic-Gothic productions, it is useful to take a moment to observe the extent to which it involves the entirety of the mode. Through the mobility of the cinematic image, the travelling filmmakers transposed their journeying onto celluloid and constructed self-reflexive narratives that, by means of a heightened awareness of sonic and visual compositions (which act upon the human body by engaging the senses directly), make each member of the audience a traveller as well, moving through the illusory tangibility of the fleeting images. As I have hinted earlier, one can draw a parallel between the intense travelling experienced by the fictional characters in the stories and the movements of filmmakers, techniques, and ideas that I have been discussing, so that one can be viewed as reflecting the other. Additionally, when looking exclusively into Romantic-Gothic plots, myriad forms of mobility are disclosed. These forms of mobility encompass geographic/physical mobility (from place to place and from spaces to places, and vice-versa) and temporal dwellings (between different temporalities), as well as psychological movements (a travelling of and in the mind).<sup>93</sup> All of this leads to the conclusion that the Romantic-Gothic provides its characters and the audience with many and singular forms of dwelling, and that its narratives are built on the multiple and multi-faceted travels of its protagonists.

Ellen Moers remarks upon this fact and characterises the female Gothic heroine as a 'travelling figure' who experiences both indoor and outdoor travels.<sup>94</sup> Celia, from Lang's *Secret Beyond the Door* (1947), embodies this idea particularly well, as she

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<sup>93</sup> Temporal dwellings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>94</sup> Moers, *Literary Women*, pp. 126-127.

wanders alone around the house, trying to find out what it is that her husband so carefully keeps behind each closed door. Conversely, Cathy and Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* prefer the freedom of their cherished moors, in which they will eternally dwell, just like Peter Ibbetson in the film of the same title, who, in dreams, spends his days with Mary in beautiful sunny fields despite being imprisoned and paralysed in the real world. Another example of outdoor travelling is depicted in *Vertigo* and *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, where Scottie and Lisa, respectively, wander in the city streets rather than the countryside. We can therefore see that, although made evident in the 1940s cycle of black-and-white Hollywood productions that came to be widely known as female gothics or narratives of feminine paranoia, this intensity of travelling (indoors and outdoors) comprises male and female agents alike.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, contrary to what might be expected from the words in which Moers describes her ‘travelling figures’, the travel motif, so pervasive in Romantic-Gothic fiction, is not solely related to either the actual geographic wanderings of the characters or women, as the examples above prove.<sup>96</sup> There is, in fact, a strong psychological aspect to the travels of the heroes, which means they do not need physical movement to travel. Going back to the example above, Peter, in a very Romantic-Gothic twist, finds a way to reunite with Mary in their shared dreams in spite of being incarcerated and unable to move due to a spine injury. Why Romantic-Gothic? Because not all of Peter and Mary’s encounters are tainted by the mundane existence of their bodies in the real world and by the impossibility of ever being physically together again. The film does not revolve around Peter’s insufferable misery, beaten up daily by prison guards and left to die in his cell whilst Mary, in a cell of her own, dreams the years away. As it

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<sup>95</sup> On the definition and exploration of the ‘female Gothic’, see, for instance, Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, 1987; Helene Meyers, *Femicidal Fears: Narratives of the Female Gothic Experience*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001; Hanson, *Hollywood Heroines*, 2007; Alison L. McKee, *The Woman’s Film of the 1940s: Gender, Narrative, and History*, New York: Routledge, 2014.

<sup>96</sup> I will not be discussing matters of gender and genre in this project.

happens, the film focuses on the true happiness they did manage to find: ‘You needn’t be afraid, Peter,’ she tells him of their ability to be together in each other’s dreams. ‘The strangest things are true, and the truest things are strange’. Cinematography and lighting played a major role here. American cinematographer Charles Lang, who was also in charge of two other Romantic-Gothics (*The Uninvited*, 1944 and *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, 1947), photographs one of their rendezvous as an ethereal 16-minute sequence, resplendent with light and subtle shades.<sup>97</sup> Largely responsible for lending a surreal quality to the images is also the work of art director Hans Dreier, a German émigré recruited by Paramount in the 1920s.<sup>98</sup> With his sharp perception of cinematic space, he choreographs this sequence in vivid contrast to the rest of the film: up until then, whenever the platonic lovers shared the frame, iron bars (or similar visual compositions) were always placed between them, separating them. Now, in the space of the dream, they are finally (cinematically) allowed to run freely into each other’s arms.

Indeed, Romantic-Gothic dislocations do not necessarily involve long train journeys or going abroad. At times, the characters do, in fact, take seemingly endless train rides, for instance, but they do not always implicate geographical movement: some journeys take place inwards, and their accumulation often culminates in a significant moment of self-awareness. One of the best examples of this immobile journeying can be found in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, where the protagonists embark on a train ride through snow-covered mountains and distant lakes, stopping casually in various European countries. As they talk and get to know one another, the train windows reveal a succession of beautiful Venetian landscapes. Revealingly, their conversation centres on travelling too, as Lisa tells Stefan about her many travels with her father. ‘When my father was alive, we travelled a lot. We went nearly everywhere’, she comments.

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<sup>97</sup> *The Uninvited* was directed by British émigré Lewis Allen, who went to the US in the early 1940s.

<sup>98</sup> Dreier was the art director for *The Uninvited* and Rouben Mamoulian’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931).

Abruptly, however, their journey comes to an end and the illusion is broken as we realise that the lovers are actually in a fair, travelling, in fact, more through words and the senses than to different places. The *mise-en-scène* has a defining role here, for it partakes of and extends the make-believe. Stefan then gets off the train and pays the old couple running the attraction to take them to Switzerland again. Stepping back into the train, the conversation continues, as does the journey, in a changing backdrop of snowy mountaintops in distant Alpine regions. What is most ironic here is the fact that the travels Lisa describes never really took place (literally) either: a friend of her father's worked in a travel bureau, and he would bring home photographs of exotic destinations to his young daughter. Putting on his 'travelling coat', he would play with the indexicality of the pictures asking her where she would like to go next. And so they would travel together in a shared psychological journey through imagination—through myriad hues and shapes and words.

In relation to these psychological dwellings, it is pertinent to attend to the role of words and storytelling in the films and examine their relation to space/place and the senses of sound, sight, and touch. Vision is a discrete sense as opposed to hearing, which means that we have to look to see, but we cannot help to hear the world around us. As Frances Dyson tells us, 'sound surrounds'.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, as she explains, 'because hearing is not a discrete sense, to hear is also to be touched, both physically and emotionally', for we cannot close our ears the same as we close our eyes.<sup>100</sup> 'In listening,' she continues, 'one is engaged in a synergy with the world and the senses, a hearing/touching that is the essence of what we mean when we talk about a "gut reaction"—a response that is simultaneously physiological and psychological, body and

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<sup>99</sup> Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

mind'.<sup>101</sup> This suggestion that sound and the spoken word are aligned with the haptic is essential to my understanding of the Romantic-Gothic.

Verbal travelling is a recurring feature in such narratives, as demonstrated by the consistent and persistent use of narration in each film.<sup>102</sup> Here, we can also include Romantic-Gothic silent—or rather, voiceless—films, like Jean Epstein's *La chute de la maison Usher* (1928), where a man approaches the house on a 'dull, dark, and soundless day' and Leni's *The Cat and the Canary* (1927), where an unnamed narrator tells the audience about 'the grotesque mansion of an eccentric millionaire'. In early films, it is customary to offer the narration in the third person, that is, the narrator is usually omniscient and non-diegetic. This is less frequent in sound films, but happened on occasion nonetheless. Two such exceptions are *Portrait of Jennie* and *Juliette ou la clef des songes*. Narration is employed sparingly in the films conveying from the outset a tone of intimacy in the story we see and/or hear, so that we feel as though we are eavesdropping on a private conversation and thereby crossing some invisible boundary of decency. This is particularly so when the words come to us in the first person, as in *Rebecca*, *The Uninvited*, *Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti et al., 1945), *The Woman on the Beach* (Jean Renoir, 1947), *Secret Beyond the Door*, *Corridor of Mirrors*, *Laura*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, and *Sunset Blvd*, for example, all of which start with a narration. With the exception of the last two titles, the voice-over in those films consists in the main character's recounting of a dream or nightmare. We are therefore led into these narratives and their stories via the human voice and the memories it verbalises. In some works, this also means that the audience enters the lives of the characters through the ephemerality of sound and the mistiness of memory at its most fragile: when it

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> As a side note, it is worth remarking that words can be approached not only as verbal but also as optic signs in the narratives. Given the close relationship between literature (particularly the novel) and the Romantic-Gothic mode there is a lot to be said about the figuration of the written word on the screen (in letters, notes, and postcards, for instance) in both sound and silent film, where intertitles express the verbal visually.

strives to remember dreams and to re-capture the moments conceived of whilst asleep. In the films I mentioned above, speech first appears as an acousmatic and extra-diegetic voice that is nonetheless soon revealed to be a diegetic voice-off. In those moments, the voice attains a peculiar status, for we are then dealing with a voice that has become autonomous, that seems to reach out to us from beyond—a disembodied voice that crosses communicative limits and promotes the exploration of the sensory through the linguistic.<sup>103</sup> The opening sequence of *Secret Beyond the Door* illustrates this point well. In a letter to Lotte Eisner, Lang wrote: ‘I am experimenting with using superimposed sound for the “thought voices” of the leading characters, and I find the idea intriguing to work out’.<sup>104</sup> Lang decided to have the film begin with a flashback to Celia’s wedding day in which she first recounts a recurrent dream she has had and then starts explaining the events that led her to marrying someone whom, after all, she still regards as a stranger. ‘I remember long ago I read a book that told the meaning of dreams. It said that if a girl dreams of a boat or a ship, she will reach a safe harbour, but if she dreams of daffodils, she is in great danger’. As she utters these words, we are looking at a water surface where a ripple effect forms. The rest of the image is blurred until the camera starts panning to the left and we perceive a small paper boat floating into the centre of the frame. As the camera continues to pan left, the paper boat disappears from view and a series of daffodils takes its place on the screen. Elisabeth Bronfen’s description of the vocal aspect in the same initial sequence completes my readings.

After Celia has named the two choices open to her in relation to her Romantic desire, the tone of her dreamy, seductive voice suddenly changes. With a lighter and almost sharp intonation, she interrupts her own ominous anticipation at the exact same moment that Lang cuts from the murky surface of the water to an image of church bells ringing. As though she were scolding herself, Celia

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<sup>103</sup> In the case of *Sunset Blvd* it truly is a voice from beyond that reaches out to the audience: it is the dead narrator the one who posthumously recalls and re-voices the events leading up to his death.

<sup>104</sup> Lotte Eisner, *Fritz Lang*, trans. Gertrud Monder, New York: Da Capo, 1986, p. 275.

exclaims: ‘But this is no time for me to think of danger. This is my wedding day!’ Celia’s voice-over reveals another piece of appropriated knowledge: the folk wisdom that on her wedding day the bride should have something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue. With this seemingly benign antidote to the ominous dream imagery, Lang finally moves to the magnificently decorated interior of a Mexican cathedral. ... [Before the altar] Celia’s voice once more changes in tone. In a whisper she describes the uncertain emotions she feels ... . All confidence and self-possession seem to have abandoned her ... .<sup>105</sup>

This account of *Secret Beyond the Door* makes clear the influence that Celia’s words and voice have on the way in which we apprehend the images: we do so through her speech, which is to say that we can see only through her voice. The boats and daffodils do not speak for themselves. Furthermore, Celia actualises the past by verbalising it: through her long soliloquy we learn about the events in her life leading up to that moment in the church. The voice is thus used to direct the viewer towards accepting a given understanding of narrative reality. Also, the changes in volume, tone, and intonation in turn point to a gap between that which is represented and the unsayable (that marrying Mark is a terrible mistake). Then, at a certain moment, the voice-off ceases to be just a voice-off and becomes an interior voice when we finally see Celia, standing before the altar.<sup>106</sup> Throughout the film, the audience travels through her memories guided by her words. Conversely, Tommy, in Minnelli’s *Brigadoon* (1954), provides another explicit example of verbal travelling, only in this case it is the character, rather than the audience, the one who travels via the words he hears: ‘So many things remind me of her. I’ll be talking with people and they might say one little word that opens the door to a memory for me’, says his voice-off towards the end of the film.

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<sup>105</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, ‘The Enigma of Homecoming: *Secret Beyond the Door*—Film Noir’s Celebration of Domestic Anxiety’, in Griselda Pollock and Victoria Anderson (eds), *Bluebeard’s Legacy: Death and Secrets from Bartók to Hitchcock*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 149-150.

<sup>106</sup> Anne Goliot-Lété remarks upon this fact as well in ‘Périls en la demeure: le “female gothic” hollywoodien’, in Jean-Loup Bourget and Jacqueline Nacache (eds), *Le Classicisme hollywoodien*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009, p. 148.

Suggestions of geographical and psychological voyaging in the films are, as we have seen, frequently conveyed by speech: the viewer travels through words and voices, and thereby through people and their memories. A closer look at another definitional characteristic of the act of speaking in the films is pertinent here: its connection to the visual. In fact, even when we do not have an off-screen voice, which, by definition, immediately associates sound with sight, words often lead to a travelling in between images. Indeed, as we have seen with the imaginary travels of Lisa with both her father and Stefan, there is an intrinsic visuality attached to the uttering of words. On this, we could state that, customarily, words, or the verbal, are associated with time, whereas images, or the visual, are typically tied with notions of space and place, in cinema as in real life. This is to say that we hear *now*, and that it is possible (and frequent) to hear a sound that cannot be placed, either momentarily or at all. In these examples, sound does not necessarily implicate place, since we can hear sounds whose source remains unknown (because it is unseen). We cannot, however, see what is not *here*, which is to say that vision needs place.

The relationship between those two triptychs—words/time/the ear and images/space/the eye—acquires another dimension when combined with an analysis of Romanticism and Gothicism as primarily sonic and visual movements, respectively. Dale Townshend considers that Romantic aesthetics is defined by a privileging of the voice over the visuality that characterises Gothic romance. He claims that the Romantics differentiated themselves from ‘the monstrosities of Gothic through a self-conscious rejection of its intensely visual aesthetic, establishing ... sound and the ear which hears it as the privileged organ of imaginative communication’.<sup>107</sup> I agree with Townshend’s distinction, according to which we can say that the emphasis on sound is

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<sup>107</sup> Dale Townshend, ‘Gothic Visions, Romantic Acoustics’, in Robert Miles (ed.), ‘Gothic Technologies: Visuality in the Romantic Era’, *Romantic Circles Praxis* (December 2005) <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/gothic/townshend/townshend.html> (accessed 17 May 2010).

typically Romantic, whereas the prominence of the visual is majorly Gothic. Following this line of reasoning, I argue that the concerted deployment of both instances is a defining feature of all Romantic-Gothic works.

Significantly, in the Romantic-Gothic, travelling verbally implicates not only sound (and thus the temporal), but also imagery (the spatial) and memory. Tellingly, in the English language, the strong connection between memory, psychological travelling, and sound is explicit in the verb 'to recall', in which the meaning of a verb synonymous with remembering directs us towards sound and the verbal specifically. It is often through words pronounced *here* that the characters are given the chance of embarking on a journey to re-construct past events and to re-create memories in the here and now. Implicit here is the observation that verbal travelling actualises people and their pasts. In the Romantic-Gothic, the bringing of the past into the narrative present is therefore not confined to the realms of the material, but can be conveyed by the ephemerality of sounds. Furthermore, these journeys that are made possible by virtue of language exist not just *when* they are told, that is, in the moment of their vocalisation, but also in the *where*, in that specific place *here* where the characters hear them now. The visual voyages set off by the verbal, however, may be kept from the audience, that is, they may take place strictly within the minds of the characters. This is illustrated in the following sequence from *Juliette ou la clef des songes*.

'Who wants souvenirs? Who wants memory?', asks an old merchant. He is travelling around the village with a packed cart selling antiques: postcards, photographs, photo albums, and a series of other second-hand objects. 'Travel photo albums!', exclaims Juliette. Michel, the protagonist, says they have no use for those things because they have not been anywhere yet. She, on the other hand, cannot let go of the album, grabs it, opens it, and lovingly stares at the pages, smiling. In her amnesic mind, each picture stands there as a testament and tribute to their love. The camera closes in

and frames Juliette and Michel together in a medium shot, looking at the pictures. As she looks at the series of photographs—at what were, in fact, someone else’s memories—she naively starts making up stories of her and Michel’s non-existent life together, one photograph after another. Speaking softly, she recounts everything she ‘remembers’: the places they have been to, the vacations they took, the hotels where they stayed, the parks where they walked, the museums they visited. Michel, who at first indulges in Juliette’s game of pretend, becomes increasingly disturbed by the amount of details she adds to the story and by the sheer joy she seems to be experiencing. He momentarily turns his back to the camera but quickly turns around again, as Juliette continues describing their travels. His face is now visibly worried: he has realised that this is no game, that Juliette wholeheartedly believes in her own words. Seconds after she puts the album back in the cart, she reaches for a shawl: ‘The shawl I wore in Seville! It pleased you so much. In the evening, when it was cool, I would put it over both our heads. You said my face looked different when I wore this shawl. Here it is now, the same face as before’, she says whilst putting the shawl over her head. ‘Do you remember it?’

Unable to bear the situation any longer, he grabs the shawl and tosses it to the ground, telling her to stop imagining their never-lived life. He wants them to create their own memories themselves. One might ask, however, whether Juliette was not doing exactly that. According to Michel, they should create their own memories by embodying them, that is, by experiencing them first-hand in the real, sensuous world. That which Juliette was doing, in turn, was in fact re/collecting memories that were not her own based solely on the indexicality of their pictorial remains. Her travels take place only in that ephemeral moment in time when she voices them and in a space created in her imagination after the places she has just seen in the photographs. Voicing her dreams, she takes her listeners (Michel, the vendor, and the audience) along with

her. We understand from this sequence that memory can be pursued beyond the mind: although she does not know/remember the people in the photos, Juliette delights in taking possession of their memories—memories that are right there, in her hands.

My understanding of memory here is closely related to the work of Edward S. Casey on the subject. The author indicates three examples of remembering that ‘are not exclusively mentalistic, representational, or recollective’: body memory, place memory, and commemoration.<sup>108</sup> All of these forms of memory are intimately entwined in the films, as we are beginning to see. Casey isolates place memory as a pivotal, though often neglected, phenomenon, and defines it as the way in which the past can be reanimated by both our remembering concrete places and our going through them. In other words, place memory relates to dwellings that are psychological (‘remembering concrete places’) and physical (‘going through them’). Place memory, I would add, is deeply rooted in sound: in the sounds and voices that are part of a place. Juliette’s words—words that carry not just sonic but also visual references—are, indeed, part of a larger concern of the Romantic-Gothic: the sonic space of the films, inclusive not only of voice, but of noise, sound effects, and music.<sup>109</sup> If language induces travelling (verbal or not), as I am arguing, so do all of these interconnected elements. It is consequently not surprising to observe the prolific use of leitmotifs, for instance, as key elements of the plot. For the moment, let us just analyse the way the voice of a character meets the music of the soundtrack.<sup>110</sup> If we concentrate on the leitmotif of *Portrait of Jennie*, we notice it is singularly peculiar, for it combines Bernard Herrmann’s haunting theremin music with mysterious lyrics: ‘Where I come from nobody knows/ and where I am going everything goes/ The wind blows, the sea flows/ and nobody knows’. Throughout the film, the lyrics (without musical accompaniment) are also repeated, which further

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<sup>108</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, pp. x-xi.

<sup>109</sup> The role of sound in the films will not be explored thoroughly for reasons of length.

<sup>110</sup> On this, see Chapter 4.

stresses their importance. Jennie's strange song reveals a deep concern not so much with the future, as would be expected, but rather with the uncertainty surrounding the past. Where is it going, this mobile past that moves back and forth in time *and* space? And which direction should it follow? 'Nobody knows' seems accurate enough an answer, were not most Romantic-Gothic heroes in large measure amnesiacs. Their past is oftentimes uncertain (most of them are orphans), whereas the present is played out in the never-clear distinction between reality and imagination. The future, in turn, is problematic as well, for if uncertainty surrounds the past, certainty pervades the future. The characters deal with a future that is certain (death) and to where 'everything goes' (into ultimate forgetfulness?). Because it is known, the future is partly desired (death will forever unite Romantic-Gothic lovers) and partly abhorred (the craving for some form of immortality pervades the tales). In light of this, journeying comprises, more so than the places and spaces to where one might go, those where one has been.

Following on from my readings of *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, and *Portrait of Jennie*, we can claim that travelling is often conceived of and experienced as a verbal game of make-believe, with imagination and oneirism in particular being regarded as a means of escaping from places to spaces—from the physicality of the here to the open-ended possibilities of abstractness. This, in turn, is exactly what cinema does: it travels through places and allows the viewers to experience different spaces. Continuing in this vein, we can draw a parallel between that which happens in Romantic-Gothics and what cinema does as a medium. Giuliana Bruno's play with the words 'voyeur' and 'voyageur' is worth paraphrasing here.<sup>111</sup> Departing from the idea that 'sight' and 'site' are inseparable concepts, Bruno argues that the spectator of a film cannot remain a simple 'voyeur', fixed in space, but must

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<sup>111</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, London: Verso, 2002. See also Giuliana Bruno, 'Site-seeing: Architecture and the Moving Image', *Wide Angle*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (1997), pp. 8-24.

become a ‘voyageur’, someone who travels through the moving images. I agree with Bruno in this respect: indeed, I believe we can say that the viewers of any cinematic work are, concurrently, ‘voyeurs’ and ‘voyageurs’. I would nonetheless add that this statement is particularly suited to describe the Romantic-Gothic mode, where the intensity of the travelling is such that it becomes the story itself. Both terms, in fact, define not only the spectator, but the characters as well: always voyeurs and voyageurs, looking, watching, but also searching and journeying. Up until this moment, I have been particularly interested in observing how that latter facet of the Romantic-Gothic—voyaging—manifests itself. A subsequent reading of *sensuousness and the face* in Chapters 3 and 4 will address the ‘voyeuristic’ dimension more directly.

### **Re/Collecting Objects, or Scattered Memories**

A dark projection room. Bursts of white light cut through the darkness as a Mickey Mouse cartoon is projected onto a screen in the background. We cannot perceive it whole, though: three projectors block our view from most of the narrative screen. Shot from a low angle, we notice two figures, two men—a younger one, standing with his back to the camera, and another sitting down behind a small table, looking up whilst pensively scratching his head. Cigarette in mouth, the older man murmurs: ‘Appletons, Appletons... Yeah, yeah, yeah’. The camera cuts to a medium shot of him. ‘There were four Appletons. That was in... 19 ... er... 02. They were clowns. They were very good, too’. A reverse shot reveals Eben, eager to learn about Jennie’s parents and, by consequence, her past. He kindly interrupts the old man, gently reminding him that he is only interested in a family with a high-wire act from 1910. Cutting again to a closer shot of Eben’s interlocutor, we realise that he will not abide by Eben’s wishes and continues his narrative as though he had not heard anything: ‘Then

there was, er, Mike and Pat Appleton. Irish. They did some songs and...'. Eben interrupts him once more, getting visibly impatient, and repeats: '1910'. 'Please', Pete begs him, 'let me do it my way. I have to go backwards and then start from the beginning, you see. Otherwise, I will not remember and I don't like not to remember. Then I'll think I'm getting a little, er, old, you see'. Eben apologises for the trouble he is causing, and the old man immediately replies: 'No trouble at all. I have a very good memory. It's only sometimes that I don't remember things very well'. He thinks for a second and then adds: 'Clara will know'. No sooner has he uttered this last sentence than the soundtrack changes, mirroring Eben's renewed hopes of finding the truth about Jennie's fate. From the beginning of their conversation and up until that instant, there was an entertaining song playing on the soundtrack, suitable to the mobile background of the Disney picture against which the characters had been talking. At the mention of Clara's name, however, a theremin invades the sonic space with Jennie's leitmotif. Eben says goodbye to the old doorman and rushes out.

A fade out/fade in puts us now in Clara's living room. She is taking a large photo album from a chest, and Eben quickly sits down at a table to look through the pages. Clara finds the trapeze act and, right there, facing down, stuck between the pages of the album, is another picture. Eben grabs it and turns it to him. The camera zooms in fast on the picture: it is a photograph of a young Jennie, to Eben's utter disbelief. That proved that the girl he had been seeing had lived—and died—many years ago. As soon as the figure in the picture is revealed, just as in the previous scene with Pete, Jennie's haunting leitmotif fills the soundtrack. 'She was a darling little girl, with big, sad eyes,' Clara recalls. Continuing their conversation, Eben learns that Jennie's parents had been killed when a wire broke during their act, and that Jennie was there when it happened. Eben then thanks Clara for her time, to which she immediately replies: 'No, thank *you*, Mr Adams. It isn't often that I have the chance to share my memories. I do hope you

find Jennie'. This sharing of memories between Clara and Eben turns out to be a very significant leap forward in his tireless journey of tracking Jennie's identity. He will soon learn everything there is to know about her past life, which, nonetheless, will change nothing: Jennie will still be caught in a violent storm and will still drown. But Eben will find a way to immortalise her by painting her portrait.

There is one striking feature in the sequences described above that distinguishes Pete from Clara: the way they access memory. Pete never does remember the 'right' Appletons, but manages to direct Eben to Clara, who is sure to have known them. The interesting point with regard to Pete's inability to recall is actually his process of recollection, however flawed. The old doorman searches the most recondite areas of his memory and goes on talking about other previous families of performers, insisting that he must remember things this way—always from the beginning. In that room, the light emanating from the darkness, which, in a different context, would probably stand as a metaphor for knowledge, produces instead the opposite effect. It seems to obfuscate the mind of the character and to obliterate his memory. All that seems to be there is the memory of cinema, represented by the black-and-white Mickey Mouse cartoon. Pete, in truth, is just as memoryless then as Juliette in the Land of Oblivion. Another issue to retain is the fact that Pete tries to remember not by relying on visual media, but rather on memory alone. On the other hand, Clara's journey through memory relies on photographs, and the acts of holding the album and looking at the pictures are enough to enable her to retrieve her memories. Assigning appropriate imagery to a memory, then, might be the only way to ensure remembering.

As our investigation has thus far shown us, Romantic-Gothic geographies involve a series of related aspects that concern, in large measure, memory and *where* and *how* we remember, whether that be by means of visual imagery or heard sound. Let us now approach memory by examining how it becomes a form of spatialising objects

and, conversely, by observing how objects can memorialise someone's absentness in the here and now. Earlier, I mentioned my interest in researching places and spaces that have been academically understudied. One such place is the space occupied by objects, such as Clara's photographs, in the narratives. It is important to assess the role of determined objects within the films in order to analyse the mediation of memories and death established between the materiality of those objects and the dwelling bodies of the characters. My aim is to foreground the interdependence of said objects, the self, and his or her memories, whilst at the same time investigating the way this relationship constructs and articulates specific memory places. Certain *topoi* and objects, I argue, act as memory accumulators, insistently actualising the past in such a way that the simultaneity of 'presents' this creates puts into question the notion of the past as an unequivocal basis for the present and future.

A typical feature of the films resides exactly in the foregrounding of the past as paralleling the present. 'The past', Philip Rosen writes, 'is to be comprehended and constituted on the basis of perceiving something of it—seeing, holding, reading, contemplating objects in the present that actually existed in the past'.<sup>112</sup> In this respect, the sensuous contact with photographs, sculptures, records, and portraits, for example, precludes forgetfulness by reinstating the past into the lingering present. This is not, however, just a matter of concomitancy of temporalities, for the Romantic-Gothic past is mobile and should not be addressed as something that has passed, but as something that passes, that travels between a there/then and a here/now. It combines the ability of both interfering with the present and influencing future situations. The appearance of Captain Gregg in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, for instance, changes Lucy's life forever. Looked at in this way, the past does not consist of a series of organised events, whose

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<sup>112</sup> Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 45.

stability and historical linearity make it safe for display, as it happens in museums, for example. It is, instead, an ever-evolving and ever-changing temporal and spatial entity, which, in the end, makes it almost impossible to discuss the past as past. We might refer to *Corridor of Mirrors* as a literal example of this situation. The film begins and ends in Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London, where Mifanwy is going to meet with her lover. Only Paul is now dead, a wax figure, a double of himself, which nonetheless still has the ability to disrupt the present and influence the future. Paul continues to have a strong hold on those that knew him. Mortimer, Paul's manservant, is there at the museum to warn Mifanwy against Veronica, the housemaid, from whom she has been receiving threatening letters. Mortimer reveals that Veronica has been visiting Paul's effigy every night, just as the museum is about to close, to talk to him alone. From afar, Mortimer and Mifanwy observe as Veronica, like clockwork, enters the room where the wax figure of Paul is placed. 'I'm late, Paul', she says. 'We haven't got much time.' As she speaks, nervously, she is shot from a high angle, creating the effect that Paul is looking at her. This unusual subjective camerawork is completed when the camera offers a reverse shot of Paul's wax model, as though he were talking to her. This strange dialogue of looks, silence, and words has immediate repercussions: we realise that Veronica is the one who committed the crime for which Paul was hanged. His presence, or, otherwise, the physicality of his memory (the wax figure), leads not only to Paul's posthumous acquittal, but also to another death (thus influencing current events): it is not long before we learn that Veronica has killed herself after confessing publicly to the murder. This example demonstrates that the past travels and conflates with present events, which, in turn, usually unfold into a drastic conclusion. This permanent dialogue between temporalities generates a precarious tension that undermines the characters' attempts at making sense of what goes on around them. Memories, in turn, are formed in the midst of the uncertainty created by this peculiar spatial and temporal dialectics.

This points to the singularities of memory in the films, and especially of the places and spaces where we can find memory.

The human reliance on objects as safe storage for memories signals a well-known phenomenological position. As Adrian Forty remarks, ‘the Western tradition of memory since the Renaissance has been founded upon an assumption that material objects, whether natural or artificial, can act as the analogues of human memory’.<sup>113</sup> He goes on to say that, throughout the ages, there has been a wide consensus regarding the possibility of objects coming to stand for memories. I argue, however, that in the case of the Romantic-Gothic, the relationship between memories and objects denotes some singular specificities, namely that memory is here more than just entrusted to objects; to put it otherwise, objects actually become physical forms of memory for the characters. I consider the portrait of Venetia that Paul worships in *Corridor of Mirrors* to be an example of this kind of object. Her memory does not merely reside in her portrait, but is, in fact, that portrait. In my analysis, I am therefore not so much interested in how objects in film have been regarded as storage for recollections, but rather in how they are themselves memories. Jacques Rancière addresses memory in this respect, asserting that it ‘is an orderly collection, a certain arrangement of signs, traces and monuments. ... the Great Pyramid, the tomb par excellence, doesn’t keep Cheop’s memory. It *is* that memory’.<sup>114</sup> This is to say, then, that it is possible to analyse memory as *something* that is materialisable via objects, and that objects consequently provide *placeness* to an Other’s memory. Through objects, memory (which is usually looked at as a space inside one’s mind and therefore out of time and space) is made concrete. Understanding memory as a matter of concreteness involves a necessary analytical distance from psychoanalytic models of memory and is more aligned with a phenomenological

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<sup>113</sup> Adrian Forty, ‘Introduction’, in Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting*, Oxford: Berg, 2001, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006, p. 157 (my emphasis).

research framework. Freudian theories state that nothing is ever forgotten, but merely repressed by the Ego.<sup>115</sup> This being the case, memory could never, on the one hand, be kept inside objects and, on the other, physical objects could never in any way replace the mental processes of memory. Informed by a different understanding of the notion of memory, I put forward a phenomenology of the Romantic-Gothic according to which I analyse memory as *placeable*—as something tangible and therefore tactile. One can grasp it and make use of it.

Investigating objects-as-memories, or memory-objects, as I shall call them, brings about formal and stylistic implications for the narrative. Functioning primarily as a means to protect the self against oblivion, the memory-objects offer the past a space where it can exist, albeit in a different form. Venetia exists no longer as a person, but as a careful creation of brushstrokes and hues. It adds to this that, as imprinted memories, objects embody the immortality that their owner, as a human being, could not enjoy. This observation links to another memory-object in *Corridor of Mirrors*: Paul's wax effigy. Immortalised in the space of the museum, Paul remains present in the imaginations of the visitors. The durability of memory is hence stretched, for memory is not lost with death, but lingers on, resisting erosion. Despite a character being dead (or presumed so) in the narrative present, the viewers are given the chance of glimpsing into his or her past by means of the objects that were once part of his or her life. These objects therefore represent signs of possession and compile within them the remnant traces of someone's presence in a particular time in a specific place. In Preminger's film, Laura's memory has been fragmented into the many objects in her flat. The portrait of her face and her apartment allow us to experience what her life was like and, most importantly, what she was like as a person.

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<sup>115</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. A. A. Brill, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1922.

The fragmentation of memory is materially and visually exposed in the many personal belongings of the dead other, which may be contained in a single place or may be scattered around the house and its surroundings. In both instances, however, these objects are usually allocated a special place. This is accomplished in three ways. To begin with, the objects may remain in a room exactly as the dead person left them, originating a sort of memorial chamber where the characters seem to be forced to pay homage to the absent one, as in *Rebecca*, where the eponymous character's office remains as it were when her dweller was still alive, or else the objects may be hidden away, in which case their unearthing triggers a series of events with catastrophic repercussions. This is true of George Cukor's *Gaslight* (1944), where the portrait of the heroine's aunt, Alice Alquist, has been stored in the attic, away from prying eyes. Finally, they may be kept in plain sight as a tribute to the dead, in the form of a portrait, for instance. Portraits are allocated a privileged place, hanging vigilantly on a wall from where they dominate space. I use the word 'space' because it is not just the place, that is, the room where the painting hangs, that is marked by its power. The wholeness of the house and its surroundings seems to centre upon the portrait, inasmuch as every room appears to lead to the one where that materialised memory hangs. The lives of the characters rotate as well around the portrayed Other and, therefore, around the object where the Other is now embodied. In this regard, we notice how much the portrait is able to manipulate feelings and force decisions. As we shall see further along, the portrait demands to be noticed and exudes a magnetic force that draws the characters and the viewers into looking at it. The coming into sensorial contact with a portrait is tantamount to the creation of space in the Romantic-Gothic.

Going back to Laura's apartment, we realise as well that objects create multiple niches of stillness within the passing of time from where the apperception of her life becomes possible: her home looks exactly as she left it, with every object where it used

to be. It is not surprising, then, that a powerful sense of anachronism pervades the narratives. Every Romantic-Gothic story has a penchant for the old, the hand-me-down, and the relic. The past always lingers in Romantic-Gothic places, and the characters often refer to the feeling that time seems to have suddenly frozen: ‘Time seems to stand still when you wait for everyone else to sleep,’ says Celia in *Secret Beyond the Door*. In Minnelli’s *Undercurrent* (1946), Ann makes an identical commentary about experiencing time as frozen. When she finally, but unknowingly, meets Michael, whose memory she has been striving to re/collect, she is standing in the middle of his small home. ‘It looks... well, as though it were waiting for someone. I had a feeling coming in, that time was standing still’, she tells him. ‘Yes, but time doesn’t stand still anywhere, does it?’ ‘Yes, it does’, she replies.

This atmosphere of stillness does not mean, as one might be led into thinking, that memory is stagnant. On the contrary, it does not lie still in objects, but rather imbues its material host with a certain kind of movement and thus participates actively in the narratives. Take the example of Olwen’s memory-objects—the portrait and the piano—in *While I Live*, which occupy a privileged place in the living room where most of the action develops. Their striking visibility puts them on the centre of the action. Another example is found in Epstein’s portrayal of the Usher family house. The active presence of memory in that space is so overpowering that the whole edifice collapses under its weight. In this way, we can speak of a contagion of memory, given that memory-objects do not just perpetuate someone’s *undeadness*, but actually transfer parts of the dead Other on to a perceiving, travelling subject or to nearby places. Objects, in this regard, might be said to connect the dead and the living both mentally and physically. As posthumous reminders of someone, objects externalise memories, thus forming a ligature between person, place, and space that offers a sort of pictorial guide or map to an actual yet imaginary life. Actual, because there was indeed a real

someone from whom that memory was extracted; imaginary, because the one who is compelled to collect its vestiges will always use imagination to fill the gaps in his or her knowledge of the Other's life—an Other whom they have never met and never will.<sup>116</sup> In the re/collected memory of the Other, imagination, then, often weighs just as much as actual lived experience.

Over the last two sections, we have come to understand the extent to which the Romantic-Gothic implicates mobility (of the body and in the mind), and that its movements are specifically directed towards searching and finding—finding a place and a time, finding someone, finding memory's traces and their places in space. Journeying incessantly whilst attempting to re-assemble a memory, Romantic-Gothic characters are, in this respect, depicted as obsessive re/collectors who take as their task the reconstitution or reconstruction of a past. 'Anyone could become obsessed with the past', says Scottie in *Vertigo*. Indeed, in spaces thoroughly inhabited by or saturated with memory, there is an urge to gather and construct a 'collective' memory of a specific individual. In other words, the films are based on piecing together an individual's identity, in rescuing it from its present fragmentation at spatial, temporal, social, and individual levels. Taking all this into consideration, a more precise way of describing memory in the films would be to move towards the idea of that which I call a remembering discourse, in the sense that the plot of the films consists in a long journey of remembering through processes of re/collection. Re/collecting—as the gathering of the actual, the material—is indeed the primary reason for the spatial, temporal, and psychological travels of the characters in the Romantic-Gothic world. If memory has been reduced to a series of bits and pieces that are no longer placed together, a memory is never whole when it is found but always partial and incomplete: it invariably calls

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<sup>116</sup> There are exceptions to this, like *Portrait of Jennie* and *Laura*. In both films, the re/collector gets to meet the person whose memory he or she has been searching after throughout the narrative.

upon a journey of re/collection that contextualises it. This journey is spatial at core, in that it supposes the movement of the body—the teleological movement of the search. It might begin, though, as a psychological journey that later translates into an actual quest for memory in the physical world. ‘I have to find something’, Jennie tells Eben in Dieterle’s film. ‘Like what?’, he asks. ‘I’m not sure, but I think I’ll know someday. I think I’ll know when I find it.’ She pauses briefly and then adds: ‘Do you know what? I think you’ll know too’. It is precisely this incompleteness and this *lostness* within the self, along with the somewhat paradoxical belief in the eventual achievement of some kind of wholeness, fulfilment, or peace of mind, that motivates the search. Given that the memory-objects that originate these movements possess their own temporality (an old newspaper, in the case of *Portrait of Jennie*), journeys of remembering are temporal as well. The question now is the way(s) in which memory can be re-gathered via objects. As we shall see, acts of re/collection in the Romantic-Gothic are based on a complex sensorial dynamics and depend on the senses, particularly touch, to be triggered.

### **The Aesthetics of the Tangible**

Ich werde Dich in meine Arme schliessen ... meine Hände werden über Dein Haar gleiten ... und ich werde fühlen, wie Dein Körper unter meinen Händen erzittert...<sup>117</sup>

from *Orlacs Hände* (Robert Wiene, 1924)

As Mark Paterson reminds us, touch ‘is a sense of communication’.<sup>118</sup> The contagion of memory to which I referred earlier is, in actuality, propagated through the senses, through the exploration of a tangible here. In Romantic and Gothic narratives,

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<sup>117</sup> ‘I want to hold you in my arms... my hands will glide over your hair... and I will feel your body trembling beneath my hands’ (my translation).

<sup>118</sup> Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies*, Oxford: Berg, 2007, p. 1.

and later on in the Romantic-Gothic mode, the characters are often seen manipulating objects, a gesture often represented by the touching of walls, handrails, curtains, and so on, as if the cumulative effect of this repeated action might conjure up the absent person who once belonged to that place.<sup>119</sup> The Romantic-Gothic can in this respect be read in the light of that which Paul Rodaway has termed ‘sensuous geography’, that is: the senses, specifically, in the case of the Romantic-Gothic, the sense of touch, constitute a privileged lens through which to address the physical rapport between the characters and their surroundings.<sup>120</sup> The main reason for this is explained in a brief passage from Rose Marie San Juan:

When a hand moves, there is always something of the stranger in it. Perhaps it is because the hand rarely seems to be in sync with the rest of the body, frequently betraying the face or undermining the voice, and always casting doubt on the unifying power of consciousness. The hand has a tendency to stray, one moment disregarding the resolve of the body to which it is connected, the next directing it as if it knows better.<sup>121</sup>

The otherness in the hand suits the Romantic-Gothic world in stressing the idea of defamiliarisation, that is, the transformation of habitual perceptions (of body parts, in this case) into something strange or foreign. The films are replete with manual imagery, often shot in close-up, of hands carrying keys, holding mirrors, opening tombs, turning door handles, searching drawers, and strangling women; hands wearing gloves, caressing rings, clutching knives, and holding lit candles; hands that hurt and comfort, that reach out but cannot touch. The integration of the sensory element into my research allows me to call into question the traditional boundaries between the eye and the hand, and between the (mobile) self and the (static) objects. Note that these boundaries are

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<sup>119</sup> A historical approach would perhaps see here reflected—in the proliferation of hands in Romantic and Gothic fiction—the context of the intense urbanisation and industrialisation taking place at the time, specifically the mechanisation of work, whereby manual labour was replaced with the use of machinery.

<sup>120</sup> Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Rose Marie San Juan, ‘The Horror of Touch: Anna Morandi’s Wax Models of Hands’, *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2011), p. 435.

generally considered from an angle of distance rather than proximity. Jacques Aumont discusses the haptic as opposed to the optic, and claims that the hand ‘assures the contact with the material world that the fine arts aim to materialise’, whilst the eye ‘surveys, compares, and foresees but always at a distance, because an eye cannot *touch* anything’.<sup>122</sup> If we follow this line of reasoning, we can say that there is a greater proximity between the space that an object occupies and the hand than between the eye and that same space. I argue instead that, in the Romantic-Gothic, the issue is qualitative and should not be addressed in terms of the degree of closeness or separation. The percipient subjects in the films can, in fact, touch a painting with their eyes just as effectively as they can touch an object by holding it. Take the example of Scottie in *Vertigo*, who quietly watches as Madeline/Judy contemplates ‘The Portrait of Carlotta’. The camera follows his look and stresses his surprise in finding the similarities shared by the two women. The use of quick zoom-ins adds a dramatic dynamic to the images, which change quickly between the bouquet on the gallery bench and the one Carlotta has in the portrait, and between the women’s identical hairstyles. In other films, the duration of the shot may also offer the characters (and the audience) the possibility of experiencing the portrait manually through the visual by presenting their careful sensorial exploration of the physical world. Yi-Fu Tuan writes that ‘most tactile sensations reach us indirectly, through the eyes’, and that seeing and touching ‘are so closely wed that even when we are looking at a painting it is not clear that we are attending solely to its visual qualities’.<sup>123</sup> In this regard, I argue that at the heart of Romantic-Gothic narratives is an intricate synaesthetic process, that is, a cross-modal or inter-sensory exchange between inner and outer reality during the course of which the characters perceive places, people, and objects as intimately connected to their sensate

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<sup>122</sup> Jacques Aumont, *De l’Esthétique au présent*, Bruxelles: De Boeck Université, 1998, p. 20.

<sup>123</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, ‘The Pleasures of Touch’, in Constance Classen (ed.), *The Book of Touch*, Oxford: Berg, 2005, pp. 76-77.

bodies. In the cinema, and in the Romantic-Gothic mode in particular, there is, as we have seen, the creation of a sensorial space for the characters, that is, a space where their senses are shown to interact with the objects around them.<sup>124</sup> What is essential to understand with regard to this is that the construction of such a space does not happen by chance. Given that these are stories narrating journeys of a search, the perusal of book pages, the grasping of hands and arms, the meticulous inspection of rooms, and the destruction of objects are all vital parts of the films. Borrowing the expression from Georges Braque, we can call this space of objects—of things—‘tactile space’ or ‘manual space’.<sup>125</sup>

Elizabeth D. Harvey starts her edited collection of essays on touch and tactility in early modern culture by observing that touch ‘occupies a complex, shifting, and sometimes contradictory position in the representation of the five senses in Western culture’.<sup>126</sup> Throughout history, Harvey explains, touch has been depicted in myriad ways, either hailed as the most invaluable sense or, conversely, as the basest.<sup>127</sup> The boundaries of intimacy and indecency, comforting and hurting, have been closely attached to touch, even more so than to the eye. In cinematic narratives, shots of hands have been present from the beginning. One reason that hands abound in silent films is ‘because they speak’, Jean-Louis Leutrat claims.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps the most extreme use of hand imagery in early film is accomplished in *Orlacs Hände*, where a pianist loses both hands in a train crash and his doctor replaces them with those of a known robber and murderer who had just been executed. As the plot develops, the pianist starts to lose

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<sup>124</sup> In this thesis, studying the sensory engagement of the films is to understand the interaction between the bodies of the characters, the environment they inhabit, and the objects that are part of their world. Unlike frequent theories of embodiment that focus on the body of the spectator/viewer as the place where emotion is experienced, I will, unless otherwise noted, analyse the bodies on the screen exclusively.

<sup>125</sup> Alex Danchev, *Georges Braque: A Life*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. cxxxiv.

<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth D. Harvey, ‘Introduction: The “Sense of All Senses” in Elizabeth D. Harvey (ed.), *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Vie des fantômes: le fantastique au cinéma*, Paris: Éditions de l’Étoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, 1995, p.85.

control over his mind and his hands, certain that his damned, cursed hands will, eventually, begin to kill. The powerful visuality of hands in cinema is not, however, exclusive of early (German) films. I add to Leutrat's statement above that hands also 'speak' in Romantic-Gothic sound cinema. In effect, the addition of diegetic sound did not diminish the impact of certain images. On the contrary: in many cases, it actually favoured the combination of the senses and thus heightened suspense. 'You see, I had a dream', says the unexpected and unwanted guest at *Wuthering Heights*. 'I thought I heard a voice calling. I reached out to close the shutter and something touched me. Something cold and clingy like an icy hand. And then I saw her, a woman'. The man was therefore first drawn to the window due to the sound of a voice calling (hearing). Nonetheless, no sooner had he reached the window than he felt a gelid hand grasping his (touch). Then, suddenly, looking out of the window, he distinguished the shape of a woman (sight). Afterwards, he continues, 'my senses must have been disordered because the falling snow shaped itself into what looked like a phantom'. This is an interesting case of a character remarking upon his synaesthetic experience of an uncanny event.

The aliveness of the memories to which I referred earlier and which attests to the inescapability from the memory of the Other is conveyed by appealing to the sensorial field. Sight and touch usually prevail over the other senses, although sound and smell detain a prominent role in some of the narratives as well. Sound (rather than images or objects) and the ear (rather than the eye or the hand) provide in many cases the linking thread between the self and a memory. Note the piano pieces to which Lisa so eagerly listened and that, month after month, allowed her to re/collect Stefan's memory in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. In *Undercurrent* it is also music that first pushes Ann into finding out all she can about her husband's brother, Michael, who has mysteriously disappeared. These titles, of course, are just a few examples. It is important, however, to

also mention a film where memory is re/collected through smell. ‘It was my mother’s favourite perfume. My father sent me a bottle before he died. I’ve made it last a long time’, says Stella to Roderick in Lewis Allen’s *The Uninvited* (1944). The cherished perfume that smells of mimosa is preserved in a handkerchief that belonged to her mother. Throughout the film, before each strange event happens, the characters notice a distinctive smell of mimosa in the room. Analysed more closely, these examples furthermore call attention to the fact that the senses not only play a prominent role in the films, but that the perception of the external world is experienced in a complex matrix of sensations where one sense immediately calls up another.

Hitchcock’s *Rebecca* is a useful case in point. At each step of her journey in Manderley mansion, the new Mrs de Winter keeps touching—with her eyes and with her hands—all that had once belonged to her husband’s first wife, Rebecca. From the moment she first steps into the monumental entrance hall, her eyes and fingers restlessly peruse every single thing around her: every room, every object, every person, as if by doing so she would be brought closer to unravelling the secrets of the past with which she has been forced to come into contact. Rebecca is everywhere in the house: from the hand-sewn monograms on the handkerchiefs at the dining table to the faithful dog that lies down by the door to the bedroom the heroine dares not enter. Overall, throughout the film, Mrs de Winter consistently behaves as a frightened spectator of Rebecca’s life, a surrogate for her husband’s dead wife. Moreover, she always appears to be out of place, never knowing where to go or how to behave within the walls of Manderley.

Still trying to learn how to be the proper mistress of the house, the camera follows her from behind in a medium shot as she enters the so-called ‘morning room’, the place where Rebecca wrote her correspondence. The camera stops its movement by the door, so that Mrs de Winter walks slowly to the middle of the room alone. The long shot offers the audience the view of the office as we imagine it looked like when

Rebecca used it. The dog that was resting in front of the fireplace leaves the room immediately when he senses the presence of the intruder. The camera focuses on the animal leaving, cutting next to a medium shot of Mrs de Winter's face, visibly troubled by the creature's hostility. As she carefully approaches the desk near the window, a short subjective shot reveals the layout of the objects on top of it. She physically approaches those objects not only with her eyes, but also with her hands, when she picks up an address book marked with a capital 'r'. She opens it but the sight of Rebecca's handwriting on the first page seems to be too much for her. No sooner had she sat down than she is startled by the sound of a ringing phone. The situation that follows is indicative of her maladjustment and inadequateness in her new role: someone on the other end asks for Mrs de Winter, and, in all her naiveté, she replies: 'Oh, I'm afraid you've made a mistake. Mrs de Winter's been dead for over a year'. As soon as she puts the phone down, she realises what she has just said, but it is too late—Mrs Danvers, the housemaid, was standing by the door and has heard the whole thing. When she enters the room, Mrs de Winter almost jumps out of her chair. The camera then focuses on Mrs Danvers and tracks backwards, framing her in a medium shot as she approaches the desk. Mrs de Winter looks absolutely terrified and, throughout their conversation, she behaves like a child who has just been caught doing something she ought not have been doing. Quietly, she grabs the arms of the chair and does not let go until Mrs Danvers has left. Next, she opens the address book, and stares at it for a while, her hands on her cheeks, her elbows on the desk. Shortly after, a different notebook catches her eye. When she reaches for it with both hands, however, she inadvertently knocks down a small white porcelain figurine that breaks as soon as it hits the floor. Not quite knowing what to do, she gets up, picks up the pieces off the floor, opens a drawer, hides them under some letters, and hurriedly closes it. The camera focuses on her hands, clumsily trying to hide the broken pieces. Overwhelmed, Mrs de Winter sits down and

again grabs the arms of the chair. Surrounded by Rebecca's memories, she feels, acts, and is treated like an outsider, a trespasser that has no business being in Manderley.

With this example, something besides the centrality of sensuousness becomes clear: that the touching of certain objects opens up a kind of Pandora's box that unleashes the events upon which the stories will build. The sequence above is one of many where Mrs de Winter's persistence in taking possession of Rebecca's things precipitates a series of events that will culminate in her husband detesting her. Similarly, this perilous yet entrancing quality to the coming into contact via touch applies as well to *Portrait of Jennie*, where the moment Eben sees, stops, and grabs an old newspaper coincides with Jennie's first appearance in the film. All that follows, in a way seems to have originated in that instant of manual contact with the object.

The process of re/collecting a memory, as we now begin to realise, is not as straightforward as it might at first seem. In other words, it is not an unproblematic journey of gathering dispersed objects that will, in the end, allow the re/collector unrestricted access to the memory of the dead. A closer look will, in effect, reveal that the gradual re/collection of memories involves an important component that is added by the mind of the dwelling self: imagination. *Laura* is paradigmatic here, for, in his head, the detective idealises the woman in the portrait, aided by the objects in her apartment and by the words of those who knew her. Because the re/collector is limited to remembering the consciousness of the Other through a variety of memory-objects and sounds, a certain degree of loss will inevitably happen—a loss that is mitigated by the self's use of imagination, with which he or she reconstructs people and past events. This means that when memories become objects (or vice-versa), they are never fully re/collectable, that is, a transformation inevitably takes place when the memory of the Other is apprehended by the self. Like a tale that is passed down from generation to generation, so is one's memory altered and subjectified over time as it is remembered.

Object by object, place by place, a new memory of someone is, then, slowly put together—a memory that is neither completely fictional nor the exact memory of the dead Other. In the detective’s imagination, for instance, Laura has already become someone else: it is not her whom he sees in his dreams, but rather his patchwork version of what she must have been like.

### **Sensorial Journeys through Memory**

Fredric Jameson argues that ‘Baudelaire and Proust showed us how memories are part of the body ..., much closer to odour or the palate than to the combination of Kant’s categories’, or, he adds, ‘perhaps it would be better to say that memories are first and foremost memories of the senses, and that it is the senses that remember, not the “person” or personal identity’.<sup>129</sup> The senses would thus be able to remember even when the person cannot consciously do so. This conception of the senses as purveyors of memory is akin to my own readings of the Romantic-Gothic. Approaching sensation in connection to memory makes it possible to claim that memory can exist without identity, or that memory will prevail even in the eventuality of a loss of identity. Yet, the reverse does not happen: there is no identity without at least the vestige of any form of memory. On this, let me again refer to the inhabitants of the Land of Oblivion in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*: they do not know who they are because they have lost their declarative or explicit memory, that is, they are unable to consciously inspect memories of past events and to express them verbally. Specifically, declarative memory encompasses episodic and semantic memory systems, which broadly means that the

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<sup>129</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 2.

characters cannot remember any autobiographical details or episodes.<sup>130</sup> Juliette, as we have seen, addresses her condition by imagining herself to be whomever she pleases, based on other people's memory-objects, like a photo album or a shawl. Yet, although declarative memory is impaired and inaccessible, there are instances of remembering in the film when the retrieval of memory depends solely on the senses, and therefore on procedural memory. Procedural or implicit memory is a type of long-term memory (like declarative memory) that refers to 'the unconscious memory of skills and how to do things, particularly the use of objects or movements of the body'. These "body memories" are 'acquired through repetition and practice, and are composed of automatic sensorimotor behaviours that are so deeply embedded that we are no longer aware of them.'<sup>131</sup> One example that illustrates this is the accordion player in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, who has been deprived of declarative memory. Having arrived unexpectedly at a village where all of the inhabitants have lost their memory, Michel meets a strange accordion player. In confidence, he tells Michel that, for him, unlike for everyone else in the village, all has not been forgotten, all is not lost: memories come to him naturally when he plays. Perception through touch thus provokes recollection. In other words, the physical contact with objects is so powerful that it establishes a bridge between the self in the present and the self in the past, making the re/collection of one's own memory possible. I would go even further and claim that, in consonance with all I have been advocating so far, since his memory is not *in* the accordion, but is the accordion itself (and, consequently, the sounds it produces), tactile, audible, and visual perception may already be, in certain circumstances, an act of re/collection. In this respect, if we look closely at the verb 'to recollect' we notice that, just as 'recalling' implicates sound,

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<sup>130</sup> For more on declarative memory, see, for instance, Alan J. Parkin, *Memory: Phenomena, Experiment and Theory*, Oxford: Psychology Press, 1999, p. 48, and Bennett L. Schwartz (ed.), *Memory: Foundations and Applications*, London: SAGE Publications, 2011, pp. 144 and 323.

<sup>131</sup> Luke Mastin, 'Declarative (Explicit) & Procedural (Implicit) Memory', 2010, [http://www.human-memory.net/types\\_declarative.html](http://www.human-memory.net/types_declarative.html) (accessed 5 February 2014).

‘recollection’ implicates the senses as well; in this case, touch and the hand in particular.

*While I Live* provides another example of the endurance of procedural memory to the detriment of declarative memory. The film tells the story of two sisters, the oldest of whom exerts a dominating control over the other. Julia is envious of Olwen’s musical talent, and systematically forces her younger sibling into finishing a piano piece she is composing. Olwen, nevertheless, and much to Julia’s dismay, cannot seem to get the ending right. ‘All we need is the ending, and after that you may rest’, Julia tells her sister. That night, however, a sleepwalking Olwen jumps off a cliff to her death. The film then cuts to the living room where we had earlier witnessed the two sisters talking. Everything looks just the same, except it is now twenty-five years later. Old Julia sits by the radio, anxiously waiting to hear Olwen’s piece, which some composer had in the meantime taken up and finished. In the room with her are her nephew, Peter, and his wife, Christine. Yet, no sooner had the broadcasting began than a frantic knocking on the door unsettles everyone in the room. Moments before, we had perceived a spectral female figure emerging quietly from the mist in the garden outside and had watched her advancing towards the house. Peter immediately answers the desperate knocking, gets up and opens the door to let her in. The two spaces come together when a young (and, we soon learn, amnesiac) woman enters the living room in a trance and runs towards the closed piano. Realising that the piano is locked, the woman tries to force it open as if her life depended on it. As she hurriedly sits down, her fingers somehow magically find their way across the keys and start playing the film’s leitmotif, ‘The Dream of Olwen’. This example is highly evocative of the pervasiveness of the sensuous, namely touch and hearing. On the one hand, the music on the radio appears to have summoned this woman and, on the other, it is through the playing of music that she is able to express herself. The way she plays the piece leads Julia and her trusty servant, Nehemiah, to

believe that the unknown woman is the reincarnation of Olwen.<sup>132</sup> That unexpected guest might be unable to remember her personal identity, but her hands re/collect the memory of the Other—Olwen—for her; they encounter it in the piano. The piano's keyboard is the memory of the dead Olwen. By running the fingers over the keys, her memory is re-appropriated by a living human body. Additionally, the viewer witnesses an exchange of memories: the memory of Olwen for the memory of that other woman, a reporter who had been investigating the young pianist's life. The memory of the dead speaks higher, and Olwen takes control over the body of the reporter.

In the sequence from *While I Live* described above, the retrieval of memory by touch is, again, associated with the playing of music.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, the use of a musical instrument as a catalyst for memory is here associated with amnesia, just as in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*. With this, we realise that memory, touch, sound, objects, and also forgetting are very closely entwined. Furthermore, knowing now that re(-)membering is so dependent upon the ephemerality of perception, we understand why it is so challenging for the characters to re-assemble a memory. On this, let us go back briefly to that idea of amnesia, or, in other words, the frequent inability of the characters to remember people and events. I mentioned it earlier with regard to *Juliette ou la clef des songes* and *Portrait of Jennie*, but it is also true, as we have just seen, of *While I Live*. To be sure, sequences that display the Romantic-Gothic as a world peopled by a series of amnesia sufferers and nameless protagonists recur consistently in the course of the films.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The theme of reincarnation recurs in the Romantic-Gothic and also constitutes the focus of *Vertigo*. Here, Gavin Elster, in a malevolent orchestrated plan to murder his wife, Madeline, convinces former detective Scottie Ferguson that Judy Barton (hired as Madeline's look-alike) is actually Carlotta Valdes, his wife's great-grandmother.

<sup>133</sup> Regarding music and the profusion of shots of hands in the Romantic-Gothic, it is interesting to remark that the piano is the privileged musical instrument of the films, both diegetically and non-diegetically. There is, in fact, an impressive number of pianists/piano players in the films, a fact I will come back to.

<sup>134</sup> Identity will be addressed in Chapter 4.

The difficult or ultimately impossible recalling of someone or of an action has two possible explanations: remembering is not viable either because the characters have never experienced those events or met those people first-hand, as happens in the photo album sequence in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, where the heroine's mind dwells in second-hand memories, or because memory is flawed, as is the case in *Portrait of Jennie*, where the heroine cannot recall how she died and is therefore doomed to relive her own death year after year. When memory fails, I claim that it needs to be triggered by the senses in order to be recovered. If account is taken of the fact that our sensory registers, such as the tactile and the acoustical, are not mere passive stimuli receptors, but, as Rodaway claims, 'are actively involved in the structuring of that information and are significant in the overall sense of a world achieved by the sentient', the overarching question now relates to the ways in which sensory perception might reconfigure the tiered structure of reality in the films, or, more specifically, the ways in which the senses can shape narrative reality by interacting with death and the oneiric.<sup>135</sup> One way of investigating the relationship between the senses, death, and dreams is to look at the moment or space of the threshold.

### **Threshold Spaces and Liminal States**

The process of remembering I have been describing ultimately results in the creation of an in-between zone—in-between the living and the dead, speech and muteness, the actual memory of someone and its forever-incomplete re/collection by an alien consciousness. In this respect, Romantic-Gothic characters repeatedly find themselves caught in spatial, physical, psychological, sensorial, and temporal liminality,

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<sup>135</sup> Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies*, p. 4.

which further highlights their condition as spatio-temporal dwellers and in-betweens.<sup>136</sup> By co-relation, the boundary, limit, or threshold, is one of the most important spaces in the films. The central themes of Romantic-Gothic productions usually address different forms of liminality: the concept of purgatory, matters of supernaturalism, and images of revenants, for instance, all point towards either an intermediate space between places or an intermediate state between being and nothingness: a permanent state of becoming. Indeed, the films present us with the question of wholeness as opposed to incompleteness through the representation of creatures that are half-human, half-supernatural; half-alive, half-dead; half-real, half-imagined. Furthermore, its stories repeatedly allude to intermediate states, such as daydreaming and sleepwalking, and its climactic moments are frequently set in intermediate times of day, namely at dawn, twilight or sunset.<sup>137</sup>

Suggested here is the idea that the remembering discourse that structures the narratives places the heroes in the midst of a continuous and fluid process of personal metamorphosis. To put it otherwise, the characters do not remain indifferent to the discovery of the Other, and oftentimes transform themselves—their bodies and their minds—to become more like that Other. Such is the case with Mifanwy, in *Corridor of Mirrors*, who allows Paul to treat her like one of his mannequins. He welcomes her in his house and then gradually styles her in incredible detail to the image of his imaginary

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<sup>136</sup> Issues of liminality in Gothic studies were the focus of a series of publications and seminars led by researchers of 'The LIMEN group'. On this, see Manuel Aguirre, 'The Rules of Gothic Grammar', [http://www.limenandtext.com/research\\_nlp.html](http://www.limenandtext.com/research_nlp.html) (accessed 11 February 2012).

<sup>137</sup> From an aesthetic and thematic point of view, the in-between, the undefined, is the object of numerous nineteenth-century works of art, literature, and poetry. Romantic poets, writers, and painters frequently depict in-between states, like twilight time or a foggy landscape. For many artists, 'interest lay ... in the way perception dissolves the boundary of sky and land', Matthew C. Brennan remarks. 'This dissolving in landscape,' he continues, 'symbolically expressed the ... dissolving of boundaries between inner and outer consciousness' (Matthew C. Brennan, *The Gothic Psyche: Disintegration and Growth in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, Columbia: Camden House, 1997, p. 23). The advances in psychoanalysis, specifically the discussions of the unconscious, greatly contributed to this view of a disturbing reality where the subject is not always in control.

lover, Venetia.<sup>138</sup> In those moments, Mifanwy is not wholly herself, nor is she Venetia. The character is in a kind of limbo where she behaves as a sort of spectator of herself—a body between two memories and two temporalities. Drawing on this idea, Romantic-Gothic characters are not usually ‘someone’, but rather ‘somebody’, in the sense that multiple personalities inhabit their bodies so that they are never really whole, but lacking. Describing the Gothic, Cavallaro acknowledges that the characters are existentially incomplete, and posits the need for them ‘to face up to incompleteness as a condition which may not and must not be redeemed’.<sup>139</sup> In conclusion, the characters should accept liminality as an intrinsic part of their lives. Continuing in this line, I argue that the bodies of the characters are constantly *in transit* between thresholds, engulfed between existence and the void, permanently reminded (and thus also reminding the viewer) of the inevitable need to make choices. Transition, then, would be a much more suited word to apply in a Romantic-Gothic context than the more restrictive ‘transgression’. Indeed, much more than pushing the limits of morality or transgressing political barriers to comment on contemporary societal issues, the Romantic-Gothic concerns itself with lingering in between opposing states of mind, with the instant of crossing boundaries, and with navigating between the past and the present, the known and the unknown, the inside and the outside of the body.

Concurrent with this in-betweeneness, there is a blurring of boundaries, which puts the emphasis on continuity and circularity rather than finiteness: a world made of interconnected instances, where beginning and end are enmeshed and the past revolves around present events. Matthew C. Brennan shares this line of thinking and defines the Gothic as ‘an aesthetics ... of crossed or open boundaries’.<sup>140</sup> Closed boundaries, he remarks, transform into a frightening openness that pervades all aspects of the Gothic.

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<sup>138</sup> These transformations will be explored in Chapter 4, where I will discuss identity and the loss thereof.

<sup>139</sup> Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision*, p. 63.

<sup>140</sup> Brennan, *The Gothic Psyche*, p. 6.

The boundaries of nature and self, alongside those of reality and dream, life and death, remembering and forgetting, become provisional, unstable, and ambiguous. Susan Yi Sencindiver also writes about this erasure of frontiers, stating that ‘boundaries which serve to demarcate dissolve; thus, inner and outer, self and other, external alien forces and the homely and familiar within are uncannily inverted or united’.<sup>141</sup> Specifically, temporal and spatial distance is at times abolished and the characters experience the past here now. A revealing example of this and, more precisely, of the temporal, spatial, psychological, and sensorial space of the limen, is depicted at length in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*. The Land of Oblivion is a realm where there is no experience of time or place, and where even psychological travelling is limited because no recollection is possible. Memories are stolen, fabricated or shared among the villagers, who thus live and dwell in the limen: in a space suspended between the reality of dreams, waking life, and the inevitability of death.

Importantly, the act of travelling, of being in between places, is itself a liminal state. The re/collecting dwellers move in the threshold space of their search. To search is, in this sense, a state between discovery and fruitless pursuit. Historically, the thread connecting voyaging and liminality can be traced back to at least the Middle Ages. According to popular belief, every human soul wanders between two worlds. The notion of man as a wayfarer along with the concept of *homo viator* pervaded medieval culture and imagination.<sup>142</sup> Art and medieval historian Gerhart B. Ladner claims that this man ‘may have around himself an aura of divine being’ and ‘travel as a pilgrim from and to an eternal order’ or may defy that order. Otherwise, he may also be either an alienated rebel surrounded by an atmosphere of demonic horror or ‘assume the guise of

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<sup>141</sup> Susan Yi Sencindiver, ‘Fear and Gothic Spatiality’, *Fra Akademiet*, Vol. 2 (2010), p. 2. She is referring to Gothic space.

<sup>142</sup> For an extensive account of the Gothic wanderer, see Tyler R. Tichelaar *The Gothic Wanderer: From Transgression to Redemption; Gothic Literature from 1794 - Present*, Ann Harbor: Modern History Press, 2012.

a fool or victim of delusion'.<sup>143</sup> As regards the Romantic-Gothic, the *homo viator* is more often someone who defies order *because* he is either surrounded by horror or suffering from delusion. To this wandering man, key settings and objects are recurrently presented as thresholds that capture the metaphysical complexity of the trans/formation of memories into living images and vice-versa. A case in point is the appearance of Captain Gregg in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, who seems to have been concocted by the sheer vitality emanating from his portrait. When the characters believe they are being driven mad by the Other and/or live in a state of permanent fear (fear of death, of loss, of forgetting), they begin to question the validity of everything they see, touch, smell, and hear, and of all they believe is happening to them. Detective McPherson, for example, is asleep in Laura's apartment, sitting before her portrait, when she first approaches him. She appears as in a dream waking up the protagonist, somewhat reminiscent of Grace Kelly's first scene in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954). Briefly, she appears to have been summoned by the obsessive desire of the detective to know her, to see her, to touch her. The uncertainty as to whether Laura ever really 'came back from the dead', that is, the ambivalence as to whether this event (Laura's return) actually happened, is maintained until the end of the narrative. Briefly, the audience is kept suspended in the threshold between knowing and not knowing.

With reference to the canonical work of Tzvetan Todorov on the fantastic, the Romantic-Gothic presents some peculiarities. According to Todorov, the fantastic lies in the reader's hesitation as to what is real.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, the Romantic-Gothic too lingers on that tenuous threshold between narrative reality and imagination. Uncanny works, Todorov explains, present the audience with a rational explanation for the event,

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<sup>143</sup> Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Homo Viator: Mediaeval Ideas on Alienation and Order', *Speculum*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (April 1967), p. 233.

<sup>144</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973.

whereas the marvellous, in turn, offers the supernatural explanation as real. In this mode, however, there are two things that need to be taken into account: the fact that, in the end, the narratives generally lean towards neither explanation, dwelling precariously within the fine line separating reality and dream (especially in films that deal with ghostly apparitions), and that uncertainty does not involve the audience alone, but the characters as well. Moreover, it does not concern just the end of the story, but the succession of events that take place throughout. For instance: although all ends well in *Dragonwyck*, that is, the heroine is saved and Nicholas, her husband, is killed, neither the characters nor the audience are sure as to whether the old harpsichord in the living room really played its haunting melody night after night. In the same way, Mrs Muir and her daughter may have never actually seen the Captain wandering through old Gull Cottage, telling stories of battles, conquests, and fearless bohemian seamen. The examples multiply, but a brief exchange of words in *Orphée* encapsulates the feeling of indecisiveness that often takes over the characters. Shortly after they arrive in Death's house (after carrying a dead man back to her place), she tells a very incredulous Orphée: 'Surely you're asleep', as if she were reading his mind. 'Yes, I'm asleep. It's very strange...', he reticently replies. Moments later, she warns him: 'You try too hard to understand what's going on, my dear man. That's a serious fault'. Ultimately, reality and dreams are so entwined that their frontiers expand and blur, so that it becomes useless to try and make sense of them. The truth is that, in these cases, the characters will never (can never) be sure about the actuality of the events they have (supposedly) experienced. Ambiguity thus prevails, and both the fictional characters and the viewer are left to decide what to believe in. Certain films manage to find a compromise and present the audience with characters who believe in the supernatural events that supposedly occurred and others who do not. There are stories, like *Portrait of Jennie* and *Peter Ibbetson*, in which the hero is given a memory-object at the very end of the

narrative as something to cling on to. The sight and touch of that object demarcates the final choice that is offered to the protagonist: whether or not to believe in the reality of someone's memory. In this context, choosing to believe would attest to the veracity of said memory. On the other hand, it would at the same time symbolise a belief in the presentness of the past, in the physical tangibility of the past. Let us now look at two examples of how the characters choose to interpret those indexical traces of memory.

Towards the end of the Dieterle film, after Jennie has 'died' yet again, the protagonist is left to wonder whether any of his moments with her ever really took place. Halfway through the narrative, he had even remarked: 'Memories of her were more real to me than what was before me'. And then, just as he is beginning to doubt his memory, he perceives a scarf on a chair next to the bed where he is lying. It is Jennie's scarf—the scarf he found wrapped in an old newspaper when they first met, at night in Central Park, and which keeps appearing throughout. Eben had returned it to Jennie earlier in the film, just after finishing her portrait. As she prepares to leave, she places the scarf over her head. When Eben turns around, seconds later and still talking to her, she is nowhere to be seen. At the end, when Jennie seems to be forever gone, Eben holds the scarf tightly in his hands, smiling as he caresses the object that, to him, stands there as the unquestionable evidence that Jennie was not only real as a figure of the past, but of the present—his present—as well. Spinney, who is beside Eben's bed, does not think he ever met Jennie, but believes instead in the power that such belief had on his life and his work.

In *Peter Ibbetson*, as in *Portrait of Jennie*, memory is likewise left behind in the shape of something wearable. In this story, we have a ring: a ring that proves that dreams are real and can actually come to replace waking life. When Peter is arrested and he and Mary are separated, she hands him a ring, and promises him that they can be together whenever, wherever. Peter describes this ring to the prison guards and to his

cellmates: 'It looks like a ring, but it isn't', he says. 'It's the walls of a world and inside it is the magic of all desire. Inside it is where she lives and everything inside leads to her—every street, every path, and the eighth sea. It's a world. It's our world'. What we learn from this is that memory-objects position the bodies of the characters within a particular space where all that belongs to the field of the sensorial, that is, each experiential event, is no longer subject to the contingencies of time and place. The here and the far away, the now and the long ago, remembrance and expectation, mesh and blur. The characters travel psychologically until they find each other in the realm of dreams, guided solely by their choice to believe. This moment also links to the end of the film. During their last oneiric rendezvous, Mary, who is now old and weak in the narrative present, but still young and beautiful in the dream, begs him: 'Peter, hold my hands. It's cold. Hold my hands, Peter! Tighter. Tighter...'. The camera then closes in on Peter's face in profile, excluding Mary completely from the frame. From his expression, we realise she has died. Peter looks down and the camera pulls back to reveal his hands holding one another. Moments later, we find Peter wandering alone in the dream. Suddenly, a bright light appears and a familiar sound cuts through the silence: 'Peter!' Mary has come back as a voice to tell Peter she is waiting for him. When the beams of light fade and disappear, Peter notices a pair of long white gloves lying on the ground. He calls out to her, saying that she forgot her gloves. As he does, the image blurs and fades to the darkened interior of the prison, where old Peter raises his empty hand upwards, holding Mary's imaginary gloves. 'You mustn't lose them', he says. 'I'm coming to give them to you'. His dying body slowly falls back into the darkness and only his hand remains visible, reaching up for Mary, and illuminated by the beams of light coming from the window above him. Rings and gloves: it is hard to think of two objects that are as close to the body as these. These wearable forms of memory once again draw attention to the privileged role of the past in the present and to

the importance of the manual. What could indeed be more effective to heighten the tangibility of memory than to implicate the hand, the privileged site of sensuous contact? In their utopian world, Peter and Mary have long crossed all the thresholds and now the final one as well: death.

This brings us to one last remark pertaining to the how and when the crossing of the threshold happens. The moment of lingering in the limen or, in other words, the hesitation as to whether or not to cross the boundary, is critical to the development of the narratives, for it will decide the fate of the characters. As if to stress the importance of the frontier, its presence is doubly signalled: temporally, as a threshold moment (the time of pondering one's choices), but also spatially, as the possibility of choosing whether or not to move from one space to another. Jalal Toufic identifies two possible ways of detecting the threshold to what he defines as 'the labyrinthine realm of undeath'.<sup>145</sup> Arguing that at the threshold itself it is already too late to choose whether one wants to cross it, Toufic states that, instants before, the body of the character in question 'performs a bungled action', such as tripping, to introduce a pause in the action, giving him or her the opportunity to make a decision.<sup>146</sup> The second way a threshold can be revealed is if the other characters point it out. There comes a moment in the narratives when others refuse to follow the protagonist, and, as Toufic highlights, when a character transitions into a space and is not followed by others, the lone trespasser makes a journey into death.<sup>147</sup> In agreement with this description of how to identify a threshold, I understand, along with Toufic, the liminal and the journey of crossing over as characterised by loneliness, in the sense that the hero is alone in his choice. For this reason, it is important to call attention to the fact that the state of being

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<sup>145</sup> Jalal Toufic, *Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, Sausalito: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003, p. 18.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

in-between two areas, of being within the liminal, does not equal or even imply neutrality on the part of the characters, quite the contrary. The frontier is precisely where their subjectivity is at its peak: it is the moment of utter solitude when they are confronted with a critical choice that is theirs alone to make. Read in this way, indecisiveness therefore characterises the moment just before the liminal, whilst the liminal itself is characterised by choice. To clarify, let us examine a specific sequence.

In *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, the final threshold—the one that allows for no turning back, for no return—appears at the end of the film. After leaving the Land of Oblivion, the camera cuts back to the prison, where Michel is suddenly woken up to find that he is free to go and that all charges have been withdrawn. Michel and the audience are left wondering whom the Juliette in Michel's dream has chosen to marry in the end. Upon being released, he goes to meet Juliette, this time in the narrative real world. Moments later, he meets with her and, during their brief conversation, he realises that she is not in love with him, and is in fact going to marry his (and her) employer. Heartbroken, Michel runs through the streets and down a long flight of steps. Juliette goes after him and screams his name from the top of the steps. She has stopped following him. This is the kind of moment to which Toufic refers: the moment when the characters choose not to follow the protagonist, thereby signalling the threshold. Michel pauses for a second, but then keeps walking. That brief instant of inertia and the subsequent onwards movement delineates the choice to cross the threshold. The implication here is that threshold spaces are first accessed mentally. Next, Michel turns into a corner and notices a metal door with the ominous warning: 'No trespassing-Danger'. Suddenly, breaking the silence of the street, he hears Juliette's whispered voice, seemingly reaching him from beyond the closed door. He moves towards it, touches it, and carefully opens it. In a close-up, the camera shows us his face, which gets gradually brighter, reflecting the light coming out from the door. Slowly, a smile

forms on his lips. We know then, as does he, that the open door before him leads to another realm, to that white village of people without memory, without past, without place. From there, there is no destination, only perennial, ghostly wandering: a daily rebirth into a life filled with all possibilities. Resolutely, Michel walks toward the lost village once more—and for the last time. The visual transgression, that is the moment of actually crossing to the other side of the door, marks the end of the narrative. Quickly mapping the major movements of the film we have, first, a passage from reality to dream, opened up by the physical and mental act of dreaming, and, afterwards, a passage from the oneiric to the actual. At the end of the film, the last stage of Michel's travelling is well identified in the material world as a door, and, by deciding to go through it, Michel resumes his journey from reality into the eternal dream.

### **Visual and Sonic Perceptions of the Ghost**

The final sequence in *Juliette ou la clef des songes* foregrounds the conscious denial of waking life as the only path to true happiness. Liminality, and the co-related precariousness of life, love, and personal fulfilment, is often expressed in a pivotal element of many Romantic-Gothic narratives: supernaturalism in the form, or formlessness, of ghosts. Writing about liminality in literature, K. A. Nuzum proposes a classification of monsters that we can usefully adapt to a reading of ghosts. Guided by her typology, we can claim that these apparitions are liminal physically, spatially, and temporally.<sup>148</sup> Now, one might ask what the difference is between the living characters and ghosts, given that such a classification is applicable to both. The fact is that there is one crucial aspect separating the living heroes from the ghosts, and which relates to

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<sup>148</sup> K. A. Nuzum, 'The Monster's Sacrifice—Historic Time: The Uses of Mythic and Liminal Time in Monster Literature', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Autumn 2004), p. 208.

temporality: in spite of any psychological dwelling, the bodies of the former are bound to live in the linearity of historical time, which is, conversely, the only time-place that ghosts cannot inhabit, only haunt.

Ghosts emanate from time into space. Furthermore, they act as a narrative device for articulating the co-existence and merging of the physical and the immaterial worlds. The notion of spaces that harbour spirits links with the idea that certain spaces and objects are capable of materialising bodily absences. The complexity of putting memory into image form (that of a ghost) allows for a discussion of Romantic-Gothic spaces as fluid sites of memory and remembering where the disembodied presence of someone lives on in particular memory-objects. The ghostly Other is therefore attached to a specific place—to a memory-object, often a house—which it inhabits and magically makes alive. As present manifestations of the past that collide with the chronological present of the narrative, ghosts are ‘living’ memories that establish a very conflicted relationship with place and time. Barry Curtis claims that haunting complicates spatial relations by making places ‘subjective and incoherent’.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, when dealing with ghostliness and haunting, places—and the characters’ perception of them—are necessarily restructured. On these ambiguous spatialities and layered temporalities, María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren write that places are ‘simultaneously living and spectral, containing the experience of the actual moment as well as the many times that have already transpired and become silent—though not necessarily imperceptible—to the present’.<sup>150</sup> ‘This is a lovely room, isn’t it?’—a housemaid asks Miranda in *Dragonwyck*—‘An unusual room’. ‘It’s unusually beautiful’, she replies. ‘That isn’t what I mean, miss’, and she explains that she is referring to ‘what she brought to this

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<sup>149</sup> Curtis, *Dark Places*, p. 179.

<sup>150</sup> María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, ‘Possessions: Spectral Places/Introduction’ in Blanco and Peeren (eds), *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 395.

room and what'll never leave it'. 'She' is the one in the living room portrait, Azilde, Nicholas's great-grandmother, who is believed to be haunting the mansion. The housemaid continues gossiping and tells Miranda that her husband had never loved her: 'He forbade her to sing and play. ... She prayed for disaster to come to the Van Ryns... and she swore that when it came, she'd always be here to sing and play. She killed herself in this room... at this harpsichord'. The inhabitants of Dragonwyck all live under the spell of Azilde's ghost, and each room in the house brings back the memories of the dead. Places thus reflect the hold of the past over the present and direct the characters' routes of remembering.

In rejecting spatial and temporal boundaries alike, ghosts are caught, and remain suspended, in a threshold—the intermediary zone between being (here and now) and not being. As Davina Quinlivan writes, 'they are elusive bodies whose presence is only partial'.<sup>151</sup> With this statement, we come back to the theme of incompleteness. The clash between the re/collector and the memory he or she is attempting to gather accounts at least in part for the fascination the characters express towards these bodiless memories: they are entranced by the realisation that their ageing mortal bodies can cease to exist whilst the mind can live on, free from the dead weight of the corporeal. This is, however, a mind that is nonetheless still very much able to dialogue with the sensuous world. Understandably, this is the ultimate wish of the Romantic and the Gothic ego; it is the paroxysm of the narcissistic cult of the self: the utopian ideal of being able to live on, to feel, and yet be rid of a carnal body that ages, bleeds, and rots.

The paradox of being able to access the sensorial whilst deprived of physicality is, arguably, the central feature of the ghost. Ghostly apparitions, L. Andrew Cooper argues, manage to still affect the tactile sense, for the touch of a ghost 'signifies the cold of death and can convey the horrors of its condition as well as the horrors it threatens

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<sup>151</sup> Quinlivan, *The Place of Breath in Cinema*, p. 2.

for those it haunts'.<sup>152</sup> The sense of touch has, in this situation, implications for both the apparition and the re/collector. That 'cold' symbolises death, which deeply affects the heroes who are forced to relive their past (along with the Other's) in each encounter with ghostly apparitions. By their very nature, ghosts make the characters physically experience the incorporeal, the intangible, not only because of the feelings they call forth, namely fear, love, and repulsion, but more importantly because they actualise the Other who died. The role of the sensorial becomes more evident when ghosts/ghostly forces confer upon selected objects an almost anthropomorphic quality, thus narrowing the gap between the self and the Other. A case in point is the haunting melody echoing from the solitary harpsichord and into the chambers of Dragonwyck mansion. Again, a painting hangs above a musical instrument, just like in *While I Live*, instantly associating memory (and its re/collection) with music. Only here the musical instrument is animated by invisible hands, and in the process becomes almost humanised. The eyes of the female figure in the portrait seem to watch the fleshless hands playing whilst the taunting conspicuousness of the music torments the heroes. Eyes, hands, and the ear: the memory appeals to the senses whilst at the same time leading the characters into a specific place within the house (in other words, reinventing spatial perception). There, in that determined place to where they were initially led by the fleeting perception of a sound, they are confronted with the paradoxical materiality of the memory-objects: the harpsichord and the portrait. The objects are here now, but they are also there then, haunting the space of the living. The harpsichord, for instance, belongs more to the past than to the present: it remains in that room, in that place, as a tribute to a dead woman, as a memorial to times and lives gone by. This shatters any sense of a concrete geography or chronology, for that room becomes the room of yore, brought back to life

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<sup>152</sup> L. Andrew Cooper, *Gothic Realities: The Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture*, London: McFarland & Company, 2010, p. 155.

with the music and the voices of the past. In other words, the place creates the ghost. That musical instrument is thus kept as a reminder or a relic that exists in the present *through* the past. Yet, someone still plays the harpsichord in Dragonwyck—the characters hear the music and see the keys moving. Where is that memory-object, then? Is it really there, visually and sonically replaying the past? From this example, we therefore learn that spatial and temporal liminalities concern memory-objects as well. What is more, they concern the senses, for the harpsichord perpetuates memory by offering it to the heroes via the sensorial (the visual and the auditory). The portrait, in turn, has an identical part in the stories. Its situatedness does not constrict its influence on the unfolding of the narrative. On the contrary, the portrait is everywhere in the house, or rather, it is *felt* everywhere, even where it is not, which is to say, even where it is not physically *there*, where the characters are. This *presentness* of an absence is, of course, the very definition of haunting. The hold of the past on the present and, specifically, the lingering of said past under different forms (ghosts, memory-objects, sound, or even smell, as we have discussed) results in the consolidation of a certain particular mode of being or state of consciousness that impacts the behaviour of the characters throughout. To the extent that it is a transitional, in-between state that stresses the inherent incompleteness of the characters, the study of mourning as a specifically propitious condition to convey Romantic-Gothic preoccupations comes to the fore as another pertinent matter for discussion.

### **Mourning Memories and the Ethics of Forgetting**

In *The Cat and the Canary*, Cyrus West, an old eccentric millionaire who has been declared insane by his family, dies at the beginning of the film. Exactly ten years after that day, as stipulated, his relatives come to the reading of the will, which will take

place in his mansion. Mammy Pleasant, the housekeeper, has been living there all that time. The lawyer, trying to make conversation, turns to her and comments that she must have been lonely there all those years. She replies: 'I don't need the living ones'. As she finishes this sentence, her eyes look up at the living room wall, where a large portrait of Cyrus hangs. Julia of *While I Live*, who does not accept that her younger sister is gone, could have proffered this statement, as could *Dragonwyck's* Nicholas Van Ryn, who inexplicably keeps that old haunted harpsichord in his home. The list goes on. What we take from this is that the belief that the dead can still keep the living company does not disappear with the passing years. Deborah Lutz identifies the Gothic lover as a mourner and states that 'his self is defined by what he doesn't have, and his melancholy guarantees the constant reopening of his desires'.<sup>153</sup> She adds that, for him, 'consciousness itself can become mourning, the lamenting of a bitter present and the obsession with lost bliss'. This sentence encompasses the two defining characteristics of mourning: obsession and faith, both of which will, in the end, deny the characters the possibility of experiencing a cathartic mourning period. There are two interconnected motives that explain the reason why mourning remains unaccomplished. The first one is involuntary and relates to the fact that the characters simply cannot sever the ties to the lost object, whereas the second reason, which might at times develop as a transmutation of the first, concerns the intentionality of the heroes not to mourn. The latter marks a step away from traditional psychoanalytical readings of mourning.<sup>154</sup> To Freud, if an individual is unable to cope with loss, he or she does not mourn. Rather, through the persistent refusal of closure, the ego experiences what might be called a never-ending state of mourning: melancholia. The state of melancholia, however, can gradually

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<sup>153</sup> Deborah Lutz, *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative*, Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006, p. 37.

<sup>154</sup> The relation of melancholia and mourning is the subject of Freud's seminal 'Mourning and Melancholia' (Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' [1915], in James Strachey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 14, London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).

develop into mourning, which would then lead to catharsis. In the Romantic-Gothic, however, healing does not demand or depend upon the end of melancholia or mourning. In fact, the transition between the two states seldom occurs, preventing the release of the self from grief. Instead, the individual deliberately chooses not to engage in traditional grieving. Importantly, we can connect the voluntary denial of the process of mourning to an ethical choice of not denying the life of the deceased being. This comes through in the way the characters embody the work of mourning, as I explain below.

As Mary O’Neill observes, ‘mourning is not a state, but a task, which requires the bereaved person to perform “griefwork”’.<sup>155</sup> Griefwork, in turn, refers to ‘the painful process of relinquishing emotional ties to the lost person or object through a process of reality testing’.<sup>156</sup> More precisely, for the characters to be able to mourn, they first need to believe in the absolute finality of death. This means that the ultimate aim of griefwork consists in accepting the loss of the Other as irreparable. According to O’Neill, there are various ways through which an expurgatory mourning can be accomplished, from performing rituals to the creation of artworks. The latter form of grieving is particularly central to the films and this is where I move on from Lutz’s definition of the Gothic mourner. Indeed, there are some singularities affecting the process of mourning in the Romantic-Gothic. For one, expressing painful emotions bodily or biologically (in the form of tears, for instance) is not the traditional way of manifesting grief. On the other hand, it is not infrequently that we encounter the characters absorbed in their art—painting, writing, composing, sculpting, or designing buildings—as a way of coping with death.<sup>157</sup> With regard to this, William Watkin’s notion that ‘to remember means to give a permanent materiality to someone or

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<sup>155</sup> Mary O’Neill, ‘Speaking to the Dead’, in Lilian H. Zirpole (ed.), *Constructions of Death, Mourning, and Memory Conference: October 27-29, 2006*, New Jersey: The WAPACC Organization, 2006, p. 13.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> The act of creation in the Romantic-Gothic is described in Chapter 3.

something that has been lost' is extremely pertinent here.<sup>158</sup> In fact, the commonest form of mourning in Romantic-Gothic works consists precisely in the appropriation and subsequent transformation of the memory of the Other into a work of art, notably a portrait, hereby opening up a path towards healing. It is therefore not surprising that, once the work of art is finished, the characters treasure it deeply and are never found very far from the site where it is kept. Combining the ideas of O'Neill and Watkin, we notice the complexities involved in the state of mourning: in order to overcome loss, the person may choose to create a work of art that will, in turn, allow him or her to cling onto that something, which is perennial and stable in time and space. The successful completion of the memory-object would, as Watkin mentions, enable and facilitate remembering. The problem with this is that the 'permanent materiality' of their creation leads to permanent remembering, which culminates in the failure (on the part of the grieving characters) to realise that their loss is whole and unamendable. When discussing works in which the dead are present as ghosts, the impossibility of properly mourning becomes even clearer. We mourn someone who is no longer here, someone whom we have lost. If this loss is not understood as irreparable, then there can be no rest, no peace. If the dead reappear and travel back from the past, then the idea of mourning does not even make sense. This further outlines Romantic-Gothic heroes as creatures of the liminal: caught in yet another threshold, they dwell between mourning and melancholia, never quite succumbing to either state due to an almost pathological faith in the eventual success of their chosen method of grieving—ideally, they hope that the creation of artworks not only assuages their loss, but actually succeeds in bringing back the dead. In short, there is an extension of the delusion rather than a coming-to-terms—a resurrection of memories, rather than a burial of the dead.

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<sup>158</sup> William Watkin, *On Mourning: Theories of Loss in Modern Literature*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p. 9.

The work of Cocteau in *Orphée* is exemplary in this respect. Mourning is unthinkable here, for that would mean, borrowing the words of Gaël Lépingle, ‘to accept the commonplace, to conform, to give up believing’.<sup>159</sup> He describes Cocteau’s climax scenes as anti-pietàs, given that ‘we do not cry over the corpse of our loved one because there is something else we must do: bring him or her back from the limbo... or die with. What matters is not to be separated’.<sup>160</sup> In case some form of resurrection is not achievable, the hero has a crucial choice to make that will decide his fate. Implicated here is another descriptive factor of the mourning process: that it is as much connected with anguish, guilt, and obsession as with love and sacrifice. In effect, the inability of the characters to retrieve whatever it is they have lost rapidly develops into bitterness, frustration, and forlornness, which in turn leads them into a helpless vacuity of being that might result in the complete dissolution of the self. Michel, for instance, stepping into the forsaken realm beyond that mysterious door at the end of *Juliette ou la clef des songes* accounts for this. To cross that final physical threshold—represented visually by the door—means to relinquish life.

For all of this, we realise that the nineteenth-century Romantic project of self-fulfilment through artistic creation is not achieved in the Romantic-Gothic, and that, as a rule, the individual is not willing, able, or allowed to forget. In some films, though (ghostly apparitions aside), we are not dealing with a case of refused mourning: many characters in fact choose to engage in mourning, and even seem to at times derive pleasure from it, from the interchangeable and unpredictable cycles of anger and acceptance of loss. I argue that we are more accurately dealing with a period of refused forgetting. The work of Marcus Uzal is helpful here, in that he reminds us that ‘there is

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<sup>159</sup> Gaël Lépingle, ‘Quelle horreur!, la quête d’Orphée: Cocteau et après’, *Vertigo: ne pas mourir*, Vol. 41 (Autumn 2011), p. 14.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

something sadder than separation, sadder even than death: forgetting'.<sup>161</sup> Without a certain amount of forgetting, however, the process of mourning cannot be finalised, and the characters do not experience the fruition and joy they normally would through artistic creation. In the end, that which should have constituted a therapeutic means for letting go of a memory conversely becomes a dangerous activity that increasingly clouds the discernment of the heroes and gradually takes over every aspect of their lives. If we assume that the work of mourning is, as Steve Vine argues, 'a process of forgetting', then 'the power of "memory" comes to cancel that forgetfulness; but memory returns the loved object to the self in the mode of absence'.<sup>162</sup> This vicious cycle is not resolved in the Romantic-Gothic mode, and the retrieval of memory prevails as the driving force behind the actions of the characters. Following this line of reasoning, the heroes will do anything to protect and preserve memory-objects.

Several elements have the power to impair actions of recollection. For instance: the internal processes via which the human body selects information—processes that are responsible for both voluntary and involuntary oblivion—can damage memory. Adding to these endogenous, biological processes, memory can furthermore be corroded by external elements. Battling forgetfulness, then, would involve an everlasting effort on the part of the characters to safeguard certain memory-objects from being corrupted by internal and external forces, such as people and time. These interfere with processes of re/collection and might considerably shorten their life span. The protective attitude of the characters towards memory-objects helps understand that anachronistic feel to Romantic-Gothic houses I mentioned earlier with regard to Laura's apartment. Things of the past are kept in their old places and seem to be frozen in time.

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<sup>161</sup> Marcos Uzal, 'La Vie exigée: à propos des films de François Truffaut', *Vertigo: ne pas mourir*, Vol. 41 (Autumn 2011), p. 29 (my translation).

<sup>162</sup> Steve Vine, 'Romantic Ghosts: The Refusal of Mourning in Emily Brontë's Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring 1999), p. 113.

We know now that objects extend grief because they stimulate memory, and that the self tries to preserve them at all cost. Nonetheless, what can be said about objects and forgetting? More accurately, if the characters so wish, can memory-objects be used as vehicles of forgetting? This relates to a broader question: once memory assumes a mappable and tangible form in the here and now, is the individual allowed to forget? Knowing that a memory is there to be visited and re-visited as often as one wishes should also mean that were one keen to forget someone, it would suffice to destroy the object or to simply keep it out of sight. Such is not the answer within the Romantic-Gothic cosmos. The fact is that, even if the heroes were to destroy all traces of memory, that is, even if forever out of the perceiving subject's eye-range, memory would still most likely exist in the sensuous world by making itself heard, for instance. In some films, there is no visible ghost, only sounds. After the old Countess Ranevskaya dies in Dickinson's *The Queen of Spades*, it is her voice that visits her murderer, Captain Suvorin, and finally tells him the secret of the three winning cards that will bring him nothing but misfortune.

In conclusion, Romantic-Gothic stories are not only about the moment of re/collection, but also about its collapse, its reverse—forgetting. The fallibility of memory and ultimate oblivion are arguably the most terrifying elements in the films. The characters begin to fear themselves and the possibility of forgetting—forgetting places, spaces, and people. After suffering a loss, the protagonists feel the need to give continuance to their dreams, whilst at the same time keeping their hopes for the future alive. As Clément Rosset notes, 'what most agonises the subject, more than its imminent death, is, first and foremost, its non-reality, its non-existence'.<sup>163</sup> Each character has its own way of coping with the eventuality of forgetting and being forgotten. Be it by building dream castles, as Cathy and Heathcliff in *Wuthering*

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<sup>163</sup> Clément Rosset, *Le Réel et son double*, Paris: Gallimard, 1993, p. 91 (my translation).

*Heights*, coming back from the dead as a ghost, like Captain Gregg in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, or creating memory-objects, like Eben in *Portrait of Jennie*, the aim is twofold: to perpetuate remembrance, ensuring that they do not forget, and, moreover, to safeguard their mortal selves against oblivion, ensuring that they are not in turn forgotten. Lisa, in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, provides a good example of someone who is repeatedly forgotten, but who takes care to ensure that she is not forgotten in the end, even if her memory is to be re/collected posthumously. Through the words in the long love letter she wrote to Stefan, he is allowed access to everything he had forgotten to remember whenever they met. ‘You *are* a sorceress, now I’m sure’, he had told her one night, many years before. ‘How else could we dance this way? We must’ve danced together before. And yet, if we had, I’m sure I remembered’. In this film, the viewer is witnessing two paths of re/collection: that of Lisa, remembering Stefan by travelling spatially/physically to the places where he dwelled, and that of Stefan, remembering Lisa through psychological/verbal travelling. This movement of retrospection succeeds in correcting Stefan’s forgetfulness.

As we can extract from the readings in this chapter, the walks of the characters across the spaces of the house prevent forgetting: their bodies trace routes of remembering that reconstruct someone from the pieces their hands and minds collect. These pieces are gathered whilst travelling from place to place and through touch, words, images, smells, and beliefs. Referring to the imperative need for living beings to change their places, Casey claims that it is only ‘by foraging in *another* place’ that the insufficiencies of the present place can be overcome.<sup>164</sup> Where the Romantic-Gothic is concerned, this means that the pathways of remembering (and whether or not these are successful) will ultimately dictate the survival of the characters. We have also analysed the processes of re/collection and the ways by which the characters re/collect, and have

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<sup>164</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xii.

realised that the narratives of the films develop as cyclical processes of loss, grieving, and sacrifice. Reading space through this lens, we see how sites of memory in the Romantic-Gothic can be read as sites of death and mourning. To mourn is, in a way, to be able to overcome the powerful seduction of death, which so strongly appealed to Gothic and Romantic minds. The inability of the heroes to cope and let go, to cross that threshold, is, in turn, directly represented in Romantic-Gothic spaces and places through the omnipresence of memory-objects. In this respect, both outdoor and indoor spaces play with the restlessness of the grieving individual, creating an image of the Romantic-Gothic house and its extensions, as spaces characterised by the inescapability from mourning practices. In the following chapter, I will offer a closer look at the travelling of the characters within these indoor and outdoor spaces.

## CHAPTER 2: The Anti-Home and Nature as Forms of Agency

### Charting the Geographical Trajectories of Dwelling Bodies

Wind was there, and space, and sun, and storm. Everything was beyond that door.

from *Secret Beyond the Door*

In the previous chapter I engaged in a discussion of space in its relation to memory-objects, travelling, remembering, liminality, and mourning. The sections that follow develop these notions and take them one step further by de-centring the focus from an exclusivist analysis of human agency. Its importance notwithstanding, other factors deserve just as much scrutiny, so that a more complete understanding of Romantic-Gothic spaces can be achieved. To that effect, I will examine in detail the way non-human agents interact with the dwelling bodies of the characters and, in turn, the way spatial cognition might impact on the built environment and the natural world. Through personification, for instance, certain spaces, places, and objects (within and outside the house), may take on a prominent narrative role and thus play a major part in the shaping of the stories. This is to say that they have their own means of agency, of interfering directly in the narrative world.<sup>165</sup> Sencindiver acknowledges this with regard to the house, and suggests that, ‘in addition to its function as a magnifying mirror for the psychic disturbances of its occupants, the sentient Gothic edifice often becomes a character in its own right’.<sup>166</sup> The building might function as a metaphor for a character’s haunted psyche and can be understood as taking up the representation of the

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<sup>165</sup> Readings of the personification of objects and the natural world have become an academic staple in most analyses of classic Gothic literature. By and large, such readings acknowledge that the environment where one dwells is a mere descriptive theme that simply intensifies whatever is going through the tormented minds of the characters.

<sup>166</sup> Sencindiver, ‘Fear and Gothic Spatiality’, p. 21.

self to the outside world, metonymically reflecting the lives of its restless dwellers. We see this in *Corridor of Mirrors*, for example, where Paul's mansion is saturated with his inner world. Heavily decorated walls and chambers, long corridors, and round, mirrored rooms clearly exteriorise his belief in and obsession with reincarnation.

Sometimes, however, the interference of the house in the narrative is more blatant and concerns the actual, physical modification of its structures. Indeed, in narratives of haunted or enchanted houses, the house is often the embodiment of a self that is completely Other and its discourse is at first incomprehensible until the solitary agent begins to willingly re/collect the memories that have been scattered across the rooms. Nevertheless, just as often, the depiction of conflict between body and habitat is more subtly presented, like through a particular positioning of the camera in relation to the actor and the *mise-en-scène*. Let us now describe two paradigmatic examples for each situation, starting with the example of a house that alters its architecture, as happens in Epstein's version of Edgar Allan Poe's oft-theorised classic 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839). This tale and its respective film adaptation illustrate the ways in which an architectural setting can become a character that is able to act directly upon the development of the stories.<sup>167</sup> In particular, the filmmaker explores this relationship meticulously by using Expressionist settings and lighting, along with cinematic techniques that draw on Impressionism, such as slow motion and superimposition. In order to heighten the psychological traits of the characters and thereby the feeling of suspense and terror, Epstein went as far as to introduce explicit visual references to another Poe story, 'The Oval Portrait' (1842). He achieves this by introducing a memory-object into the narrative: a portrait. Roderick Usher becomes incapable of loving his wife, Madeline, as much as he does the painted representation of her face. As

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<sup>167</sup> There have been numerous film adaptations of the tale, namely *La chute de la maison Usher*; *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1928); *House of Usher* (1960); *The Fall of the House of Usher* (2002); *Descendant* (2003); *Usher* (2004); and *The House of Usher* (2006).

the action develops, Usher shows an increasing fear of his own estate, and the audience becomes aware that the spatial limits of the house might translate into a commentary on the finitude of the self: Poe's and Epstein's house is identified with the genetic line of the Ushers, and its collapse at the end marks the biological end of the Usher family.

Collapsing buildings, like the house of Usher or the modern mansion in Edgar G. Ulmer's *The Black Cat* (1934), which is blown up at the end of the film, do not constitute, as I have noted, the only manifestations of the connection between the environment and the dwelling re/collector. It is equally possible to investigate how the self's search for and re/collection of memories are expressed spatially simply by looking at the ways in which the camera captures the contact between the character and spaces, places, and objects. At times, certain objects, for instance, seem to be deliberately in the way of the characters, preventing them from doing something or being with someone. The mise-en-scène compositions of *Peter Ibbetson* are especially revealing in their exposition of geographical and psychological distance. In the previous chapter, I mentioned the iron bars that separate the two lovers from the very beginning of the film. We first have the bars of the fence that demarcates each of the children's yards, then the metal bars on the window in Mary's house, and, later on, the bars of the prison cell where Peter is being held. This distancing strategy is moreover emphasised during the course of the story, specifically in the recurrence of objects that prevent togetherness: walls, windows, and the vertical slats of the blinds in a French coffee shop, among other mise-en-scène elements.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, when Peter, in his fantastic dreams towards the end of the film, walks through the prison bars to reunite with Mary, spatial relations are radically altered. From that moment on, the barriers that stood between them dissolve,

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<sup>168</sup> In *Undercurrent*, a similar strategy is used, in this case to distance Ann from her psychotic husband, Alan. Throughout, they are often framed with fire between them, either from candles or a lit fireplace. These objects, which should suggest domesticity, instead separate the couple, conjuring fear and uncertainty.

so that the couple is finally framed together: they can at last touch, love, and live. Spatialising the characters in this way by manipulating the space around the human body creates the illusion of the protagonists walking progressively from claustrophobic, enclosed, spaces towards utopian freedom.

In popular imagination, freedom is traditionally pictured in association with open spaces, and, by consequence, with nature. Nevertheless, the bond between the dweller and the natural environment that developed throughout the nineteenth century brought to the fore a singular understanding of that same relationship. The image of the isolated, tortured, and sensitive Romantic-Gothic hero whose fate seems to be inextricably tied to the secluded place he or she inhabits is, in fact, a direct descendant of Gothic and Romantic literature, poetry, and painting, where this kind of subject had already been extensively explored. Claire McKechnie and Emily Alder comment on the prominent role of the natural world at the time, noting that it was ‘intricately bound up with how Victorians thought about themselves and how they related to their social world, to the extent that we can hardly extricate the idea of nature from the idea of the nineteenth-century imagination’.<sup>169</sup> Edward G. Wilson, in turn, helps us comprehend the union of self and nature by approaching it from two different angles: what he calls ‘anthropocentric doubling’, a narcissistic view of nature that stems from ‘a perception of the external world only in relation to the ego’ and ‘aesthetic doubling’, based on ‘an intuition of a distributed wholeness coursing through discrete parts’.<sup>170</sup> Both these forms of doubling paint the self as a conscious being, aware of himself/herself and of the spaces that surround him/her, which conveys a rather egotistical understanding of reality. Even the aesthetic doubling places the self in the centre of the issue, ‘intuiting’

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<sup>169</sup> Claire McKechnie and Emily Alder, ‘Introduction: Literature, Science, and the Natural World in the Long Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2012), p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> Edward G. Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice: Romanticism, Science, and the Imagination*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 180.

that nature is a certain way. There is no mention of nature as independent from human perception, as a space that does not depend on human validation or, even, on human existence. I contrariwise argue that the built and natural environment cannot be regarded as just the backdrop of the plot nor a magical magnifying glass to peer into the souls of the heroes, but that, above all, they have the capability of agency, which allows them to partake in—and at times even direct—the action.

In Romantic-Gothic journeys, this dynamic relationship is intensified and made more complex: it is not just a matter of personal emotions being mirrored in nature; instead, the audience is made aware of the fact that the environment itself can induce specific emotions into the mind. There is no fixed causality: it is a two-way exchange of feelings. Indeed, whatever it is that the characters are sure to lose in the course of a Romantic-Gothic story, particularly love or sanity, the places they inhabit and the spaces that surround them will either have caused that situation or will invariably reflect its correspondent repercussions. The independence of the environment and the awareness that it can be the primary site of action provides us with a key criterion to understand the human-nature relationship. At the beginning of *The Black Cat*, it is the heavy rain that makes the road give way and causes the car to overturn. It is, therefore, the stormy weather that literally drives the characters into the house by the road where all the frightful events that follow will happen. Adverse meteorological conditions set off the film.

The cinema comes forward as an unparalleled means for conveying these ‘conditions’, acting as a privileged purveyor of sensations that lends itself to a synesthetic approach. The sonic and visual fields activate the notions of touch, smell, and even taste, often through a combination of the textual/verbal and a specific image. Simply put, cinema, like no other art, provides the technology with which to access our senses, drawing on it to create, for instance, feelings of terror, suspense, and horror.

More pointedly, with regard to the depiction of the environment, the techniques the filmmakers employ frequently emphasise the finiteness of life by projecting human figures into the openness of nature. Take as an example the image of the small boat, unmercifully overturned and torn to pieces by a tidal wave in *Portrait of Jennie*. The roaring sound of thunder and heavy rain is perceived in conjunction with a series of shots of an impressive body of water moving to the spellbinding orchestrations of Tiomkin. Selznick and Dieterle heightened this climactic moment by tinting the film stock with different hues, so that we go from black-and-white to green at the beginning of the storm and to sepia tones right after. The rosy hue literally signals the calm after the storm. The aesthetic choice of changing colours succeeds in adding an emotional crescendo to that last fateful reunion of Eben and Jennie: the moment when their timelines finally merge. Composing the sequence, there is also the use of dialogue (whilst Eben tries in vain to save Jennie) as well as all the other ambient noises, like the sound of thunders, rain, and of the waves crashing against the rugged cliffs. Apart from these on-screen techniques, producer and filmmaker invested a substantial amount of time and money in creating an all-round sensuously immersive experience for the viewers in movie theatres. In a memo about the film, Selznick wrote: ‘I hope to get a real D.W. Griffith effect out of this that will have tremendous dramatic power and enormous spectacular value, thereby adding a big showmanship element to the picture’.<sup>171</sup> As the ferocious wave begins to form, the producer chose to have the screen expand, so as to bring the audience experience to a whole different level.

At this point, we can firmly state that the characters and the surfaces adjacent to their bodies form unique bonds, and that the cinema is the ideal medium to portray this connection. I will analyse those spaces that are most relevant to the Romantic-Gothic by

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<sup>171</sup> David O. Selznick, *Memo from David O. Selznick*, ed. Rudy Behlmer, New York: Viking Press, 1972, p. 387.

grouping them under two main categories: the house (or the built environment) and nature (the outdoors). As primary exemplary cases, I chose *La Belle et la Bête* and *Peter Ibbetson* for their privileging of a singular dynamics of space—that of the house and the places/objects within it, in the case of the former, and that of the house and its natural exteriors in the case of the latter. After first investigating the relationship that the characters establish with the house, its contents, and its architectural structures, I will then move to an interpretation of the closely-knit bond between the self and nature.

### **The Place and The Body: Site-Seeing and Site-Sensing**

A large, heavy wooden door opens into a darkened, half-lit corridor. A female figure comes running in. There is an orderly row of candelabra-holding hands adorning the otherwise empty walls. In slow motion, we watch the woman rushing through the hallway and towards the camera. As she runs past, the bodiless hands turn steadily in her direction, one by one, as if vigilantly following her every step whilst also pointing the way forward. Upon leaving the corridor, she enters a living room where a long shot frames her from behind a set table and an empty chair, her cape sweeping the floor as she moves towards a long, wide staircase. Zooming in on her climbing the stairs, the camera suddenly stops before an imposing passageway. There appears to be another door in front of her, framed by two candlesticks, one on each side. The door itself, however, is missing: in its place there are two more disembodied hands guarding the entrance. Firmly wielding swords whose blades cross and touch, these hands seem more menacing than the ones located at the entrance to the castle. On seeing the swords, Belle, still filmed in slow motion, stands back, frightened, and turns around—but only for an instant: the hands lift up the swords shortly after, making the next room accessible to her. Contrary to what would be expected, the camera does not immediately

follow her through the passageway—it stands still just long enough to show us both hands resuming their initial position, veritably closing (or rather enclosing) Belle in that unknown place where she is now, momentarily out of our sight.

The closedness that this descending movement of hands brings to the yet invisible place that lies beyond them is quickly contrasted by the amazing openness of the corridor that the camera cuts to next. On one side, there is a series of doors, each paired with a window on the opposite side, fully demarcating the limits between the interior of the house (beyond the door) and the exterior (beyond the window). Full-length white curtains that the wind softly blows are thrown onto a ghost-like Belle who gently glides by. In this way, the elements come indoors and help trace the trajectory of the character. The unlit, bare walls seem to come to life by virtue of the intermittent strokes of light and shadow thrown upon them from the world outside. There is a very ethereal look to this sequence, achieved also by having the actress placed in a trolley with castors, so that she seems to be floating through the curtains. This technique provides aesthetic continuity to the previous slow-motion shots and further accentuates the idea that Belle has stepped into a magical realm and is being led to a specific place inside the house. In this respect, the agency of the house is so powerful that it literally takes hold of the body of the character, pushing it forward and stripping it of any free will. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that, if the house and its non-human inhabitants appear, on the one hand, to take control of the self's actions, it is also true that, on the other, it is Belle's passing by that seems to awake them. Space, in this regard, responds to a human presence. In other words, the dwellings of the character in the house trigger a series of physical reactions from the house itself.

As we have observed, typically inanimate objects come to life when they feel Belle's presence: from the candelabra-holding hands she walks past at the beginning to the sword-wielding hands and the waving curtains of that last corridor, which like

disembodied hands, caress Belle's skin with soft and long white fingers. This interaction, in turn, visually replicates Belle's earlier caressing of the house with her billowing cape. By reciprocating Belle's actions, the house and the body of the self engage in a sensuous game where fear and fascination for the unknown mesh and blend. Tellingly, whilst in the corridor, Belle does not try to avoid contact with the blowing curtains that touch her, but rather touches them back: the house is getting to know her, just as she is getting to know the house.

The unexpected reciprocity of such a process is also that which best reveals the Gothic within this film's Romanticism; that is, where there should be apathy and inertia we find aliveness and movement; where there should be distance and silence, we find proximity and sensuous interchange; and where borderline terror should dissuade the characters from exploring the unknown, they instead choose to coalesce with it. The Romantic-Gothic builds precisely on this unexpectedness of actions, and on the complementary union of self, dwelling space, and the senses. One outcome of this interdependence is the fact that, through her physical contact with the body of the house, Belle appears as the creator of an almost endless succession of spaces—spaces of the human body, but also of silence, noise, and music, as we will now examine.

As we have seen thus far, the house and the self are linked on a number of levels and develop a web-like relationship, over the course of which the self alternately appropriates and is appropriated by its material surroundings (inclusive of objects and architecture). From this perspective, we can consider Belle's movements to extend the physical places of the house, in the sense that these places only become alive and visible to us *because* of Belle, that is, they come into existence as a consequence of her presence. This observation, in turn, allows as well for a reading of the house as an extension of the wandering re/collector. We can consequently claim, as does Louis Marin, that more than simply being animated by the movements within it, space can be

understood as the actual effect of those movements.<sup>172</sup> Put another way, space can be thought of as deriving from dwelling. Martin Heidegger argued elsewhere to this effect, claiming that ‘we do not dwell because we have built, but we build because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers’.<sup>173</sup> A place, then, does not exist *per se*: it lives in space, in time; it follows the movements of its dwellers and occupies a delimited natural environment. The camera, as it advances deeper into the house, corridor after corridor, in a way reflects this idea, giving the illusion that the wandering body creates space as it moves: that the area in front of the camera’s recording field derives from the sensorial exploration of the house. Ultimately, then, the edifice exists for and because of the people who take shelter in it. Following this line of reasoning, it is not surprising that, when the space ceases to be inhabited/habitable, its structures reflect that abandonment. The structure of the building becomes aged, its walls cracked, and the rooms dusty and sombre.

To continue our investigation, let me return to that same sequence in *La Belle et la Bête*.<sup>174</sup> In reading that movement of Belle in the corridor, we notice that, from the moment Belle enters the corridor until she exits, the camera offers a fixed shot of her body advancing steadily towards us. In spite of this movement forward, the camera does not pull away: it stands still as Belle glides along the hallway and through the floating curtains. Her figure then gets menacingly closer, inevitably taking over the whole frame—a quick fade to black follows. Next, the camera cuts to a long shot of Belle, and, unexpectedly, the non-diegetic music stops for the first time since she entered the castle.

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<sup>172</sup> Louis Marin, ‘Classical, Baroque: Versailles, or the Architecture of the Prince’, trans. Anna Lehman, *Yale French Studies*, No. 80 (1991), p. 170.

<sup>173</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971, p. 148.

<sup>174</sup> As a side note, it is interesting to notice the similarities between the sequence in which Belle first enters the Beast’s castle and the one in which Countess Ranevskaya enters St. Germain’s mansion, where she will sell her soul to the devil in exchange for the power to always win at cards. Here too, the door opens by itself, letting the heroine in. She is wearing a floating full-length cape and is greeted by servants holding lit candles in the darkened hallway.

Her back to the camera, she looks at two more hands holding candelabra, one on each side of a closed wooden door. As she carefully approaches it, a voice cuts through the silence and speaks to Belle softly as it opens, introducing itself as ‘the door to her room’. The camera then cuts to a close shot of the character from inside of the bedroom, and it seems as though the invisible eyes of all the objects in it were watching her, waiting for her to come in. Behind a still reluctant Belle, another closed door is visible on the other side of the corridor. She hesitates, stares at the room and ponders whether or not to go in. What she does not realise, but the viewer does, is that her decision is, at that point, inconsequential, for the threshold she appears to be at the brink of has long been crossed: it was crossed the moment she decided to walk into the castle. From that moment, there would be no turning back. We now look at her looking, and watch as she observes the new place she is about to walk into. No sooner has she entered the bedroom than the door starts to close and the music resumes.

This whole sequence from Cocteau’s film is a case in point when it comes to discussing Romantic-Gothic space and sensorial space in particular. The peculiarity of the places that Belle traverses, from the empty seat and table to the scattered hands and the voices that animate the door and the mirror, is symptomatic of the overall malaise that characterises the narrative. Animism (along with anthropomorphism, one of its subspecies) figures widely in the Romantic-Gothic imaginary and is particularly visible in the many hands, candelabra, and swords that emerge from the house and its walls, which further stress the borderless communion of house and body, thus foregrounding the image of the house as a breathing organism.<sup>175</sup> All these elements, however, point to incompleteness and division, to solitude and death: the castle of the Beast brings to light

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<sup>175</sup> David Punter and Glennis Byron identify animism as a subset of the uncanny in *The Gothic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 284-285.

the notion of multiple thresholds, linked together to convey the sinister dangers to which the self has fallen prey.

The singularities of the sensorial are evidenced in this film. The continuous display of dismembered corporeal imagery and disembodied sound throughout the sequence, as well as in the whole film, is almost violent in its bluntness and it stresses the importance given to the tactile, the skin, and synaesthesia. In fact, the film creates multiple cross-sensory perceptions that provide a twist to the traditional synesthetic experience. In other words, we are not dealing here with a simple (con)fusion of the senses; rather, each bodily constituent invokes something *else* that is conspicuously missing, consistently frustrating our sensorial expectations of seeing, touching/being touched, and hearing. All of those scattered hands, for instance, are hands that do not, and cannot, touch—a fact that seems to be metaphorically emphasised by their holding candelabra with lit candles: fire will burn the hand that tries to touch it. Furthermore, it creates proximity and distance at once: proximity between Belle and the place she is in, in that the light from the candle allows her to see and inspect her surroundings, and distance between Belle and that same place, in that the fire also creates a barrier that ostracises her, that prevents her from coming too close. The presence of fire therefore stresses the inability of the hand to perform its primary function: to engage in tactile contact. Nonetheless, hands are given a different role: that of seeing. In effect, these limbs are able to survey the heroine, to sense her body and to move spatially according to the direction it takes. What is more, not only do they see, but they also vividly appeal to that same sense—sight—through the brightness of the flame on each candle they hold. We can, in this regard, talk about literal manipulation: the severed hands seem to push Belle into going a certain way, almost telling her which paths to choose.

Rose Marie San Juan wrote a propos wax models of hands that they ‘appear not only as three-dimensional entities in space, but also as part of a body elsewhere’.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, there is an implicit but unavoidable presumption that the hand is represented as part of the body to which it belongs, which consequently generates the notion that one cannot exist without the other. The fragmented experience of the body therefore empties the latter of humanness by presenting the quintessentially human body part—the hand—as independently capable of agency.<sup>177</sup> To heighten the sense of unease this provokes in the viewer, all of those disembodied hands are not re/membered for the duration of the film. They belong to no one, and, what is more, we are not sure if they ever did.<sup>178</sup> This awareness brings forward a major aspect of the sequence: the concept of unexpected absence. Looked at closely, each place in the sequence seems to be characterised by an absence: the absence of a servant opening the doors of the castle, the absence of a host greeting the incoming guest, the absence of eyes in the hands that see (and of any obvious bodies attached to them), the absence of fingers in the curtains that touch, the absence of a visible human source to acousmatic voices, and the absence of a body sitting in that empty chair that Belle quickly runs past. Nevertheless, this pervasiveness of inherent and exclusive human attributes, such as hands and speech, somehow makes up for the unusual bareness of the castle’s walls and floors, noticeable, for example, in the blatant absence of any paintings or carpets.

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<sup>176</sup> San Juan, ‘The Horror of Touch’, p. 435. For a detailed, engaging and in-depth study of the hand, see also Katherine Rowe, *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

<sup>177</sup> Images of hands abound in the Romantic-Gothic mode. Their meaning, however, varies greatly. If, in *La Belle et la Bête*, they accentuate the fragility of the self and its body, in *Peter Ibbetson* hands are conversely used to symbolise union throughout the film. When Gogo/Peter and Mimsey/Mary are about to be geographically separated by his uncle after his mother’s death, a close-up shows the children locking hands, as Gogo vehemently refuses to leave Paris. This interlacing of hands symbolises their inseparability, regardless of physical and geographical distance.

<sup>178</sup> This uncertainty and the fear it might arise have fuelled human imagination for centuries. It is therefore not surprising the large number of terror/horror stories associated with the image of the severed (and often mobile) hand.

For all of this, it becomes clear that those absences imbue the castle with a very distinct sensate quality; a quality that, in turn, extends not only to each and every space in the film, but to Romantic-Gothic spaces in general. Noteworthy is also the effect of the consistent movement forward throughout the whole sequence. As Belle is consecutively given access to room after room, she appears to be entering a kind of house of death, a place of absence and mourning, concealed from the outside world. The ever-present movement of objects, light, shadows, and sound within the frame is somewhat terrifying, because the character seems to be hopelessly walking deeper and deeper into an increasingly remote space from where she will have trouble escaping—as we sense she might soon need to. I say ‘somewhat terrifying’ because the combination of slow motion with the non-diegetic music, as well as the singular strangeness of the house and its *sui generis* owners, makes us feel unexpectedly at ease in this unsettling place. The creation of a space that invokes a mix of terror, horror, and enchantment where sound, sight, and movement harmoniously—but eerily—come together again illustrates the setting of a Romantic-Gothic mood. Besides, the delay in time during the first half of the sequence serves a specific purpose, calling attention to the movements of the central character and the spaces that are offered for her to explore. Additionally, this slowing down in narrative time is also responsible for rendering Belle’s first journey in the house very much surreal, so that, although filled with bizarre elements, the action is not disrupted, and the appearance of the magical is naturalised. Paradoxically, however, the slow motion seems to also precipitate the action to its conclusion—death?—in the sense that, from the very beginning, it appears as though Belle has come too late—too late for life, too late for love, and barely in time to pay her last respects to whoever inhabits that grandiose sepulchre.

To round up this close reading of the beginning of Cocteau’s film, it is relevant to stress that the rhythm of the syncopated movements of the hands, the light emanating

from the many candles, the mix of close and long shots, and the general animation of objects in the castle, along with the succession of closed and enclosing spaces, are remarkable for drawing attention to the importance of the camerawork and mise-en-scène in the structuring of a place: it is through them that the sensuousness of the cinematic image is conveyed. Additionally, the way the camerawork, the mise-en-scène, and the sonic field are coordinated brings to light an essential feature of Romantic-Gothic space: the way that only the camera can connect all of these places and allow us to understand them relationally, that is, in conjunction with other places, spaces, objects, sounds, and people. This is important because it structures these places as living entities that exist in space and in time, and that actively seek to share the lives of their inhabitants—inhabitants who are transported consciously or not, willingly or not, from room to room through a multiplicity of doors and mirrors.

The following sections explore the issues of sensorial space further by analysing the places within the house, its architectural structures and, finally, its connection with nature. My aim is to bring together the behavioural patterns of the characters in what I call the anti-home and in the natural environment, and connect these with the ritualistic interaction between the body and the display of memory-objects.

### **Sites of Memory: The Home and the Anti-Home**

It is widely accepted that the spatiality of the Gothic relies heavily on repetition. The films I am analysing here have kept this prominent aspect of Gothic literature very much alive, so that the viewers are constantly confronted with identical places and motifs, whether within the same film or in different ones. These recurring memoryscapes, together with the precise arrangement of topographic features, trace out imagistic paths in the minds of the viewers that propose certain ways of observing and

analysing the story world. For instance, the audience can anticipate from the start that, if a film opens with a castle silhouetted against a nightly sky, the characters will suffer innumerable afflictions whilst within those walls. We know beforehand that such spaces house terrifying secrets and mortal dangers. Therefore, we do not generally foresee a truly happy ending for the erratic wanderer who enters the castle. In the same way, a film that begins with images of an agitated ocean and menacing waves does not promise a blissful unrolling of events. Amidst all the sites that recur in Gothic and Romantic literature and poetry, the cinema has persistently elected the house as its location of choice. There is a specificity to how the Romantic-Gothic thinks about the space of the house that distinguishes it from melodrama and other classic film forms whose narrative patterns revolve around the family home.

The house has indeed secured a unique place in the Romantic-Gothic imagination and is by far one of the most recurrent and definitional settings in the films.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, despite the visibility it has been given since the first cinematographic projections and its centrality to the Romantic-Gothic, overall academic comment on the subject has comfortably rested on matters of feminism and gender, insofar as these houses, whatever form they are given, are usually connoted with male power and control—with spaces where the helpless, subservient woman is imprisoned and finds herself having to prove her worth before the eyes of the male character. The privileging of feminist readings comes as no surprise if we consider the fact that the image of the house has from the start been associated with so-called ‘female Gothic’ texts, of which Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) are two prime examples. A consequence of this is the study of these issues as

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<sup>179</sup> Epstein’s previously discussed *La chute de la maison Usher* is an example of an early film that has the house as a major protagonist. Early German cinema was equally prolific in its use of the house. See, for instance, the representation of the haunted castle in *The Chronicles of the Gray House* and the underground prison beneath the house in Wiene’s 1920 *Genuine, die Tragödie eines seltsamen Hauses*.

limited to a specific historical period and country of production. Hollywood cinema, namely in the cycle of films that stretched from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, depicted the bond between the house and the characters with special insistence, revolving around ‘a young inexperienced woman [who] meets a handsome older man to whom she is alternately attracted and repelled’, as Diane Waldman writes.<sup>180</sup> As an alternative reading to broaden the discussion and to better understand the ways in which the house is depicted, I again propose to develop an image-oriented analysis of paradigmatic sequences of international films whose framework is more aesthetic and phenomenological, and via which I argue that it is possible to explore, for instance, how the house is able to convey fear and horror.

Across the ages, the image of the house has shifted between two opposites, and has been hailed as a place of happiness, safety, and bliss just as frequently as it has been deemed a prison. The house in *Secret Beyond the Door*, for instance, is less Celia’s home than the place of her exile. Throughout its many travels, from country to country and from book to film, the house acquired a whole variety of forms, from an imposing and remote castle to a small town home. In fact, the house functions differently in national contexts and means something quite specific in the US. The European tradition puts the focus on the castle-atop-a-hill style of opening, whereas Hollywood productions prefer to settle the menace within the walls of a city house or apartment. We need only look at Murnau’s *Schloß Vogeloed* (1921) and *Laura* as examples of both approaches to the opposing geographical locations of the house. Then, there is also the case of émigré filmmakers, who chose yet another place for their stories that consists of a mixture of the two. Ophüls’ *Caught* (1949), for instance, is set in a small house by the sea, like the one featured in *The Razor’s Edge* (1946), directed by British émigré

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<sup>180</sup> Diane Waldman, ““At Last I Can Tell It to Someone!”: Feminine Point of View and Subjectivity in the Gothic Romance Film of the 1940s”, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter 1983), p. 29.

Edmund Goulding. When inside, however, the differences fade. Even the sonic field presents numerous similarities, in the sense that city houses frequently also have creaky wooden floors, secret passages, hidden doors, revolving-bookcases, and rooms where ghostly sounds or chants are heard at night.

Let us now investigate how the figure of the house is introduced and integrated into the narratives. The Romantic-Gothic mode is characterised by a decisive change in location that takes place at the beginning of the stories. The journeys the protagonists embark on at that moment are exteriorised as sorrowful journeys into the unknown, be it an unknown space that belongs to the Other or the vastness of nature. That spatial travel is particularly visible in 1940s American films, but can be observed in early European productions as well, like *Nosferatu*, which starts with the hero, Hutter, travelling to Transylvania to visit a new client, Count Orlok. In most Romantic-Gothics, the hero or heroine customarily starts the film in the peaceful and sheltered comfort of a provincial family home, presented as an ideal of domesticity. *Undercurrent*, for instance, opens as a sophisticated family comedy, set in a small American town. Yet, as the plot of the film unfolds, its tone gradually changes. In the comfort of her home, Ann is introduced to Alan Garroway, whom she soon thereafter marries following a whirlwind romance. They start their life together by moving to Washington, but, not long after that, decide to travel again in order to spend some time at Alan's almost deserted property in Middleburg, Virginia. Seduced by its mysterious owner, Ann moves into a new, unknown and dangerous place.

As we can see from the above example, there are, as a rule, two types of habitation that co-exist in the Romantic-Gothic: the small and quiet family home and the large and secluded house where the hero or heroine is invited (and afterwards

generally forced) to live in.<sup>181</sup> The word ‘home’ is therefore taken to mean company and comfort, as opposed to separation and loneliness in the case of what I call the anti-home. This latter type of habitation has taken on many shapes, but is most often represented as an isolated castle or mansion with a seemingly ever-growing maze-like interior of rooms, stairways, walls, windows, and trapdoors.

Importantly, the replacement of one home for another is not a purely geographical event and is always accompanied by an emotional journey.<sup>182</sup> From the moment the front door to the house is crossed, two journey paths—a psychological and a physical one—will co-exist and blend until the end of the narratives.<sup>183</sup> In *Rebecca*, for instance, it is the new Mrs de Winter’s trespassing of Rebecca’s room and her subsequent contact with the personal belongings of the latter that signal the beginning of her twofold journey: on the one hand, she travels physically as the avid re/collector of Rebecca’s memory, whereas, on the other, she also journeys within her mind, all along questioning her own sanity, the actual behaviour of her husband towards his late wife, and the real intentions of Mrs Danvers.<sup>184</sup> The geographical side to her journey, which, as I mentioned, concerns her desperate gathering of clues to prove her suspicions and regain social status, bears a significant weight in her psychological journey as well, for

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<sup>181</sup> Although my form is transnational, it suffers a twist in specific countries sometimes. An exception to the clear geographic separation of home and house can be found in Hitchcock’s *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943). In this film, terror is welcomed into the home from where no family member moves out. There is no topographic replacement of the home for the house. Instead, the house is here created *within* the home where the thief and murderer is a loving relative and guest. This is an interesting twist to the more common situation where the notions of peril and death are allocated to a specific space outside of the home and are contained within its limits. In this film, however, evil wanders in the home and has the power of transforming it into a cradle of darkness. This welcoming of danger into the home is a distinct feature of American Gothic.

<sup>182</sup> It is worth noting that this replacement of one home for another is usually temporary, because it is expected that, by the end of the films, the characters will return to either the home we were shown at the beginning of the film, as in *Corridor of Mirrors*, or that the anti-home will become homely by the disappearance of an evil human presence, as in Dickinson’s *Gaslight*, where the police comes to arrest the heroine’s husband. Nevertheless, a different outcome is occasionally offered: the hero might not be able to ever again leave the house, as in *Dracula*.

<sup>183</sup> This journey, notably in the ‘female gothics’, is usually a part of a pre- and post-threshold moment, associated with a coming-of-age process, which, in turn, often relates to marriage and, more specifically, to becoming a married woman.

<sup>184</sup> Other striking examples are Ingrid Bergman’s characters in Cukor’s *Gaslight* and Hitchcock’s *Under Capricorn* (1949), where she plays a woman driven to the verge of insanity by her dominating husband.

it is through re/collection that she can achieve that much longed-for mental stability. In *Rebecca*, this equals her finding out whether or not her husband murdered his former wife and whether he is or is not planning on doing the same to her. This links with a main feature of the narratives: the acknowledgement that dwelling in a house entails psychological consequences, in that it gradually becomes a persistent, obsessive, and maddening questioning over the sanity and lucidity of one's own memories. As both a physical and an inner travel, the re-location of the characters to what they at first believe to be a home-like place therefore also implicates the *a priori* renunciation of a certain kind of life.

- I was so happy once... home.
- And you will again.
- Will I? Sometimes I feel I'll never leave this house.

This excerpt from a dialogue at the beginning of *The Queen of Spades* clearly presents those two different, or rather antithetical, spaces—the home and the house. More than a mere lexical idiosyncrasy, the representation of these edifices varies markedly, in form as well as content, as we have been observing. In this particular conversation, young Lizaveta directly associates the loss of her home with the loss of happiness. The familial coziness of the home is mournfully opposed to the claustrophobic anguish the character experiences in the anti-home, referred to by Lizaveta as 'this house'. The beginning of this film, in turn, is rather atypical, in that, when it starts, the heroine is already found 'caged' in a house not her own and from where she longs to—but cannot—escape. The yearning for a home and, later on, the actual escape from the anti-home is a recurring theme in the films.

Drawing on Frances A. Yates's conceptualisation of memory as supported by a spatial mapping, Toufic concludes that in the labyrinth, of which the house is an

example, ‘one has an erroneous and defective memory, or else no memory at all’.<sup>185</sup> If space challenges common logic, then memory will not be properly formed. In agreement with Toufic’s interpretation, I claim that this ‘defective memory’ is observable in the proneness of the characters to re/collect memory. Using the metaphor of the house as a labyrinth where the threat of death hovers around the protagonists, I argue that memories are not just there in the house to be re-appropriated, but that the house itself, as a space where people and memories dwell, needs to be re/collected too. This is to say that the myriad rooms need to be conquered by the re/collectors, who will in turn connect them to one another via their movements of dwelling. The impact that spatial organisation has on memory is explicit in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*: the village is lost in space and thus its inhabitants cannot remember. When space is defective, memory is defective as well.

The understanding of the house as decentred and decentring space is essential to discussing the conflicting levels of reality present in the films. The relationship between outer reality, inclusive of the house and its belongings, and inner reality—comprised of memory (what has been), perception (what is) and imagination (what might be)—brings to the fore the issues of liminality at play within the mobile, ever stretching, ever shrinking boundaries of the house. The overall provisional quality of these borders is very apparent, for example, in *La Belle et la Bête*. As I have discussed, Belle’s dwelling creates space(s) and extends the places of the house. These spaces and places, in turn, prolong the physicality of the human body, notably via the scattered body imagery. We can also argue that all of those limbs are an expression of the Beast’s likewise fragmented body. Given that certain spaces derive and evolve from the dwellings of the characters and from how they physically—or sensuously—interact with the house and its objects (and vice-versa), I claim that, over the course of the film, the material world

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<sup>185</sup> Toufic, *Vampires*, p. 77.

and the self permeate each other. This is central to my argument that the house materially incorporates memory or, rather, that memory is physically detectable in the house, with many of its objects being presented as memorial artefacts.

The house is, in fact, the largest memory-object with which the characters come into contact. Continuing my reading of objects in the previous section, the journey of the re/collector in the anti-home is set off by an encounter with a memory-object and characterised by a subsequent pursuit of the memory of the Other. Following on from this premise, let us now look more closely at the dispersion of memory within the space of the house. In *La Belle et la Bête*, as I mentioned above, the fragmentation of the body is explicitly shown in the many hands and voices that appear throughout the narrative. In other films, however, different techniques are used, namely the recurrence of mirrors and doubles to signal the fission of the self, that is, the subdivision of the character into two or more bodies. Whether that division is physical, psychological or both, the body always becomes Other.

Memory in the Romantic-Gothic can be split in a threefold manner: into a human host (other than the self), into an object (inclusive of places inside or outside the anti-home), or into two conflicting personalities (both living within the same body). In the first two situations, memory is dislocated *from* the self, whereas, in the latter, it is divided *within* the body of the self. Furthermore, when memory subdivides into a human host, there are three possible scenarios. One typical outcome is to have memory inhabit a being that is physically different from the self. The figure of the double is emblematic of the splitting of memory from a human host into another. In *While I Live*, for example, Olwen finds a human host in the young journalist, and memory is therefore transferred onto the body of a stranger.

In *The Student of Prague* the situation somewhat differs, and memory is separated into two bodies that are physically identical—despite being independent from

one another. Galeen directed the film in 1926, a remake of Rye and Wegener's original film of the same title, which is now lost. The plot revolves around a young student, Balduin, who falls in love with a countess after saving her from a runaway horse. To be able to court her, however, he needs to improve his financial situation, which leads him to making a dangerous deal with a sorcerer named Scapinelli. In exchange, Scapinelli asks for Balduin's mirror reflection, and through it he takes control over his soul. Balduin's reflection corporealises as an evil double, who repeatedly confronts the now wealthy Balduin and eventually claims his life.

Finally, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* stands out as illustrative of the way in which the recipient of a person's memory can be another personality of the same body to whom the memory belongs in the first place.<sup>186</sup> In Robert Louis Stevenson's story and its film adaptations, memory is separated into two completely disparate Janus-like identities that are nonetheless part of the same body. Importantly, the change from one personality to another is accompanied by a radical metamorphosis that succeeds in camouflaging one of them to the benefit of the other. This means that we are dealing with a hybrid form of memory displacement—one that combines physical otherness with corporeal sameness. To complete my analysis of how memory is present and presented in the films, I will now look into objects and their connection to identity.

The division of memory acquires an even more complex dimension when we turn to the study of the ways in which it involves inanimate recipients. In considering memory-objects, as I have explained, objects that should be deprived of movement either border on aliveness or are actually kinetic. Memory, then, is responsible for making certain objects active participants in narrative action. Portraits (as in *Portrait of Jennie* and *Laura*), pianos (as in *While I Live* and *Undercurrent*) and wearable belongings, like *Peter Ibbetson's* ring and *Rebecca's* evening gown, are examples of

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<sup>186</sup> I am referring to the versions directed by Mamoulian (1931) and Victor Fleming (1941).

objects instilled with memory. It is also important to remark that the multiplication of memory into objects and their subsequent transformation into the memory of the deceased usually occurs after the self has died. They become the Other, the stranger, who in some narratives is even transformed from the virtually impalpable into the deceptively tangible: a ghost.

The issue of individual memory is therefore a more complex matter than it might at first appear, for, as we have just observed, when a memory splits, it does not just split, but always splits *into*—into someone or into something else. It moves outside of the body and is multiplied *externally*.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, that dispersion of memory is a process that carries with it serious consequences when we take into account the fact that identity in these films is acquired through place and its sensorial exploration (via the travels the memory-objects instigate). The gathering of a memory therefore also involves the re/collection of an identity (the two terms could even be used interchangeably in this context). Differently put, the interiorisation of selfhood in the Romantic-Gothic mode depends upon sensorial perception and the subsequent interpretation thereof. Calling our attention to the importance of the emotional ties that bind us to place, Yi-Fu Tuan argues that each individual develops a close emotional relationship to the dwelling-place, and that a sense of identity can derive from this interaction. He uses the terms ‘topophilia’, which describes a positive affective bond between people and place, and its opposite, ‘topophobia’, as ways of examining how we feel towards a particular place.<sup>188</sup> Looking at the films, the identity not only of the self, but also of the physically absent (those whose memory the self re/collects), is constructed spatially as the final outcome of a quest. The identity of the characters is, in this sense, a place-identity, acquired via an outwards-inwards dynamic movement of

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<sup>187</sup> The externalisation of identity into objects will be further explored in Chapter 4.

<sup>188</sup> The device of having multiple narrators tell and frame a story was repeatedly used in *film noir* as a means of decentering identity, as mentioned by Brennan in *The Gothic Psyche*, p. 20.

interaction between the self and the built and/or natural environment. Identity is thus furthermore performative, for it is constructed in an on-going interchange with the real. Specifically, the memory of one's identity is constituted object-by-object, room-by-room, as the wandering hero re/collects each memory-object from a specific place. By locating identity in place(s), we define it as a process or a 'state of becoming', to again use Klee's expression. In this regard, the dweller's conflicted sense of belonging to a place, so typical in the Romantic-Gothic, highlights the problematics of a spatialised identity: insofar as the self is constantly adapting to the changing physical environment, its sense of a selfhood that is stable and inviolate is lost.

*Undercurrent* provides an example of a character whose identity is challenged because of her search for the memory of the Other. After searching for Michael for so long and in so many places (the anti-home, the ranch, dinner parties, and so on), Ann begins to second-guess herself and her state of mind as suspicion increases over her husband's implication in Michel's supposed murder. Her sense of wholeness, her selfhood will not be reacquired until the memory of the other has been successfully remembered. In other words, it is only with the return to normalcy and to the home, which can mean the original home of the hero or the transformation of the anti-home into a home, can the character be freed from the memory of the Other and thus regain his or her identity. Given the impact that the house has on journeys of remembering and on the psychological well being of the characters, let us assess the particularities of the architectural structures of the anti-home and how they affect the bodies that dwell within its limits.

## Architecture—Travels Within

Mifanwy, in case you call when I am out—my house is yours to wander in. P.  
from *Corridor of Mirrors*

We have by now established that the image and space of the house are of the utmost importance in the Romantic-Gothic mode, and I now take this enquiry further in an attempt to clarify the way the built environment relates to the self and the outdoors.<sup>189</sup> The visibility accorded the architectural is sometimes thematically corroborated by the professional occupations of the characters. In *Secret Beyond the Door*, for instance, Mark is an architect who collects rooms where murders have occurred, whilst grown-up Peter Ibbetson works as an architect in a London firm. By looking closely at the very structure of the house, with its labyrinthine rooms, tunnel-like corridors, sliding panels, and collapsing ceilings, it becomes clear that everyone therein residing is a guest, who the camera frequently depicts as a trespasser, filming each crossing of doors as if some invisible and dangerous boundary were about to be crossed. I have described how Belle stood outside her bedroom, trying to decide whether or not to go in. There is also Celia, in *Secret Beyond the Door*, waiting for everyone to fall asleep so she can explore her husband's collection of rooms or Ann, in *Undercurrent*, running away to Michel's cottage in the hope of finding out what happened to him. Indeed, Romantic-Gothic topographies usually have one or more spaces that the self either cannot or should not transgress, so that the re/collecting wanderer often seems like an intruder amidst the mobile infrastructure of the anti-home.

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<sup>189</sup> It is worth recalling that, historically, the term 'Gothic' was largely used to describe a style of construction centuries before coming to classify a literary genre. Walpole was the first to employ the term in this sense, by adding the subtitle *A Gothic Story* to the second edition of his novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Additionally, from the late 1740s and throughout the nineteenth century, the attention to architectonics led to a Gothic revival that started in England and quickly spread across Europe. Although Gothic architecture does not figure widely in every film, the man-made structure of the anti-home, whatever shape it takes, is the core of most narratives.

Cavallaro writes about the emphasis of the Gothic on the built environment and the way it metamorphoses, claiming that its 'penchant for assuming a variety of spatial forms is further corroborated by the fact that gothic plots unfold in changing architectural structures'.<sup>190</sup> These changes refer as much to the interior of the house as to the fact that the outside of the edifice is itself prone to change. In analysing the morphic qualities of the anti-home, it is vital to state from the beginning that the built environment should not be interpreted as the mere architectural materialisation of the inner troubles of the individual, as a sort of modelling clay that envelops the characters, that breathes, cries, and laughs as they do. In fact, it can be perceived as a kind of skin that actively cultivates sensory experiences. More specifically, spatial analogies for psychological phenomena notwithstanding, the architectural often inculcates specific emotions into the characters, leading them to experience fear of their present condition and of their two hosts: the house and the other dwelling self that inhabits its space. This is important because, in showing that the edifice does not always become a character exclusively by virtue of mirroring the tortured minds of the heroes, it highlights the ultimate powerlessness of the characters to easily navigate through interior spaces. We may then conclude that the performativity of the places within the house can be established in one of two ways: either a place absorbs the feelings of the characters and becomes, in the first instance, an objective manifestation of their subjective experiences or it creates those subjective experiences by first instigating sensory reactions in the characters. In the former situation, we could talk of causal agency on the part of the house, in the sense that it reacts to the characters, and only then may it act on its own. In the second case, however, the house acts upon the characters and leads to their guiding their actions according to the stimuli received. The architectural therefore intervenes in the stories by virtue of its very structure, that is, by confronting the characters with

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<sup>190</sup> Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision*, p. 29.

myriad challenging obstacles that they need to surpass in order to move forward and resolve whatever mystery they are caught in. *Portrait of Jennie* illustrates this towards the end, when Eben climbs up into Land's End Light looking for Jennie. The high angle shot of Eben looking up at the long spiral staircase of the lighthouse is replicated ten years later in *Vertigo*. In both cases, the characters are faced with the complex architecture of a building, which hinders the success of their remembering processes.

I have now identified the house as an entity capable of agency that uses its architectural lines to sensuously engage in direct dialogue with the characters. This also means that the movements of the characters in the house are (in part) manipulated by the architecture of the place. In this way, both entities become inextricably bound together. In his discussion of Gothic affects, Bruno Lessard states that 'the house replaces the monster. Instead of a physical presence haunting space, we have physical space h(a)unting the characters'.<sup>191</sup> By actively engaging with the self, the architecture of the place becomes linked to the body, suffusing every room and object with sensorial memories. Point(s)-of-view shots, sweeping pans, sound (or the absence of it), cameras roaming over arches and ceilings, and gliding up and down flights of stairs contribute to this sensorial dialogue as well. Consequently, the reciprocity derived from the process of getting to know a house through a sensate approach facilitates the intrusion of the architectural into the lives of the characters. Note how the whole house seems to welcome Belle as she enters, and how rooms open and close as she passes by.

The connection of dweller-dwelling space is so intricate that, at specific moments during the course of the stories, the structure of the house might be physically

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<sup>191</sup> Bruno Lessard, 'Gothic Affects: Digitally Haunted Houses and the Production of Affect-Value' in María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (eds), *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, London: Continuum, 2010, p. 219. Lessard mentions Misha Kavka's 'plasticity of space' to describe the cinematic Gothic's use of space to convey fear through the manipulation of space around a human body (Misha Kavka, 'The Gothic on Screen', in Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, p. 210).

modified, as we have seen with regard to *La chute de la maison Usher*.<sup>192</sup> Billy Stevenson acknowledges the intricate symbiosis of house and self, commenting that the characters frequently seem to appear within the spaces they inhabit as a mere manifestation of their particular characteristics.<sup>193</sup> If more obvious when it comes to discussing ghosts, this appearing/disappearing faculty is especially striking when we examine the many house servants and other secondary characters that participate in the films. Quite frequently, their sudden presence or absence is a source of discomfort to the characters. ‘You startled me!’, the young reporter says to Nehemiah in *While I Live*. The house servant promptly apologises and replies that he does not usually startle people. A similar situation occurs in *Portrait of Jennie*, which introduces Miss Spinney as nothing more than a passing shadow, following Eben when he first enters the art gallery on a wintry night hoping to sell some of his paintings. Until she speaks directly to him, he is completely unaware of her presence. Both Nehemiah and Miss Spinney seem to appear *because* of a human presence that walks into a determined place.<sup>194</sup> It is as if the contact between self and room had summoned them.

As with any house, the Romantic-Gothic domicile is formed by a determined number of rooms, which are in turn divided into multiple adjacent places that the

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<sup>192</sup> William Wordsworth’s ‘The Ruined Cottage’ (1797) presents a situation similar to the one described above. In this poem, the ruin of the home stands as the result of a wife’s continual loss of hope over her husband’s return from the war. The wife, named Margaret, waits sorrowfully for him, season after season, until she dies of mourning (see Stephen Gill, ‘The Ruined Cottage Revisited’, in *Wordsworth’s Revisitings*, 2011).

<sup>193</sup> The author makes this remark with reference to the protagonist couple of *Secret Beyond the Door*. See Billy Stevenson, ‘Lang: Secret Beyond the Door (1948)’, September 2008, <http://www.afilmcanon.com/journal/2008/9/18/lang-secret-beyond-the-door-1948.html> (accessed 27 October 2012).

<sup>194</sup> In this respect, the role of the servants in the films is noteworthy, in that their function is not dissimilar to that of a modern day surveillance camera. They seem to always be aware of everything that is going on and of all that has happened before. They act as the supreme guardians of memory: Mrs Danvers protects the memory of Rebecca, Spinney, from *Portrait of Jennie*, preserves the memory of Eben, and Mammy Pleasant devotes her life to her old master, Cyrus, in *The Cat and the Canary*. Housemaids in particular are oftentimes the ones that either warn the characters about the dangers lurking around or, conversely, lure them into hellish situations. They usually seem to be conjured by the place and appear suddenly on the screen. Furthermore, their actions are frequently coordinated with inanimate presences, like the portrait or the mirror, as well as with living creatures, like cats and dogs that keep recur throughout the narratives.

dwelling body links together. These intersect with each other via revolving doors, windows, staircases, mirrors, and corridors, among other architectural devices. The spatial interconnections between all of those places, however, are markedly unconventional in the Romantic-Gothic. The camera offers the perception of the house's dwelling places to the spectators, who, contrary to the characters, are given unrestricted access to almost every room in (and perspective of) the house. It enjoys an amazing freedom of mobility, either gliding swiftly along darkened hallways, over rooftops, church bells, and ballrooms or stopping for a while, whether in a park or in front of a painting. All in all, it enjoys the kind of freedom for which the characters strive throughout. On this, let us look at *Secret Beyond the Door*, more precisely to the sequence where the camera closely follows the decisive expedition of the heroine in the anti-home. This is the journey that will unravel the mystery of her husband's secret room. Earlier that day, Celia had ingeniously copied the key to the locked room Mark adamantly refuses to let her enter. She waits until night-time to venture downstairs. When all is quiet, she makes her way out of the bedroom and towards the forbidden door. From a high angle, we watch as she starts to climb down the spiral staircase that connects both floors. As she advances along the deep-shadowed hallways with the sharp bright circle of her flashlight illuminating the way forward, the camera accompanies her in a full shot. The Expressionist lighting creates an eerie atmosphere that foreshadows the terror Celia is about to experience whilst at the same time transforming her into a black silhouette moving steadily along the corridor. When she turns left, we notice she is nearing a large metal gate. Then, as she turns the handle (her profile to us), the camera moves closer, describing a small semi-circle so that her back is now to the screen, and she resumes her walk towards the locked door. The space of the ill-lit corridor seems immense, an illusion that clearly positions the heroine as a lost wanderer within the anti-home, too small and too helpless amidst its treacherous architecture.

Admittedly, all of the intercrossing places in the house would, at first glance, seem to allow one to effortlessly move between one and the next, and consequently to appear, enter, hide, or escape *ad libitum*. Nevertheless, the fact is that objects and places that should facilitate transition actually end up creating a profusion of physical and psychological barriers to the dislocations of the characters, guaranteeing their entrapment. Windows and doors do not always open or close, and when they do, they do not always establish a simple physical and temporal connection between one place and another; rather, they might open or close to different times and spaces. As Hannah Mowat asserts, the window is ‘an ambivalent access point’, for it is ‘functional in principle, but unreliable in practice, and proximity to it has the potential to blind and obliterate’.<sup>195</sup> Notice, in this regard, that windows are oftentimes shut and cannot be forced open, allowing the characters but a glimpse of an unreachable freedom. Concerning the use of doors, their role is also not simply to act as passage sites, as a means to enter or leave a place, or as a straight conduit to the interior or exterior of a house; rather, as Leutrat remarks in his detailed study of the fantastic in film, they often enclose to create interior spaces.<sup>196</sup> Through revolving doors, heavy doors, hidden doors, and half-open doors, the characters appear and disappear into different spaces or times. Similarly, staircases and corridors do not always give access to a room as would be expected, but instead lead to another flight of stairs or to another corridor. These barriers might translate into an actual impediment of movements, or, by contrast, might instead relate to the absence of obstacles, which sets in motion an apparent non-stopping flux of movement in an ever-expanding space. The living organicity of the built interior entraps the mind and the body of the heroes and thus interferes with

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<sup>195</sup> Hannah Mowat, ‘Nature versus Architecture: Navigating the Threshold in Alain Resnais’s *L’Année Dernière à Marienbad*, Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining* and Jessica Hausner’s *Hotel*’, *Frames Cinema Journal*, Vol. 2 (November 2012) <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/nature-versus-architecture-navigating-the-threshold-in-alain-resnaiss-lannee-derniere-a-marienbad-stanley-kubricks-the-shining-and-jessica-hausners-hotel/> (accessed 11 November 2013).

<sup>196</sup> Leutrat, *Vie des fantômes*, p. 62.

actions of re/collecting. The way the buildings are structured therefore actively promotes the self's estrangement from society, often making one almost inaccessible in their confines. The struggles against the architectural are, in this respect, somewhat reminiscent of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's dream prisons, where the presence of the self is overpowered by sinister subterranean interiors, and where point of view is distorted in such a way that objects seem to multiply *ad infinitum*. In a way, then, the houses seem to have been purposely built to forever thwart and delay the re/collector's escape. The dis/continuity of the places within the house, and the dynamic each of them establishes between its intrusive, serpentine, shadowy interstices and the human body is responsible for creating the kind of interrupted mobility that characterises Romantic-Gothic journeys and also illustrates the fact that being in Romantic-Gothic places is always a geographically and psychologically disjointed experience.

This sends us back to a previously discussed topic, concerning the ability of the house to convey fear. Fear (as well as memory) therefore pertains not solely to the mind but to place as well—it is displayed and choreographed spatially by the architectural structures of the anti-home. In this regard, the dialectic between the self and the Other is outlined in spaces that not only dramatise the relationship between the individual and the house, that is, between the self and architectonics, but that, in so doing, challenge notions of memory and identity as well. Still, it is precisely the insistence on facing up to the architectural that will enable the characters to unravel (at least part of) the mystery that holds them captive inside the anti-home. 'The way a place is built determines what happens in it', says Mark in *Secret Beyond the Door*, thereby attributing to architectural design the role of sole agent responsible for shaping the feelings and actions of the re/collectors. To this situation, however, we may oppose the opinion of Slade, Peter Ibbetson's blind employer. His telling him 'being happy ain't in places. Being happy is inside of you' provides the reverse side to Mark's belief, and

puts the faculty of agency in the dwelling human body. The Romantic-Gothic lingers in this uncertainty, going incessantly from one extreme to the other without ever reaching a balanced compromise between the two. At the same time, this contributes to explain the reason for which the spatial performance of mourning is unsuccessful in assuaging the restless minds and bodies of the characters. Moreover, it raises the question of where happiness lies in the Romantic-Gothic. Is it in us or in places? For all that we have discussed so far, we can suggest that it lies in us in places, that is, if any stage of happiness can be achieved, it will necessarily be dependent upon the relationship between the dwellers and the places where they re/collect and remember memories.

### **Spatialising Time in the Architectural**

C.T.-Y. Lai adds an important historical perspective to the view according to which the house embodies the self. He claims that it is the Romantic obsession with impermanence that is translated into the architectural, and that architecture illustrates different forms of instability, namely that of personal life. In this respect, he argues that buildings can be regarded as records of an individual life.<sup>197</sup> This idea is vital to my understanding of the house as a memory-object in the Romantic-Gothic. Similarly, Goliot-Lété writes that the walls of a house are a cognitive reserve, an archive.<sup>198</sup> From this point of view, the way the home and the anti-home are designed and the changes their structure might suffer help analyse the troubled minds of the dwellers. However, in my chosen canon, it is not merely a question of the house storing and instantly reflecting the self's *feelings*, suddenly falling apart, for instance, when the character is about to die. It relates instead to the longer process during which the architectural

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<sup>197</sup> C.T.-Y. Lai, *Frozen music: English Romantic Writings and the Architecture of the City, 1811-1830*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University College London, 2011).

<sup>198</sup> Goliot-Lété, 'Périls en la demeure', pp. 149-150.

continually registers the co-habitation experience between the house and the self. In other words, it concerns a process of engraving in the building the damages made by the passing of time on the Other and the self.

The derelict estate of *Wuthering Heights* reflects the pain Heathcliff and Cathy felt over the years, so much so that, in the narrative present, it is but a shadow of what it once was: broken windows allow rafts across the house, cobwebs hang from the decrepit ceilings, dust covers the beds and the furniture, and the lit fireplace in the living room cannot hide the cold that has long ago settled. In this sense, the joys and losses through which the self has lived can be physically detected in the edifice. Implicit here is the suggestion that the anti-home reflects not just the mind of its current dwellers, but also that of its past guests, and that the objects that had once belonged to someone now deceased are inherited by the architectural. Heathcliff is no longer the master of the house: nature has taken that role. This sheds some light on why some of the heirlooms, keepsakes, artefacts, and souvenirs found in the rooms of the anti-home at times seem to belong more to the architectural structures that envelop them than to its inhabitants. At once mournful and oneiric, Paul's mansion in *Corridor of Mirrors*, for example, is representative of the Romantic-Gothic anti-home, built and kept in homage to someone and thus knowingly or unknowingly devised to make the process of forgetting almost impossible. The continuous and conflicted process of mourning is thus implicated in spatial dwellings.

Mourning in the Romantic-Gothic, when understood as the condition of refusing to forget, can actually be understood as a largely spatial process, to some extent pre-determined by a schematic arrangement of structural details. To clarify, let me recall one of the primary arguments I made with regard to mourning in the previous chapter: during their exploratory dwellings, the re/collecting actions of the characters involve permanent remembering, which brings to the fore the inability to forget as a result of

those same actions. As the objects become autobiographical to the dweller, the edifice becomes nothing short of a private memorial that imprisons the living but also the dead and their memories. In other words, Romantic-Gothic houses most often take the shape of memorials to the departed and are cinematically constructed as spaces where past memories and the memory of the past accumulate and build up.

In this context, the anti-home could also be paralleled with the museum, to the extent that both spaces showcase the dead, or rather, death, in the confinement of their architectural structures.<sup>199</sup> To be sure, both the cinema and the museum have the ability to historicise objects and create ghosts. The deracination of the corporeal being is made evident in the anti-home, which the characters expected to be a welcoming, homely place. Sencindiver remarks, in this respect, that when one is ‘exiled within the walls of one’s own domestic space, the familiar is defamiliarised: ordinary objects, actions, and events are rendered alien’.<sup>200</sup> This is what happens with objects in museums. As Sandberg claims, the technique of displaying discrete objects by re-situating them ‘in an “unbroken” context [allows] spectators both accessibility and the illusion of an experiential connection with the objects of their vision’.<sup>201</sup> This ‘experiential connection’ acquires a different dimension in the anti-home, where the advertency against touching, that is, the (general) prohibitive contact between the hand and the object in the museum does not apply, and where touch is required to retrieve the memory of the past. The anti-home is indeed a space of memory and a place for

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<sup>199</sup> This understanding of the anti-home as a museum points towards a historical link to the nineteenth century and the rise of the museum. As Mark B. Sandberg observes, ‘museums could profitably be seen as indices of new social relations between bodies and objects in the late nineteenth century, a line of inquiry that leads to investigation of the many other institutions of the visible surrounding cinema’s founding moment. It may well be, in this light, that the relation between effigy and narrative is a key to unlocking the social context of viewing at the turn of the century’ (Mark B. Sandberg, ‘Effigy and Narrative: Looking into the Nineteenth-Century Folk Museum’, in Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 354).

<sup>200</sup> Sencindiver, ‘Fear and Gothic Spatiality’, p. 24.

<sup>201</sup> Sandberg, ‘Effigy and Narrative’, p. 325. For more on film, spectatorship, and museums, see Alison Griffiths’s *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. The author analyses interactive film spectatorship as well as the relationship between the spatiality of museums and the body of the viewer.

remembering: an archival temple where the characters create a more or less aesthetically pleasant indoors cemetery. Moving the afterlife (of objects and people) out of the graveyard and into the space of the anti-home (or the museum) entails specific implications. From this perspective, given the fact that the displayed objects stage encounters between the past and the present, we can claim that material and immaterial memories, such as objects and ghosts respectively, are inextricably bound to place, in the same way that we, as humans, are, in Casey's words, 'tied to place undetachably and without reprieve'.<sup>202</sup> This is pertinent to my research because it means that the house, just like the museum, creates its own temporal logic according to which memory and time are compressed in space, acting as media via which personal history becomes ahistorical and the past atemporal.

One of the best examples of how time is spatialised can be found in the way the contents of the anti-home are organised. Because the rooms and the objects in them have remained the same, the house seems to have stopped in time—the more or less distant time of the ancestors who scrutinise the protagonists from their watchful portraits on the walls. Aware of the connection between time and objects, Barry Curtis writes, in his study on the haunted house, that 'the contents of houses are imprinted with events in time'.<sup>203</sup> He claims that old things are integral to the notion of the haunted house in 'establishing links with previous times or distant places'.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, this museological quality presents the anti-home as a liminal place: a site where the artificially remembered past is put on display in the hope of preserving something of that past in the present and for the future.

The voyages in liminality between temporal realms that the dweller performs in the anti-home bring us to the difference between the spatial organisation of the home

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<sup>202</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xiii.

<sup>203</sup> Curtis, *Dark Places*, p. 67.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

and the anti-home, in that both buildings point towards spatial liminality. As it is possible to conclude from the readings so far in this chapter, the unknown, memory-laden spaces of the former are architecturally opposed to those of the latter and vice-versa. But what are the definitional elements that distinguish between these two spaces? To be sure, in the closedness of Romantic-Gothic edifices, places develop chiefly in two ways: vertically or along horizontal lines. Both designs create, as a result, places that either comfort, or, conversely, distress and deny the characters the possibility of an existence outside of their limits. The home, on the one hand, is traditionally built to human scale and characterised by mostly horizontal lines that give shape to small, sunlit, everyday-looking rooms. On the other hand, there is a privileging of vertical lines, spiralling spaces, high-ceiling chambers, and object-saturated rooms in the anti-home.<sup>205</sup> To complement this analysis, it is important to note that both places can be examined with regard to appropriation, that is, by observing how the architectural appropriates both the itinerant body of those indoors and the natural exterior. Here as well, the means of appropriation in the home vary significantly from those registered in the anti-home. The major difference has to do with the more or less clear distinction between indoor and outdoor. Whereas the home relies on a formal separation between the two, the same is not true in the anti-home. In the latter, the threshold has virtually faded.

The neighbourly relationship established between the inside and the outside favoured by the home is based on the fact that one knows precisely where the architectural begins and the natural ends. A tacit agreement is thus effected, and both the interior and the exterior can commune and co-exist peacefully. The inside of the

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<sup>205</sup> When discussing colour films, the home is generally associated with pastel shades, whilst the anti-home privileges bright tonalities, such as reds and yellows. In black-and-white productions, the emphasis is on lighting, which, in turn, shifts markedly from the home to the anti-home, where contrast lighting dominates.

house remains protected from the outside, not least by having the latter prevented from ever intruding the architecture of the home. This is achieved by means of windows and doors, for instance, which can approximate (if the subject chooses to open them) or separate. The only way the natural world is usually allowed to overtly come into contact with the interior of the building is under a mutilated form, that is, when almost all bonds with the outdoors have been literally severed. On this, we need only look at the many flowers in jars that are so often found in the home. Conversely, in the anti-home, the two realities permeate one another. Images of castle walls covered by moss or vines, for instance, recur quite frequently in the Romantic-Gothic. In addition, in the likely case that the mansion is surrounded by nature, the bushes, tree branches or sea waves usually reach out to touch the property, crossing the boundary from nature to built environment. The coastline that frames the anti-home in films such as *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, *The Razor's Edge*, and *While I Live*, illustrates this situation and is evocative of a quintessentially Romantic-Gothic atmosphere. Note the opening lines of *The Uninvited*:

They call them 'the haunted shores', these stretches of Devonshire and Cornwall and Ireland which rear up against the westward ocean. Mists gather here, and sea fog, and eerie stories. That's not because there are more ghosts here than in other places, mind you. It's just that people who live hereabouts are strangely aware of them. You see, day and night, year in year out, they listen to the pound and stir of the waves. There's life and death in that restless sound and eternity too. If you listen to it long enough, all your senses are sharpened. You come by strange instincts. You get to recognise a peculiar cold, which is the first warning.

In films such as the above, haunted shores commune with seafront houses, at once representative of the forces of nature and the resilience of human memory. In conclusion, then, we can say that the home civilises nature whilst the anti-home welcomes it in its natural state.

There is nonetheless one exception to this division: when the home is abandoned and no one dwells in it any more the edifice and its structure give in to the passage of

time. *Peter Ibbetson* offers a striking example of this. Attempting to re/collect the memory of his childhood, Peter Ibbetson leaves London and boards a train to Paris. After revisiting the Musée de Paris, where he meets a girl, he reencounters Colonel Forsythe, who used to play with him and Mimsey when they were children, telling them stories of his war days. Then he takes his new acquaintance to the countryside, where a quick travelling shot of a mansion indicates that Peter has just arrived at his destination: his old home. The shot that follows is quite unexpected: the camera makes a 180-degree turn and frames the couple arriving, so that we see them walking from inside the yard, in between tree trunks and leaves. This framing could be perceived as a point-of-view shot from the house itself, almost as if the rigid, immovable architecture of the building were watching them, surveilling them. Peter unceremoniously pushes the rusty gate door open. ‘This is where you lived?’, the girl asks him. ‘Yes, here’, he replies. ‘Well, it’s a bit run down, isn’t it?’, she comments, looking at the desolate, decadent estate. The house seems to have been closed for years. Peter, however, does not appear to notice the current state of the property and, with a smile on his face, says lovingly in a low voice: ‘And she lived there’. The camera shows us that Mimsey’s house is in the same pitiful condition as his. The outdoor has visually effected the passing of time, and its herby hands have stretched, touched, and invaded the architectural—and with it the private space of the house. Time has been spatialised in the rundown building and became visible and tangible.

## Nature and Architecture: Elegy to an Absence

Antoni Gaudí wrote that Gothic works ‘produce maximum emotion when they are mutilated, covered with ivy and illuminated by the moon’.<sup>206</sup> These elements—ivy-covered walls and moonlight—are indicative of the passing of time, of ephemerality and abandonment. Nature has settled in where it should not have. Everywhere in the Romantic-Gothic anti-home we can see the effects of time passing and the marks of times passed, but the epitome of the proximity between the building and nature is the image of the ruin: a site where the outside is dominant, and that, by resisting time, paradoxically stresses the overwhelming presence of an absence—the absence of a unified architectural structure, of an interior space in which to dwell. This brings forward nature as a force of agency, just as powerful as the architectural and the characters. Moreover, I suggest that the natural environment is not constricted to responding to human emotions: in fact, it more often than not acts (and reacts) to place and human presence, that is, to whether and how a place is occupied. The moss and vine that have covered the walls of Peter Ibbetson’s Parisian home or the broken windows of *Wuthering Heights* and the obtruding bricks of the Usher house have reached their present state because of an absence, in the first two films, and because of a misappropriation of space in the case of the third. In analysing the role of nature in Emily Brontë’s poetry, Vine claims that the poems ‘elegize an absence that inhabits nature’s presence’ and are characterised by ‘an awareness of nature as ... enshrining the place where the beloved is absent’.<sup>207</sup> This sums up what I was discussing above regarding Peter Ibbetson’s home: the presence of nature where it should not be present sends the characters and the audience back to the idea of what *should* be there; of what

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<sup>206</sup> Carlos Flores, *Les Lliçons de Gaudí*, Barcelona: Editorial Empúries, 2002, p. 89.

<sup>207</sup> Vine, ‘Romantic Ghosts’, p. 103.

or who was once there and is now gone. By making itself so blatantly visible, nature stands for the passage of time, and the remains of the edifice become home to an unbridgeable void.

Noteworthy in this regard is the cult of the ruin in mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth-century Europe, a time when the construction of ruins in private gardens became a common practice. The ruin was not perceived as an archaeological fragment, that is, as a broken piece in need of reconstruction and re-contextualisation: it was held as picturesque, as a symbol pregnant with artistic possibilities that filled the imagination of writers, painters, and architects.<sup>208</sup> Alain Fleischer calls the ruin a ‘lost battle’, ‘that which ... continues to resist time after having giving in to it, after having been beaten by it, and which will forever endure as both defeat and resistance’.<sup>209</sup> The ruin, he continues, is ‘that reflux, that retreat, that movement of return to the previous state of nature before Man’: it is that which ‘Man builds and time takes away’.<sup>210</sup> It is, I would add, time spatialised. In discussing restoration and preservation, Rosen states that the latter ‘can provide an encounter with [the historical actuality of a building] by refusing to interrupt its passage through time’.<sup>211</sup> ‘Ancient buildings’, he continues, ‘should therefore remain untouched, becoming something like monuments to the dead, preserving their spirits in a kind of architectural afterlife’.<sup>212</sup> The images of mouldering tombs in *Dracula*, the crumbling stones of the house of Usher, the broken windows of decrepit Wuthering Heights, or the grounds of Peter Ibbetson’s old home, all covered

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<sup>208</sup> These ideas were not exclusive to European countries: in the US, the Romantic Nationalists articulated the concepts of national past and world history, and replaced the image of the ruin for that of American wilderness. The untamed American territory could be ‘picturesque, sublime, and horrifying, all themes associated with the Romantics’ (Julia A. King, “‘The Transient Nature of All Things Sublunary’: Romanticism, History, and Ruins in Nineteenth-Century Southern Maryland”, in Rebecca Yamin and Karen Bescherer Metheny (eds), *Landscape Archaeology: Reading and Interpreting the American Historical Landscape*, Knoxville: The University of Texas Press, 1997, p. 251).

<sup>209</sup> Alain Fleischer, *Les Laboratoires du temps: écrits sur le cinéma et la photographie 1*, Paris: Galaade Éditions, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>211</sup> Rosen, *Change Mummified*, p. 50.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

with weeds, denote those feelings of time suspended and oldness rediscovered by highlighting the unstoppable intrusiveness of the environment into the deteriorated spaces of the architectural.<sup>213</sup>

At this point, it is important to end this section by also including the kinetic human body into my reading of nature and built infrastructures. Indeed, despite having now analysed the spaces of the home, the anti-home, and their respective architectural structures, the question remains of how nature and natural phenomena function in relation to a human body that is either trapped in the architectural or is free to roam in outdoor spaces. To begin answering this question, let me briefly return to *La Belle et la Bête*; more specifically, to the scene in Belle's bedroom where we had left off earlier.

After entering the room, her first decision is to run towards the open window at the far end and to open it wider. This quick gesture might have gone unnoticed or deemed insignificant were it not for the fact that moments like this recur very often in Romantic-Gothics. Besides greatly stressing the distance between the self and the outdoors, the action of opening or closing windows also reflects their in-between status. The liminal space that is the window, somewhere in between the seclusion of the characters in the anti-home and their forlornness in the outside world, physically demarcates the sensorial distance separating outside reality from the self in the house. To the similarity of Belle, Peter Ibbetson walks towards a window shortly after he arrives in Yorkshire. He has been hired, or so he thinks, to tear down the old stables and replace them with new ones. At this point, he does not yet know that the property belongs to Mary and her husband, the Duke of Towers. Through a lozenge-like pattern, made by the metal bars protecting the window, we perceive the nearby stables. Distance, therefore, is here doubly signalled, but a sense of familiarity (and, thus,

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<sup>213</sup> For more on nineteenth-century ruins, see, for instance, Rumiko Handa, 'Ruins in Nineteenth-Century Romanticism: A Case of Hermeneutical Distanciation', Copenhagen Working Papers on Design, No. 1 (January 2010), pp. 1-8.

proximity) is there as well: metal bars, as we have seen, are usually an indication of Peter's spatial closeness to Mary. In this context, then, the contradictory function of the window is clearly highlighted, and the ambiguity of the distance between the body of the self and the body of nature is visually represented in the lozenge-patterned bars of the window that separates Peter not only from the natural world, but specifically from Mary, whose memory he has begun to re/collect in the aftermath of the trip to his old Parisian home. Seconds later, Peter steps away from the window overlooking the stables and goes outside to take a closer look. Once there, he finally meets the Duchess of Towers. Despite being outdoors, Peter and Mary are still separated by architectural structures, just as they were decades before when quarrelling over wooden boards to build trains and dollhouses. Peter is standing on one side of the fence, Mary on the other.

Belle, in turn, after rushing to the balcony windows in the Beast's castle, stands still for a little while, staring at the world beyond. Turning away from the window, she looks dismayed and sits down. The freedom of the outside world was right there: she could see it, smell it, feel it, and hear it. However, looked at from the inside of the anti-home, the exterior has become virtually intangible; as intangible to Belle as it was to Peter and the ghost figures that populate Romantic-Gothic tales. All in all, despite its physical proximity from the self and the profusion of windows, corridors, and doors, the characters often perceive the outside world as utterly out of reach: deceptively close and tangible, it nonetheless belongs to another realm where a different spatial structuring applies. Surmounting that gap, that separation, is the outcome for which the characters strive throughout the narratives. In the eventuality that their endeavours are successful, the conquering of the architectural (the going out the door or window, the knocking down of the fence) will mark the end of their re/collecting journey, for only when the architecture of a place has been re-possessed can order be at last restored. The readings

that follow examine how the body of the self interacts with the open spaces. In particular, I analyse how memory, the senses, and the body link with the spaces outside of the house, and, conversely, how these exterior spaces relate to the wandering re/collector.

### **Changing Perceptions of Nature**

Further to the connection of self, house, and environment that we have been examining, a tight relationship develops as well between the travelling re/collector, nature, and natural phenomena. ‘They congregated round me; the unstained snowy mountain-top, the glittering pinnacle, the pine woods, and ragged bare ravine, the eagle, soaring amidst the clouds—they all gathered round me and bade me be at peace’, Victor Frankenstein comments in Mary Shelley’s novel.<sup>214</sup> Here we have that idea of ‘anthropocentric doubling’ I defined at the beginning of the chapter, for Victor perceives nature, or the sublime, egotistically, as revolving around him. The representation of nature as a reflection of the inner battles of the self is a prominent feature in both Gothic and Romantic literature and art, which relied heavily on nature to convey inherently human feelings, such as loss and grief.<sup>215</sup> In effect, one of the founding pillars of the Romantic doctrine is the belief in the transformation, or rather, transfiguration, of outside reality by emotion.<sup>216</sup> In other words, the external world was regarded as an extension of the subject’s psyche and was therefore depicted as reflecting the direct influence of human presence. Vine, in analysing three lyric fragments (circa

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<sup>214</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, 1818, pp. 109-110. Available at <http://www.planetebook.com/Frankenstein.asp> (accessed 15 June 2014).

<sup>215</sup> From the second half of the eighteenth century, the landscape underwent massive alterations brought about by both climate and increasing urbanisation, which redesigned the city, transformed how people understood themselves in relation to the past, and modified their degree of connection to the environment.

<sup>216</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Romanticism and nature, see Dalia Nassar, ‘Romantic Empiricism after the “End of Nature”’: Contributions to Environmental Philosophy’, in Dalia Nassar (ed.), *The Relevance of Romanticism: Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

1838) by Emily Brontë, claims that ‘the poem’s visionary refusal of mourning collapses into a perception of nature as the very scene of mourning, the very panorama of loss’.<sup>217</sup> Romanticism fostered the new attitude of the self towards nature, according to which writers and artists exposed and expressed the inner workings of the mind in the outer openness of nature, clearly separating the new mentality from the prevalent attitudes of voluntary blindness towards the non-empirical that dominated during the Enlightenment.<sup>218</sup> This meant that the new sensibility mixed together the self and outside reality, as Brennan states, ‘reality included not only the objective external world but also the subjective inner one’.<sup>219</sup> According to the Romantics, the self had been exiled from nature and must return.<sup>220</sup> This ‘return’ was traditionally a journey of discovery, whose successful completion would eventually bring peace of mind to the self.

From the moment the hero appropriates nature as a dwelling place, it is not only the interior and exterior of the home or anti-home that change, but their outdoor surroundings also start to slowly metamorphose into a living and breathing corpus, often in conjunction with meteorological phenomena like rain, snow, wind, and thunderstorms. Heathcliff facing the snowstorm in search of Cathy’s ghost at the beginning of Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights* is paradigmatic in this respect. To the heroes, the outdoors symbolised unrestricted freedom and platonic love—the space of nature was the space of happiness. After Cathy is gone, nature takes over the anti-home, and the bricks of *Wuthering Heights* no longer create an efficient barrier against the forces of the natural world. The moment the unannounced guest recounts the strange dream he

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<sup>217</sup> Vine, ‘Romantic Ghosts’, p. 102.

<sup>218</sup> ‘The Cloud’ (1820) by Percy Bysshe Shelley is an example of the attention granted to nature and meteorology during the nineteenth century.

<sup>219</sup> Brennan, *The Gothic Psyche*, p. 23. For the purposes of my argument, I claim that outside reality encompasses all that is extrinsic to the physical self, which includes landscape as well as objects, like buildings.

<sup>220</sup> See Carl Woodring, ‘Nature and Art in the Nineteenth Century’, *PMLA*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (March 1977), p. 193.

had (about a ghostly woman wandering alone outside), Heathcliff rushes to the door and into the heavy storm. Cathy—his Cathy—will always be outside that door, in the moors where they laughed and dreamed. The distinctive visuality we often attribute to these scenes of interaction with nature can be traced to the rise of landscape painting in the later decades of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, it was during the following century that a preoccupation with atmospheric phenomena became a major thematic subject and an integral part of what Jill Bennett calls ‘the repertoire of landscape’.<sup>221</sup> We need only look at the paintings of Gainsborough (1727-88), Friedrich (1774-1840), Turner (1775-1851), and Constable (1776-1837) to acknowledge the weight that the artists were then attributing to the depiction of the natural environment.<sup>222</sup> Descriptions of inclement weather in literature were paralleled by artistic representations of tumultuous seas and snowy landscapes, bringing to the fore the Romantic-sourced precept according to which the journeying into nature equals a journeying into the anguished mind of the self. This view of the natural world as an enlarged mirror on which the troubles of the self are reflected was accompanied by a growing interest on the scientific study of meteorology and the elements. In the early years of the nineteenth century, French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) published several papers about atmospheric phenomena, and, in 1803, Luke Howard (1772-1864) suggested a classification of clouds that paved the way for subsequent investigations on the matter

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<sup>221</sup> Jill Bennett, ‘Atmospheric Affects’, in Papenburg and Zarzycka (eds), *Carnal Aesthetics*, p. 106.

<sup>222</sup> Romantic nature (*die romantische Stimmungslandschaft*) as displayed, for instance, in Friedrich’s allegorical landscape paintings, mirrors the painter’s state of mind and the self’s smallness vis-à-vis the vastness of the natural environment. Death symbols, such as snow and ruins, pervade his work, a fact for which the Expressionists greatly admired his oeuvre. From the late 1910s, the Surrealist group as a whole, and Max Ernst in particular, adopted the image of the forest as a metaphor for the imagination. According to Victoria Nelson, for Expressionists and Surrealists alike, the individual’s union with nature, not with God, became the ultimate goal (Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets*, p. 206). The union of subject with object now involved the encounter of the self with the environment, inclusive of the natural outdoors and the urban space. For some insight on the affinities between Expressionist cinema and Surrealism see, for example, Richardson, *Surrealism and Cinema*, 2006; Linda Williams, *Figures of Desire*; and Ado Kyrou, *Le Surréalisme au cinéma*, Paris: Éditions Arcanes, 1952.

and exerted a great influence on many writers and thinkers.<sup>223</sup> During this time, the appeal of snowy landscapes and ice formations captivated Romantic painters and writers, who favoured a depiction of the outside natural world (and its restlessness) as complicit in the deepest fears of the individual. In his account of the history of ice and ice forms, Edward G. Wilson moves beyond the standard commentary on the representation of nature and argues that the Romantic poet not only charged ‘biological occurrences with human significance’, but translated ‘the visible world into a *double* of his interior energies’.<sup>224</sup> In this regard, nature was viewed not from the perspective of causing or reflecting one’s feelings, but rather as an actual part of the self outside of the self. Nature had taken centre stage in both European and American literature and art works.<sup>225</sup> Related to this is the fact that Romantic innovation in the visual arts, literature, and poetry was predicated on a sense of motion, of time passing, of places changing. Looked at in this way, the cinema almost seems to be the natural consequence of an increasing social interest in representing movement, atmosphere, and the elements from the mid nineteenth century onwards. On this, Nelson Brissac Peixoto claims that the feature that ‘best defines the century that invented cinema’ is the way nineteenth-century painters converted light and air into pictorial themes, dealing extensively with the portrayal of clouds, storms, and rainbows.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> The papers published by Lamarck include: ‘Recherches sur la périodicité présumée des principales variations de l’atmosphère et sur les moyens de s’assurer de son existence et de sa détermination’ (1801) and ‘Sur les variations de l’état du ciel dans les latitudes moyennes, entre l’équateur et le pôle, et sur les principales causes qui y donnent lieu’ (1803). Howard’s essay ‘On the Modifications of Clouds’ was first published in the *Philosophical Magazine* in 1803. Regarding the influence of the works of these authors, there is, for example, a poem on clouds written by Goethe in 1821, whose original title is ‘Howards Ehrengedächtnis’ (‘In honour of Howard’s Memory’).

<sup>224</sup> Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice*, p. 180 (my emphasis).

<sup>225</sup> Later on, from the 1960s, this way of representing feelings was also adopted by the so-called ‘auteur cinema’, as António Costa mentions, where a particular feeling towards nature or landscape becomes one of the essential elements of the narrative, as frequently happens in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni (António Costa, ‘Présentation. Invention et réinvention du paysage’, *CiNeMAS*, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 11) (my translation).

<sup>226</sup> Nelson Brissac Peixoto, ‘Cinema e Pintura: A Pintura, a Fotografia, o Cinema e a Luz’, in Ismail Xavier (ed.), *O Cinema no Século*, Rio de Janeiro: Imago, 1996, p. 293 (my translation).

Towards the end of the century, there was another change in the way nature was perceived, and, as Jennifer A. Hurley explains, authors of the time ‘shared many ideas concerning the prominence of the self-reliant individual, the infusion of nature with spiritual significance, and the potential of persons to achieve transcendence via communion with nature’.<sup>227</sup> Gothic literature added a dimension of madness, rage, and eroticism to the early Romantics’ rather benign and almost cathartic view of nature. The self was no longer thought of as in harmony with nature, and abrupt changes in meteorological conditions were considered to denote his or her indomitable feelings. In this context, rain, snow, storms, and fires, for instance, were no longer welcomed means of purification or liberation, but rather something that needed to be fought. Nature—a living entity endowed with feelings and agency—was neither refuge nor muse, but a seductive mortal enemy.

### **Impressions of the Landscape in the Romantic-Gothic Mode**

The view of nature as embodying the self and the recurrent depiction of states of flux (the movements of the wind, snow, and water) travelled from poems, novels, and paintings to the cinema, which, from very early on, dealt with the representation of characters falling prey to sudden climatic changes and extreme weather conditions that accommodated their frequent mood swings. In other words, violent imagery of stormy nights, with torrential rain, strong winds, menacing tides, and ferocious waves, together with their respective sounds, are usually understood as expressing and/or foretelling some of the fears that have just settled (or are about to settle) into the lives of the heroes. Tempestuous weather, for instance, is often responsible for incidents that move

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<sup>227</sup> Jennifer A. Hurley, ‘Foreword’, in Jennifer A. Hurley (ed.), *American Romanticism*, San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2000, p. 9. The author is analysing nineteenth-century American Romanticism specifically.

the narratives forward. At times deadly, these moments increase the suspense by showcasing the potency of non-human sources of agency. Olwen falling to her death from a cliff during a stormy night, the snowstorm that follows the death of the Countess in *The Queen of Spades* and the car crash on a rainy night at the beginning of *The Black Cat* are but a few examples. Therefore, much to the similarity of what happens with interior spaces, which, as I argued, usually speak via the memory-objects they protect, the outside world is likewise given a voice with which it can interact with the characters and affect their disposition. In terms of narrative, this situation is represented in a twofold manner: either by emphasising specifically human concerns or, in turn, by acting as a counterpoint to them. Shelley's *Frankenstein* explicitly refers to this double role of the natural environment: 'Dear mountains! My own beautiful lake!', Victor exclaims. 'How do you welcome your wanderer? Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace', he wonders, 'or to mock at my unhappiness?'<sup>228</sup>

The first situation (whereby nature projects inwardness) might sometimes be looked at sarcastically, as is the case in *Secret Beyond the Door*, where, the moment it starts pouring at the house-warming party Celia and her husband, Mark, are throwing, she comments in voice-off: 'Then nature joined the conversation'. In this scene, the torrential rain can be read as anticipating the horrors that the heroine is about to uncover and which regard her new husband. Watching as the heroes try to adapt to an environment that seems to breathe and think as they do, we can argue that mise-en-scène is psychological, or, rather, that outside reality and the spaces the heroes wander in reflect their subjectivity. More pointedly, the space of nature not only describes and comments on character, but also constructs it. 'Whatever happens out there, here you will always be my queen', Heathcliff assures Cathy one day when they are playing

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<sup>228</sup> Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 81.

make believe in the moors. The outdoors defines their relationship throughout the narrative and is depicted as the only place that offers them peace and happiness. It is as though they are not themselves unless they are out there in the moors, fighting imaginary knights and wandering around imaginary castles. The architectural changes them to such a degree that they both live embittered miserable lives when inside their respective houses. Nature, then, helps them rebuild their identities.

Another co-related point of interest with respect to the outside spaces concerns the sonic elements (on and off screen), which also come through as aspects of character and plot development. Whereas the camera is the primary means of conveying both the spatial qualities in the frame and the closedness of the filmed places in the anti-home, in some instances the use of sound—particularly special sound effects—prevails over camera angles and movement in the depiction of the relationship between body and nature. The scene where thundering night skies, heavy with rain, witness the creation of Dr Frankenstein's monster is a well-known example of how the cinema can use the sounds of nature to stress the magnitude of a narrative event.<sup>229</sup>

From these readings, we realise that there is another central distinction involving nature, besides its mirroring of the feelings of the characters. This distinction relates to the original power of agency that directs the connection of self and nature. My argument here is built along the same lines as that concerning the built environment—I am suggesting that the natural world both influences and is influenced by the self. In simpler terms, nature might embody the self or, on the contrary, instigate certain feelings in the characters. Questioning the origin of the self's feelings—that is, inquiring whether they belong to the self prior to the contact with nature or are instead acquired as a result of that contact is particularly important, because it shows just how much the self

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<sup>229</sup> I am referring specifically to Whale's 1931 adaptation of the novel. An earlier version, directed by J. Searle Dawley in 1910 does not offer any representation of natural phenomena when Frankenstein's monster is brought to life.

can be manipulated by the agency of the surrounding world. My claim here is that, ultimately, it is not a question of the self embodying nature or vice-versa: the Romantic-Gothic portrays the self as a self *in* nature, which means that the natural environment should not be understood as something purely external, but as an intrinsic part of the self. As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, there is no fixed causality: the power of agency shifts constantly from dweller to nature in a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Throughout the narratives, the display of the power of nature might become so merciless and overwhelming that it almost seems to dehumanise whatever human presence might stand in its way, as with the giant wave that caused Jennie's boat to capsize and claimed her life. This becomes even more noticeable when we include the architectural in the investigation. Indeed, the natural world, especially when saturated with meteorological phenomena, constructs a space where the characters are turned into mere irrelevant presences whose fate seems to be determined by how they interact with the bodies of the house and its extensions. The recurring image of a door opening wide by the sheer force of the wind, for instance, is paradigmatic of this interaction, in that it shows how the natural surroundings force their way into the house and, in the process, entrap the characters within. In actuality, nature frequently has the double role of both driving the heroes into finding shelter in the anti-home and of preventing their exit afterwards. We can thus conclude that the ultimate consequence of the encounter between the characters and natural phenomena is usually their hopeless imprisonment in the anti-home. 'It is too bad about the rain. It is very unusual', says a carriage driver at the beginning of *The Black Cat*. The pouring rain soon causes the carriage to crash, and its passengers are forced by to seek shelter in a strange nearby mansion. The owner is an old acquaintance of one of them, and, in the end, neither will leave the house alive.

Finally, it is important to remark that, as I have already implied, Romantic-Gothic nature does not constitute a safe refuge from the overpowering presence of the anti-home, nor will it assuredly provide comfort or peace of mind to the heroes. We can say at this point that the openness of nature does not equal unrestricted freedom. The sort of escapism it offers the Romantic mind is considerably unconventional and might be characterised, as Tony Tanner notes, as ‘a “centrifugal tendency”’, that is, ‘a dilation of self, which can become an abandoning of self, into the surrounding vastness’.<sup>230</sup> There is no room for peaceful co-existence: to escape equals to blend with, and, ultimately, to disappear. The relationship that develops between the individual and this ‘vastness’ is therefore a very troubled one. Testifying to this is also the fact that, though the Romantic-Gothic heroes might sometimes end their journey in communion with nature, they might just as often succumb to it. Such is the case in *Portrait of Jennie*, where Jennie’s ghost is cursed to repeat the same day—the day of her death—year after year. Neither the external natural world nor the domestic space ever seem to be sites of freedom in the Romantic-Gothic. Actual freedom would instead more accurately depend on the characters’ leaving a certain place, thus severing their bonds to the house.

The wandering mourners shape and are shaped by space. In this chapter, we have analysed the spatial complexity of Romantic-Gothics in which an unmappable profusion of spaces proliferate. When out of the house, the characters are nonetheless exposed to the elements, which take over the role that belonged to the architectural. To put it the other way around, if built structures do not protect the self, neither does the external environment. Moreover, nature, like the building, possesses the means to act independently from the self. Regardless of whether they travel the immensity of wilderness or instead dwell in the claustrophobic enclosure of the ruined anti-home, the

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<sup>230</sup> Tony Tanner, ‘Differing Perceptions of Nature in American and European Romanticism’, in Hurley (ed.), *American Romanticism*, p. 98.

characters are always ‘on the move between places’, to use Casey’s words, in order to achieve that which they seek and strive for above all else—identity, for instance, as sought by Michel in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*; greatness and wealth, as fought for by Captain Suvorin in *The Queen of Spades*; redemption, as longed for by Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*; or the love for which Eben so eagerly longs in *Portrait of Jennie*.<sup>231</sup> The travels of the wanderers within and outside of the house and the ways in which they re/collect memory by facing the challenges posed by both organic architectural structures and the defiant natural world, further confirm Casey’s statement: human beings *need* to travel to fill a void. Romantic-Gothic characters journey *because* they lack something—something that the here and now cannot offer them, but that might be available elsewhere or elsewhere.

Looking closely at the narratives of the films, we have also observed that, as the action unfolds, the watchful house accentuates the paradoxical nature of its spaces—spaces that do not always abide by objective geographic coordinates and that can be concomitantly welcoming and repulsive, wide and claustrophobic, symbols of both home and exile. Each space inside the anti-home is merged in a complex network of significances where sense perception is toyed with and minds can get lost forever. A succession of closed windows, winding staircases, endless corridors, locked gates, two-way mirrors, sliding panels, secret chambers, and dead-ends intensify the polarity between space awareness and the manner in which the characters are allowed or forced to experience their surroundings sensorially.

There is, however, a non-spatial dimension to the phenomenological relationship between the body of the characters, the building, and the environment that has not been discussed yet—a dimension that relates to time and temporality, and to how these qualities are perceivable in Romantic-Gothic narratives. This situation is particularly

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<sup>231</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xii.

notorious in *La Belle et la Bête*, where the simplest of actions, such as walking along a corridor, is, indeed, rendered fantastic. Significant for the present discussion is the understanding that the overpowering influence the house has on the characters is achieved not only by the spatial characteristics I have been examining, but also by the fact that the interior of the anti-home is replete with objects that conjure up a distant historical and personal past, which raises doubts about the stability and veracity of the dwellers' real, first-hand memories. Time and the temporalities invoked by objects have a profound effect on space, place, and memory.

Marin stresses the vital articulation between space and time when he expands his thoughts on the notions of space and place, claiming that 'space is the effect produced by operations of orientation which, by the same token, "temporalize" it'.<sup>232</sup> By looking at the spatialisation of time with regard to the anti-home and the ruin, we have realised that the past lives on in both the physical memories kept in specific places in the anti-home and in the vestiges of human presence. For Goliot-Lété the powerful formal unity of Gothic films resides in a very specific spatial configuration, that is, in a certain narrative architecture and a particular bond between the present and the past.<sup>233</sup> The following chapter examines the Romantic-Gothic in light of the 'particular bond' it establishes between a living past, a menaced present, and a conflicted future.

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<sup>232</sup> Marin, 'Classical, Baroque', p. 170.

<sup>233</sup> Note that the author is referring specifically to female Gothic films. Goliot-Lété, 'Périls en la demeure', pp. 142-143.

## CHAPTER 3: Re-Voicing the Past

### Profaned Sanctuaries: Temporal Dis/Connections

Halfway through *Corridor of Mirrors*, Paul exclaims:

Everyone wants to belong to the future. No one wants to belong to the past—except me. ... We don't know if the future will be good or bad, but we gamble on it. Well, I've given up gambling. I prefer the certainty. To the past!

Virtually any one character in the Romantic-Gothic world could have uttered this disenchanted toast. More importantly, however, the heartfelt bitterness of Paul's words, the cynical rejoicing in his choosing the past over the future, and his deep, irreparable loneliness draw the viewer's attention to another vital component of these film works—one that I have purposely left out until this moment: time. The reason for choosing to delay the introduction of the temporal element into this study relates to my argument that, in the Romantic-Gothic, time is contained in space. In departing from this premise, I therefore posit that a foundational knowledge of the latter is needed in order to properly investigate the former. In this regard, my previous analyses of places and spatialities have paved the way for the readings in this chapter. Furthermore, in arguing that time is spatialised, I mean to advocate that the phenomenological experience of time varies according to the spatial coordinates of the characters. Take *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, for example. One of the first images of that strange village is that of a clock tower whose clock has no pointers. Soon after Michel arrives, the camera frames an old man, busily trying to organise the dozens and dozens of calendar pages that he has scattered on the steps around him. An accordion player sitting nearby calmly asks him why he is so keen on finding out the date. The man replies that waking

up not knowing which day it is troubles him. That he does not know exactly why, but it troubles him. And so he lowers his head again and carries on with his impossible task of organising the torn pages.

In this sequence, time is, in effect, palpable and localisable in space: the audience and the characters can see it there, on the steps, in all those sequential black numbers on white sheets of paper. A sense of time passing, however, is absent: the villagers have lost track of time because they cannot remember; and the reason they cannot remember is that the place where they live cannot be geographically pinpointed in space. Without an actual location, temporality fades and disappears. This becomes clear the moment the narrative changes spaces, from the virtual (the village) to the actual (Michel being released from jail). At this point, time changes as well and starts to move forward chronologically. This tells us that time is not linear, but flexible, a notion that is vital to the understanding of the Romantic-Gothic mode in general. This first section will reflect on how time is present (and presented) in the narratives. Aiming to answer this and other co-related questions, I will also assess the weight that the temporal carries in each narrative and how the knitting together of overlapping spatialities, entangled temporalities, and memories objectified reveals the critical and pervasive engagement that the Romantic-Gothic and its characters foster with the past or, more accurately, with versions of a past. My focus will equally be on how the past is brought back to the present and on how this relates to the senses.

As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, objects are the memories of someone who is no longer alive and, for this reason, they also point to a different time, an *elsewhen*. More precisely, given their status as memories, objects encapsulate a complex temporality, because despite having exceeded their original owner's lifetime, they remain active nonetheless, affecting the present progress of the diegesis. Furthermore, my assuming that memories are either objects or places and that time, in turn, is embedded in place

means that without it—without place—there is neither memory nor a sense of time. In *Corridor of Mirrors*, for instance, time arises from the many rooms and objects within Paul's mansion, which bring back the past and give the viewer the illusion of a halted temporality. Time coordinates, in this sense, respond to the presence of certain objects or to the act of being in specific places. As such, time thus interpreted does not truly pass in the anti-home, but merely hovers and curbs around the characters, lingering on and adapting to the spaces they are in.

Let me now clarify the two basic concepts that will lead my investigation. The word 'temporality' is used to refer to the experience of time or, in the words of Richard McKeon, 'to designate time in its circumstances, substantive and cognitive'.<sup>234</sup> This formulation of temporality as an interior or subjective concept is not new, as Jenny Chamarette acknowledges, and is already discussed in the writings of Kant, Merleau-Ponty, Freud, Bergson, and Deleuze.<sup>235</sup> To be certain, the notions of time and temporality are extremely nuanced in the Romantic-Gothic and work differently depending on where we focus the analysis. I mean that the concepts of 'time', understood as referring to the time in which the characters exist, and 'temporality', understood as the way in which they experience time within a determined timeframe, vary substantially if we place the focus on memory-objects rather than on the wandering subjects. Simply put, neither a standardised chronological dimension nor the meaning of 'temporality' as I have just described it can be unproblematically applied to objects in the same manner that they are applied to people, for the obvious reason that objects do not—cannot—perceive: hence, they cannot *experience* time. It is nevertheless possible to study the way in which time is perceived *in* objects by both the viewers and the characters, who are able to not only look at, but also touch them. Following a similar

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<sup>234</sup> Richard McKeon, 'Time and Temporality', *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April 1974), p. 123.

<sup>235</sup> Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film*, p. 26.

logic, it is equally possible to discuss the temporality of an object by learning its history, specifically to whom it has belonged in the past. In the pages that follow, I will explore the relationship between time and temporality and between the self and objects.

A striking feature of the Romantic-Gothic mode concerns the fact that the characters seem to be constantly moving adrift in between different and overlapping temporalities, and not only that: they also seem to be stuck in an eternally circular time continuum. In order to explain this encounter of temporalities, I will use the concept of pastness. This idea will underscore the readings in this and the following chapters, so it is necessary to elaborate a bit further on its exact meaning.

The notion of pastness as I understand it here cannot be substituted for ‘the past’ or for any other identical expression, as it encompasses the idea of lived time, redirecting us towards the concept of temporality. Pastness thus implicates the experience of the mobile past through the senses and is deeply rooted in the present. Shaviro offers an elucidatory definition of the concept, stating that ‘the pastness that I yearningly reach for has nothing to do with the actual past; it is rather the obsession of a past time that never was present, and that therefore cannot be remembered or recovered’.<sup>236</sup> In *Rebecca*, for example, Mrs de Winter’s obsession leads her to try and embody her idea of Rebecca and her past. The pastness she longs for is nothing but a concept of her own making: her own re-construction of things past in the present.

The sequence from *Corridor of Mirrors* that opens this chapter summarises some of the issues I have thus far mentioned. Particularly, Paul’s speech denotes his general malaise, at once a cause for and a consequence of his unsuccessful attempts to live peacefully in and with the present time. The tone is reminiscent of Romantic poems where the self is forever tormented and maladjusted in the present, and the words he

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<sup>236</sup> Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, p. 224. In the original context, Shaviro is discussing the work of Andy Warhol specifically.

chooses give away a feeling of sublime loneliness, expressed in his belief that 'everyone' wants to become part of a future from which he is, voluntarily or not, excluded. 'Everyone wants to belong to the future. ... Except me', Paul declares. Additionally, if we analyse his speech more closely, we realise that his toast is one to both his past and that of others, and almost a mythification of dead times. It is likewise the verbal confirmation of a still on-going mourning period—the mourning for a time that has irrevocably passed (long, long ago) and that was never his to begin with. There is a hint of irony here, concerning the complete surrender of the self to a past that is, or was, rather dubious, to say the least. However he chooses to understand it, the past Paul dreams of was not even kind to him in the first place: neither his (real) past as twentieth-century Paul nor that of his supposed Renaissance alter ego, Cesare Borgia. Living life as Paul, he is a wealthy, middle-aged man, alone in a vast estate where he stores relics from the life of a woman he believes to have loved in a previous life. Similarly, however, this longed-for past was actually a very troubled time for Cesare himself who, incapable of conquering Venetia's affection, ended up brutally murdering her with her own hair. This is the past to which Paul so overtly toasts.

Confronted with his inadequacy in the diegetic present as well as with Mifanwy's growing distrust and ennui, Paul's longing for his own version of the past increases. Paradoxically, then, and somewhat masochistically, his toast seems to almost welcome his present-day downfall and to precipitate the plot to its fatal conclusion: Paul is eventually arrested and sentenced to death for a crime which, as it turns out, he did not commit. Ironic in this context is also Paul's absolute failure to (or choice not to) realise that the past to which he so willingly surrenders is anything but certain. Indeed, this is a major temporal feature that affects the wanderings of the characters in Romantic-Gothic narratives: the fact that, to them, the past is often much more uncertain than the future. In truth, we, as human beings, typically hold specific

expectations regarding future events, associating with the yet-to-come the possibility (however remote it might, at the present moment, seem) of eventual happiness and personal fulfilment. On the other hand, we expect the past to remain fundamentally unaltered and to encompass lived events as historical facts upon which the present and the future will build. We concede that the past may be re-contextualised in light of present or future happenings, discoveries or innovations, but ordinary logic tells us that although our perception of the past might change, the past itself cannot. Past events can never be undone or re-lived exactly as they once happened. The Romantic-Gothic does not contradict this statement and its stories build precisely on the very idea it expresses. What happens is a re-appreciation of the past via the way it becomes implicated in the present. This is why I referred to the past as ‘uncertain’ above: its uncertainty, then, stems from the sensory rediscovery of the old and the powerful seduction of the anachronistic. So, whilst we are usually concerned with who we are and who we will become, the Romantic-Gothic looks back, stuck between pasts and presents, and asks who the characters were and have since then been.

Attesting to this profound dwelling in the past is the persistent denial of the future in Romantic-Gothics; or, at least, of the future understood in a traditional way. ‘When is tomorrow, Jennie?’, Eben asks his beloved in *Portrait of Jennie*. In fact, to the exception of the moment when she predicts that Eben’s portrait ‘will hang in a museum and people will come from all over the world to see it’, there is hardly any acknowledgement of the existence of the future. Eben and Jennie meet when she is just a child, and only few weeks later she has already grown into a young woman. The future is almost coincidental with the present, even where growing old is concerned. By asking Jennie when tomorrow is, the painter is laying bare the strangeness of the accelerated time continuum where she lives and the overwhelming incongruities caused by the collision of different temporalities. Overall, Eben’s journey consists of re-

assembling the past in the present in the hope of succeeding in preventing what has already taken place: Jennie's death. Accepting the future as a moving forward in time hinders both their chances at happiness. For the protagonist couple, the idea of a future devoid of pastness is unimaginable: happiness lies in the long ago and the far away, not in the yet-to-come.

As the example shows, in the Romantic-Gothic, categorical judgments about the supposed irreversibility of time become complicated, as do all attempts to approach the temporal dimension solely through common sense. Despite the fact that gone-by actions and their respective outcomes do remain unmodified through time, the past (one's own and the Other's) nonetheless travels and collides with the present, creating new temporalities for the characters involved. Importantly, past(s) and present may sometimes be so entwined they become indiscernible. The protagonists are not always aware of temporal discrepancies and of the disorganised crossing of spatio-temporal thresholds in which their lives dwell. Put otherwise, they are not always aware that their search (their re/collecting activity) involves a multi-layered experience of time as well as a decision to constantly choose one temporality over another. In some cases, they lose (or choose to lose) the ability to distinguish between past and present. Paul confesses to Mifanwy:

Before I was searching for something. I know I must have seemed mad and frightening to you. But have you ever thought that everyone, from the very minute he's born, is searching for something? Most people die without even knowing what it is. I knew. That's why I'm one of the lucky ones. All sorts of people before me have tried to live outside their time—quite futile. There is a time to be born and a time to die.

Paul chose the past and, what is more, he chose to transform the present into the past. He feels blessed because he discovered his future lies in accepting and disappearing into the past. If we now turn again to *Portrait of Jennie*, we notice a

similar understanding of temporal matters. Here, the past is re-played, re-lived, re-experienced, and re-enacted by the dead (but very present) Jennie, who hovers about in the present, searching for something and sharing her melancholy pain with the living. Eben becomes gradually aware of the immense gap that separates him from Jennie, and, on a nightly walk in Central Park, he comments:

I've been thinking... No matter how far away that kind of distance is, it can be reached. Over there—beyond the hills—one can drive to it—or north, among the pines—or eastward to the sea. It's the only kind of distance I ever knew anything about before. But now—... now I feel there is another kind of distance... a crueller distance. A distance of yesterday and tomorrow, and it frightens me. It frightens me that there's no way to bridge it.

At this point, Eben is painfully aware that he might never be able to surmount the temporal distance that keeps growing between them. The sequences from *Corridor of Mirrors* and *Portrait of Jennie* I have been describing, lead to the conclusion that there is a two-way contamination between the past and the present—the past guides the present, whilst the present re-actualises and re-constitutes the past. Specifically, the contamination of temporalities is facilitated not only by animated apparitions, such as ghosts, but also by certain objects, like a ring or a glove that connect the bygone and the present moment (as in *Peter Ibbetson*), or by the image of (and in) a painted portrait, as in *While I Live*, *Corridor of Mirrors*, and *Dragonwyck*, for instance. At once beings and totems of past times, these objects saturate the present with memories, sending the characters on a long and turbulent journey through the preterite.

Earlier, when discussing space, I stressed the fact that spaces and places are understood relationally. I will add now that the same is true of time. Typically, this would mean that we understand the past in relation to the present, and vice-versa. McKeon remarks that 'time is not an entity which is encountered, or a concept which is

perceived, in isolation'.<sup>237</sup> Rather, he continues, time and temporality come 'into being and knowledge only in connection with something else'.<sup>238</sup> I am arguing here that, in the first instance, that 'something else' concerns the notions of space and places/memory-objects. In other words, time as spatialised does not make sense without a prior or concomitant investigation of objects or, more precisely, of objects in space. The past is, in fact, carried back and forth in time according to the sensuous interaction of the re/collector with specific objects. It is therefore through movement (the spatial movements of the characters) that time is unleashed and multiple temporalities are created. To conclude this reading, let us return to Eben and Jennie, in particular to the moment when they first met.

Night is falling in Central Park. The low-key lighting creates an uncomfortable feeling of impending danger. A faint light suddenly brightens the foggy exterior when the streets lamps are switched on. Coming out of the wintry mist, we see the dark lonesome figure of a man walk slowly along a deserted pathway, whilst his voice off serenely recounts: 'Suddenly, I had the awareness of something extraordinary. The city sounds were muted and far away. They seemed to come from another time, like the sound of summer in a meadow long ago'. As he wanders, one of the park benches he passes catches his eye. He quickly stops, leans over and, in close up, we watch as his hand reaches for a creased newspaper someone had left there. It was wrapped around something, forming a sort of package. As he picks it up and begins to open it, a female voice calls out: 'It belongs to me!' The camera immediately cuts to a long shot of a young girl building a snowman. This shot is accompanied by a distinctive and dramatic change in the soundtrack, which abruptly starts playing what we later identify as Jennie's theremin leitmotif. The way it is filmed, the appearance of Jennie—of the past

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<sup>237</sup> McKeon, 'Time and Temporality', p. 123.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

materialised—seems to be the direct result of Eben’s walk through the park and his grabbing of the newspaper. It is as though movement and touch have conjured up the ghost.

### **The Romantic-Gothic Re/Collector**

The experience of pastness is one of the defining characteristics of Romantic-Gothic beings. Portrayed as vividly discontented with life, the heroes nevertheless try, once and again, to achieve the happiness that can never actually be theirs. This, of course, only adds to their misery. The paradox of keeping up a fight against the inevitable is well illustrated in *The Queen of Spades*. ‘My advice to you is to be content, as I am. Take life as you find it’, says the notary to Captain Suvorin. The latter, promptly and arrogantly replies: ‘I rather take it by the throat and force it to give me what I want’. Nonetheless, once strong-willed individuals like Suvorin begin to realise the uselessness of their efforts, which usually happens in the first half of the film, they start to slowly wither away, succumbing to feelings of nostalgia and melancholia. Take as an example that ‘unknown woman’ from Ophüls’ film, hopelessly devoted to a concert pianist and *bon vivant*, and whose life revolved exclusively around his unrequited love; or Paul, who obsessively stored fifteenth-century memorabilia in his corridor of mirrors, lost in a desperate search for an imaginary (but ever-so-real) Venetia. Consider Julia from *While I Live*, who spent her days in a secluded house by the sea, remorsefully worshiping the work of her dead sister Olwen; or Frankenstein’s monster, wandering scared and helpless through the frozen Alps. Take as well the image of the Beast, alone and ashamed in his immense castle of solitude, patiently awaiting a much belated death.

All of the images above encapsulate defining traits of the Romantic-Gothic hero. Yet, there is one implicit vital feature that is important to foreground: the fact that the characters are not just lonely, but live in self-imposed isolation. The epitome of the deliberate severance of all ties with the outside world is represented by the life of King Ludwig II of Bavaria.<sup>239</sup> Halfway through *Ludwig II: Glanz und Ende eines Königs*, the Bavarian king and his fiancée are sitting close together in the royal balcony box in the private theatre of the Munich Residenz. Framed in a medium shot, they talk softly whilst the orchestra plays Wagner for their ears only. The haunting Wagnerian music and the sight of the beautiful theatre devoid of spectators greatly disturbs Sophie, who wants to leave immediately. ‘Why are you doing this?’, she asks. ‘I must show you what our life will be like—if you remain with me. Alone, Sophie, with nobody... nobody’. Then he continues: ‘You see, sometimes I see a light’. ‘What kind of light?’, the Princess interrupts. ‘My light; it’s my guide. When people are near, it disappears and lights away no more. It just disappears’. Crying, Sophie says she cannot do it; she cannot live without people. With this twisted gesture, of forcing Sophie to make what seemed to her an impossible choice, Ludwig succeeds in breaking off the engagement. He is now free to be alone with himself. Embodying the archetype of the Romantic-Gothic hero, who prefers to retreat to his own oneiric delusions rather than accept the morose and petty reality of the dystopian everyday, the king deliberately makes himself a hostage of abandon and solitude. Later in the film, Ludwig devotes all his time, energy, and imagination to the construction of his fairy-tale castles, having cut off

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<sup>239</sup> By ‘outside world’ I mean everything, everyone, and every place that excludes the presence (real or imaginary) of the beloved. Käutner was not the only director fascinated by the life of this king. From the mid teens to the 2010s, the persona of Ludwig II has captivated the interest of numerous directors, namely Ludwig Trautmann (1917-18), Rolf Raffé (1920), Otto Kreisler (1922), Dieterle (1930 and 1954-55), Luchino Visconti (1972), and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg (1972 and 1982), and Marie Noelle and Peter Sehr (2012).

almost all contact with state affairs and the royal palace in Munich.<sup>240</sup> Sissi, his beloved cousin, comes to visit him and he shows her around the palace of Herrenchiemsee, his latest project. Modelled on Versailles, and as a tribute to Louis XIV of France, Ludwig took special pride in its magnificent hall of mirrors. He asks Sissi what she thinks of it. She looks around, astonished, and replies that it is wonderful. ‘But something’s missing—people, music...’, she says. ‘*I see the people. I hear the music*’, Ludwig joyfully states. ‘The best thing is that the people here don’t have shadows’. These words are representative of that voluntary seclusion of the self I mentioned above, and also of the inevitable downfall of a mind that refuses and refutes the real world at all cost.

Through the figure of the Bavarian king, who famously spent inordinate amounts of money to sponsor the arts (especially music and architecture), we can move to a discussion of the connection between the burden of mundane existence that tortures the characters and the Romanticisation of the acts of death and dying through art.<sup>241</sup> Lisa Lieberman writes that ‘a longing for death was a sign of sensitivity and artistic promise’.<sup>242</sup> The bond between creativity and death was indeed very strong in the mid nineteenth century, so much so that, averse to the routine existence of daily life and afraid of feeling perennially unaccomplished and incomplete, the Romantics created imaginary universes and alternative realities, where dreams, the exotic, and the fantastic

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<sup>240</sup> James D. Wilson acknowledges the role society and social status play in the awakening of feelings of depression. He claims that the lonely hero’s recognition of social obligations is a significant source of anguish that is particularly relevant in discussions of American Romanticism due to ‘the nation’s persistent attempt at self-definition and the preoccupation of its artists with the cultural and political implication of the “experiment” in democracy’ (James D. Wilson, *The Romantic Heroic Ideal*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982, p. x).

<sup>241</sup> Ludwig’s role as a patron of the arts is strongly emphasised on the screen, particularly where it concerned his role in assuring the perpetuation of Wagner’s work. In Kätner’s film, Ludwig confesses to Bismarck: ‘I want to—and this will sound absurd—but I’ve always wanted to establish a refuge for artists’. ‘Yes, the mortal was created to guard and preserve the immortal’, Bismarck replies.

<sup>242</sup> Lisa Lieberman, ‘Romanticism and the Culture of Suicide in Nineteenth-Century France’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1991), p. 611.

reigned supreme. Consequently, in many of their works, one finds an overvaluation of the act of creating at the expense of the search for the technically perfect artwork.<sup>243</sup>

The inclusion of varied art forms (like painting, sculpture, and music) into the narratives makes manifest the propensity of the characters to engage in (obsessive) behaviours through artistic endeavours. Romantic-Gothics customarily focus on artist-heroes that are usually presented as either professional/amateur artists or artistically inclined individuals who possess an overtly acute sensibility. To be sure, the viewer can easily assess the natural predisposition of the characters to the arts by highlighting their occupations in the films. There are architects in *Peter Ibbetson*, *Dead of Night*, and *Secret Beyond the Door*; painters, in *Portrait of Jennie* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; sculptors in *House of Wax*; pianists/piano players in *Orlacs Hände*, *While I Live*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Undercurrent*, *The Uninvited*, and *Dragonwyck*; writers in *The Black Cat*, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* and *Sunset Blvd*; and art critics in *Laura* and *Corridor of Mirrors*. Furthermore, there are multiple secondary characters who are also portrayed engaging in artistic activities, like the many musicians that are part of the supporting cast, from the accordion player in *Juliette ou la clef des songes* to Wagner and opera singers in the films *Dieterle* and *Käutner* directed about Ludwig II. From this perspective, the artist empties himself of himself in order to better capture the Other, thus becoming, in the process, partly other himself. I now ask where inspiration comes from in the films.

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<sup>243</sup> On the concept of ‘infinite perfectability’, see Ernst Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 4 and pp. 66-70.

## Decadence and Disease: The Genesis of Art

Within a Romantic-Gothic logic, there are three fundamental elements that can be highlighted as either a source of inspiration for the production of artworks or the immediate cause for creative aesthetic activity. Dreams are one of the most obvious elements to foment inspiration and creativity. As noted in Chapter 1, oneiric sequences and nightmares often open the films. What is more, imagining is one of the most powerful and effective weapons the characters possess to cope with being alive. As Wilson argues, ‘the imagination through art provides mortal man with his only experience of the conditions of heavenly bliss’.<sup>244</sup> Art represents refuge.

Paired with the oneiric provenance of some works of art is a second promoter of creativity, one that is another common muse of the Romantic-Gothic: memory. Frequently, we find the characters painting, sculpting, or writing about someone they once met and with whom they shared a strong connection. *Portrait of Jennie* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* provide good examples of this relation between art production and processes of recollection. Otherwise, the artist may draw on a different type of memory. On this note, we could say that Prof Jarrod, from *House of Wax*, melds imagination with collective memory in the historical figures he chooses to sculpt.

The third and final element to complement the investigation into the genesis of creativity is of a somewhat different nature. It relates to the relationship between art/artist and insanity. Over the centuries, the connection between genius and madness has been surrounded by an aura of sublime mystery. The ‘pathogenesis of art’, to use Annette Wheeler Carafelli’s expression, is in fact a theme that has intrigued humankind

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<sup>244</sup> Wilson, *The Romantic Heroic Ideal*, p. 35.

for over twenty-four hundred years.<sup>245</sup> It was, however, from the last decade of the eighteenth century, and especially from the second half of the 1800s, that the aetiology of mental illnesses turned into a major scientific and philosophical preoccupation.

Mid-seventeenth and eighteenth-century physicians, influenced by the vogue of emphasising reason and scientific empiricism, explained insanity away, guided by ‘the Lockean philosophical framework of enlightened rationality’, as Hannah Franziska Augstein observes, which meant that delusions were understood as ‘basically erroneous thinking [that] led human reason into the wrong’.<sup>246</sup> All over Europe, the mad were then separated from society and relegated to specialised institutions conceived of to punish those who, it was believed, had willingly chosen a life of unreason. Michel Foucault called it ‘the Great Confinement’.<sup>247</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century there nonetheless appeared new ways of diagnosing and controlling mental disorders without completely ostracising the patients, whom physicians started treating more humanely.<sup>248</sup> We went from a time when behavioural and psychological abnormalities were disparaged and deemed the result of demonic possession to a view of mental illnesses as worthy of inquiry.

Despite such significant changes, yet another perception of the term ‘insanity’ began to develop in the mid nineteenth century, when Romantic poets, writers, and artists, who alternated suddenly—and sometimes violently—between sane and insane patterns of thought compromised the *furor poeticus* of Ancient Greece and Plato’s

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<sup>245</sup>Annette Wheeler Carafelli, ‘Byron and the Pathology of Genius,’ in Alice Levine and Robert N. Keane (eds), *Rereading Byron: Essays Selected from Hofstra University’s Byron Bicentennial Conference*, New York: Garland, 1993, p. 205.

<sup>246</sup>Hannah Franziska Augstein, ‘J. C. Prichard’s Concept of Moral Insanity: a Medical Theory of the Corruption of Human Nature’, *Medical History* (1996), p. 311.

<sup>247</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Madness And Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, Oxon: Routledge, 2005, pp. 36-60.

<sup>248</sup> On this, see *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55, and also Allan Ingram (ed.), *Patterns of Madness in the Eighteenth Century: A Reader*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998, and Glen Colburn (ed.), *The English Malady*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.

influential distinction between clinical and creative insanity.<sup>249</sup> In other words, this meant that the production of acclaimed works of art increasingly lost its relation to the ancient concept of artistic frenzy, which was described as involving mental passivity and the divine possession of the artist's body. Extraordinary creativity started being regarded as a biological and/or genetic condition.<sup>250</sup> There was at the time the widespread belief amongst the medical community that the pathologies of the mind and body could indicate an innate disposition for artistic talent. This resulted in the poetical Romanticising of insanity, which was disseminated in the later nineteenth century and found resonance in a series of case studies elaborated by the then emergent science of psychiatry.<sup>251</sup> New conceptions of how the brain functioned, along with the psychiatric investigations led by Jacques-Joseph Moreau (1804-1884), Bénédict Augustin Morel (1809-1873), criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), Max Nordau (1849-1923), and Paul Möbius (1853-1907), among others, seemed, in a way, to corroborate the existence of a relationship between biological anomalies and genius.<sup>252</sup> According to their medical experiments, the 'artistic vein', so to speak, could literally be physiologically detected in the diseased brain and body. The downside to these medical observations was that mental and physical degeneration began to be looked at as a necessary condition to achieve creative freedom and subsequent public acclaim.

The characters that I have called Romantic-Gothic were shaped during this pivotal moment in history when creativity and madness came under scientific scrutiny.

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<sup>249</sup> See, on this subject, E. N. Tigerstedt's essay 'Furor Poeticus: Poetic Inspiration in Greek Literature before Democritus and Plato', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (April-June 1970), pp. 163-178, and Jennifer Lokash, 'Byron and the Pathology of Creativity; or, the Biogenesis of Poetic Form', *Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007), p. 27.

<sup>250</sup> See Dino Franco Felluga, *The Perversity of Poetry: Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, especially Chapter 1.

<sup>251</sup> Punter and Byron, *The Gothic*, p. 23.

<sup>252</sup> Discussions on the alliance between art and genius can be found in Paul Möbius, 'Über hereditäre Nervenkrankheiten', in Richard von Volkmann, *Sammlung klinischer Vorträge*, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879; and G. S. Rousseau, 'Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 3 (1976), pp. 137-157.

As they are depicted in film, these discontented selves appear as a kind of hangover from Romanticism into the age of psychoanalytic discovery. The mode thus paired the cult of the decadent, dismembered, and diseased body with that of the deranged mind, sentencing its characters to a life with no hope of physical or spiritual salvation. The vivid interest in issues pertaining to the frontiers between sanity and insanity, along with the conflicted way the imperfectness of body and mind is apprehended by the heroes are two of the most easily recognisable features of the Romantic-Gothic. Living in a permanent state of irreparable forlornness, we can conclude that the hero retreats to the mind (to the in/security of his or her own thoughts) in search of that perfect musical note, that missing word, that one brushstroke that would ideally make the very act of existing bearable again. From this perspective, the act of creating art was, in reality, more of a viable way of catalysing the frustrations of a lifelong quest—a quest for oneself and for all things ephemeral, like beauty and happiness—than a process of cathartic liberation (or sublimation, to use psychoanalytical terminology). A quest for ephemerality is, however, by its very nature, doomed to failure from the beginning. In actuality, all the characters do is chase ghosts: utopian ideas of what, where, and with whom they want to be. *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, *Portrait of Jennie*, and *While I Live* are about chasing actual ghosts only to lose them in the end, whilst *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Laura*, and *Corridor of Mirrors* are about chasing the idea of someone the hero or heroine can never have.<sup>253</sup> Situations similar to these recur in the films. If the characters are to be happy, their only chance lies beyond this life, as portrayed in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, where Michel chooses the dream over reality. Taking this into account, we can say, then, that what the characters seek above all else is freedom—freedom from their worrisome lives and mundane flesh. In one word, they seek death.

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<sup>253</sup> In *Laura*, I am referring specifically to the character of Waldo Lydecker.

In their acceptance of and even desire for death, the heroes showcase the extent to which the Romantic-Gothic mode has absorbed the sentiment that, by the 1880s, dominated artistic and literary discourses. Romantic-Gothic heroes are completely and voluntarily subservient to that kind of death wish that was at the centre of the Romantic movement. After Mary dies in *Peter Ibbetson*, her voice assures her beloved from the beyond: ‘Here there... there are no words for such loveliness—a loveliness greater than any we’ve known. I can hear the flowers growing and the bells pealing for life and for death. You’ll have just begun to live, Peter’. Analysing the *Todestrieb* in Goethe’s *Werther* (1774), Wilson argues that ‘Werther desperately seeks self-annihilation, to become absorbed in transcendence. Art can purify his passions, release him from the prison of self’. However, the author adds, there is always ‘the inevitable descent, the “return to habitual self”, as Werther lapses into solipsistic misery’.<sup>254</sup> The characters never fully recover from an utter disenchantment with both the mundane reality of everyday life and their ultimate powerlessness to experience a sense of pure, unadulterated happiness—the proverbial *joie de vivre*.

From the internalisation of death as the uninvited companion of a truly Romantic-Gothic soul and its subsequent externalisation as art, one can see the extent to which the films portray the act of dying while living as part of quotidian life and hold death as its supreme climax.<sup>255</sup> The realisation, on the part of the characters, that they live in a dramatically ever-transforming world where art, science, technology, and religion collide rather than meld, supports Margaret Higonnet’s notion that ‘the captain of this century -- bracketed by Goethe’s *Werther* and Durkheim’s *Le Suicide* -- is

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<sup>254</sup> Wilson, *The Romantic Heroic Ideal*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>255</sup> The idea of death as the blessed end of a tormented existence was popular among such Romantics as Kleist and Novalis. For more on this, see Hilda M. Brown, ‘Ripe Moments and False Climaxes: Thematic and Dramatic Configurations of the Theme of Death in Kleist’s Works’, in Bernd Fischer (ed.), *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, Rochester: Camden House, 2003; and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Emergence of Romanticism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 50-53.

death'.<sup>256</sup> In this sense, Fernando Pessoa described human beings as living cadavers, patiently awaiting their ultimate surrender to dismaying oblivion when he wrote:

It is by death that we live, because we exist today only for having died to yesterday. It is by death that we hope, for we can believe in tomorrow only because we're sure today will die. It is by death that we live when we dream, since to dream is to deny life. It is by death that we die when we live, since to live is to deny eternity! Death guides us, death seeks us, death accompanies us. All that we have is death, all that we want is death, and death is all that we care to want.<sup>257</sup>

Having now located the origins of the creative impulse in oneirism, memory, and insanity, it is important to stress that which is simultaneously the chief underlying cause for and the desired consequence of artistic creation: not to be forgotten.<sup>258</sup> This is important because the efforts of the characters to neither forget nor be forgotten call forth the need for them to rely on specific forms of exteriorising memory, most notably portraiture. The space of the painting, the time of portraiture, and the temporality of portraits will be the main focus of the following section.

### **Portraits and the Romantic-Gothic**

We have no certain knowledge as to the commencement of the art of painting .... The Egyptians assert that it was invented among themselves, six thousand years before it passed into Greece .... As to the Greeks, some say that it was invented

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<sup>256</sup> Margaret Higonnet, 'Suicide: Representations of the Feminine in the Nineteenth Century', *Poetics Today*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2, 1985, p. 103. Shelley also evokes a life haunted by death in an essay published in 1824 in *London Magazine*: 'I walked through the rooms filled with sensations of the most poignant grief. He had been there; his living frame had been caged by those walls, his breath had mingled with that atmosphere, his step had been on those stones, I thought:—the earth is a tomb, the gaudy sky a vault, we but walking corpses' (Mary Shelley, 'On Ghosts' in E. J. Clery and Robert Miles (eds), *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 282).

<sup>257</sup> Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Richard Zenith, New York: Penguin Books, 2003, pp. 415-416.

<sup>258</sup> This will be discussed further along.

at Sicyon, others at Corinth; but they all agree that it originated in tracing lines round the human shadow.<sup>259</sup>

Why portraits? As I have just argued, portraits are a vital aspect in analysing the re/collector and, more specifically, in understanding the workings of the intricate relationship between temporality, death, remembering, and forgetting. I begin the discussion by looking in detail at the historical and mythical roots of drawing/painting and by highlighting some of its particular features.

The origins of portraiture, as the opening quote from Pliny demonstrates, have intrigued humankind for centuries and have long been linked with shadows, popular symbols of death and mourning. To provide a better account of the implications between the human face and its representation as a drawing or a painting in a Romantic-Gothic setting, let us attend to the myth of the creation of the first portrait as described by Pliny, the Elder. In Chapter 43 of Book XXXV, he tells us that the origins of portraiture can be traced back to the myth of Butades of Corinth. According to the story, the invention of portraiture resulted from the romance between Butades' daughter and a young soldier who was about to leave on a long journey. More precisely, it emerged from her desire to preserve the image of her lover's face whilst they were apart. Noticing that the light in the room where they were parting was projecting the shadow of his head against a wall, she started drawing the profile of his face. In this way, and to a certain extent, she was able to preserve the likeness and even the tangibility of her beloved's countenance.

In the myth, then, the act of portraying someone is directly associated with light and shadows, love and loss, staying put and going away, temporal and spatial distance,

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<sup>259</sup> Pliny, the Elder, *Natural History*, Book XXXV, chapter V (circa 77-79 AD). Available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D35%3Achapter%3D1>.

remembering and forgetting, and the inescapable menace of an imminent death.<sup>260</sup> In his reading of portraiture, José Gil references the same myth to demonstrate how emphatically the first delineated images of a face already pointed to the kingdom of the dead.<sup>261</sup> I would add that, on another level, a broader analytical reading of this myth allows for the possibility of linking Pliny's story with the earliest experiments with phantasmagorias and thus consequently with the origins of the medium of cinema.<sup>262</sup> This analogy could be extended further to include thematic choices. In particular, the process of representation and creation of art with its focus on love, loss, and departure is enacted numerous times in Romantic-Gothic productions, as we have seen. These themes are overtly explored in *Portrait of Jennie*, for example, when the protagonists meet once again in Eben's studio so that he can finish the painting. On that occasion, Jennie tells him that she is about to leave for a few months to care for her sick aunt at Cape Cod. They stay together for a few hours whilst Eben paints on, determined to finish the portrait. Once Jennie is gone, all he will have is that canvas to remember her by.

What we learn from Pliny's tale and the sequence from *Portrait of Jennie* is that, in reality, the finished portrait—any portrait—is, from the start, an image of death, an amputation of the living body, and a powerful symbol of love and imprisonment. Having already examined the inclination of the characters towards these themes in the

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<sup>260</sup> In this chapter, Pliny is actually describing the creation of the art of modelling or sculpting more than painting: 'Upon seeing this, her father filled in the outline, by compressing clay upon the surface, and so made a face in relief'.

<sup>261</sup> José Gil, "*Sem Título*": *Escritos sobre Arte e Artistas*, Lisbon: Relógio d'Água, 2005, p. 19 (my translation).

<sup>262</sup> Marina Warner establishes a parallel between forms of externalising and exhibiting memory and film practices, claiming that objects such as death masks, waxworks, photographs, and films all coincide in their ability to directly represent an absence. Portraits, I would add, are included in the above category. In other words, they also partake of a power to represent, disclose, and copy death (Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, p. 160). Continuing in this vein, Warner remarks that shadows activate memories, which leads to an interesting observation concerning the use of monochrome in photographs. Considering that most Romantic-Gothics neglect the colour strip, the idea that black and white suggests pastness is an interesting one, and opens up new ways for investigating the reasons behind their monochromatic look—other, that is, than the studio's financial decisions.

preceding chapters, the proliferation and appeal of portraits in the films comes as no surprise. Specifically, the use of such objects denotes a strong connection, at narrative level, with the kind of post-mortem body imagery that fascinates the Romantic-Gothic dweller, and which can be traced back to a series of medical experiments in the second half of the nineteenth century. In actuality, even when it is not constricted to the sole representation of a face, the traditional Romantic-Gothic portrait shows little more: the neck, the shoulders and one or both arms.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, the depicted figure is usually wrapped in darkness, so that not much else stands out other than a floating head against a darkened or blurred background.

In the portrait, the human body is thus represented as blatantly dismembered and de-contextualised. Aside from a focus on dismemberment, there is, however, one other prominent link between the Romantic-Gothic portrait and the vibrant social panorama of the late eighteenth century through to the end of the 1800s: the privileged social role of portraits at the time.<sup>264</sup> The inauguration of portrait galleries in several countries ‘testified to the importance then attributed to portraits as agents in shaping national identity’, as Joanna Woodall claims.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, as portraits, by default, offer the indexicality of a likeness, they became central to the preservation of memory by assuring (or, at the least, allowing for) the recognition of the sitter’s identity long after his or her demise.

Portraits had such an impact that, by the end of the nineteenth century, they were arguably the most frequently reproduced images. Besides, this was a society where, as Nancy Mowll Mathews states, ‘the study of the movement of nature, the urban machine,

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<sup>263</sup> There are punctual exceptions to this. *Dorian Gray* is one such case (Basil paints a full-length portrait of his model).

<sup>264</sup> The eighteenth century is often called ‘the age of portraiture’ in Britain. On the role of portraiture and Gothic fiction, see Kamilla Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification, 1764-1835*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

<sup>265</sup> Joanna Woodall, ‘Introduction: Facing the Subject’, in Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 5.

and the body was conducted concurrently with studies of the human face—speaking, smiling, sneezing, and kissing’.<sup>266</sup> Such detailed studies contributed to the consolidation of the portrait’s status as archive by denoting the increasing interest in the investigation of the human face and features in an almost scientific manner, namely in the experiments conducted by French inventor Georges Demeny.<sup>267</sup> Adding to their fast-growing popularity was the fact that, since the first decade of the century, portraits were also a celebrated source of entertainment: the *tableaux vivants*—a parlour game that consisted in the static impersonation of renowned paintings—was particularly widespread at the time.<sup>268</sup> In this respect, we can say that, alongside their aforementioned socio-political role in the preservation of individual and national memory, portraits promoted the re-enactment of historical events as well by keeping them alive in collective memory.

If we now turn our attention to the Romantic-Gothic, we realise that the choice of the portrait as a pervasive element in the narratives is far from random. Portraits have been incorporated into Romantic and Gothic stories from very early on, and have since figured prominently in the Romantic-Gothic imaginary.<sup>269</sup> *Portrait of Jennie*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Gaslight*, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, *Dragonwyck*, *Laura*, *While I Live*, *Corridor of Mirrors*, and Preminger’s *Whirlpool* (1944) are a few examples of

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<sup>266</sup> Nancy Mowll Mathews, ‘Introduction’ in Nancy Mowll Mathews (ed.), *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1880-1910*, Vol. 1, Manchester: Hudson Hill Press, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>267</sup> In 1892, Georges Demeny writes: ‘How many people would be happy if they could for a moment see again the living features of someone who had passed away! The future will replace the still photograph, locked in its frame, with the moving portrait, which can be given life at the turn of a wheel! The expression of the physiognomy will be preserved as the voice is by the phonograph. The latter could even be added to the phonoscope to complete the illusion .... We shall do more than analyze [the face]; we shall bring it to life again’ (Georges Demeny, ‘Les Photographies parlantes’, *La Nature: revue des sciences*, Vol. 20 (April 1892), p. 315).

<sup>268</sup> Brigitte Peucker, ‘Filmic Tableau Vivant: Vermeer, Intermediality, and the Real’, in Ivone Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, London: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 294. On waxworks and *tableaux vivants*, see also Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*, pp. 148-151.

<sup>269</sup> *The Castle of Otranto* includes portraits as an important part of the story’s setting, as do Poe’s ‘The Oval Portrait’ (1842) and Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1871). In fact, it is hard to name works of Gothic fiction from the late eighteenth century to the mid 1800s that does not to some extent include a representation of portraits/portraiture.

works that showcase portraits as integrant and integrating elements of the plot. Implicit in this statement is the fact that portraits seldom are passive décor, but do actually restructure sequences and propel the action.

In *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, a stormy night welcomes Lucy and her daughter, Anna, to Gull Cottage, their new home. Whilst getting ready for bed, Lucy reaches for a hot water bottle and decides to go downstairs to fill it up. Candle in hand, she carefully makes her way to the kitchen. As she comes down the stairs, she stops for a while and then turns to her right. She is standing by the door to the living room, which she cannot help but push open to peek at the strange portrait that had scared her earlier. When she does, we see Captain Gregg's picture from over her shoulder, in between the candle Lucy is holding and the back of her head. In that moment, with his face emerging out of the darkened room, he seems almost as real as she. What is more, the way it is filmed, it appears as though Lucy is checking in on the portrait, making sure it was and still is there. She then closes the door, walks away, and enters the kitchen.

This is a paradigmatic example of the hold that portraits have on the characters. Note that Lucy does not simply look at the portrait as she is passing by: she deliberately interrupts her going to the kitchen to open a door, an action whose sole purpose is to catch a glimpse of the portrait. The analysis of this sequence also brings me back to my earlier argument that the fondness of the characters for morbid and enigmatic beauty explains their initial attraction to portraits. However, notwithstanding this first impulse to look at a portrait, the depiction of a human face with all its particular facial features and expressions is by itself not enough to account for the beguiling temptation of gazing at a portrait. Something else is present in that interaction from the outset—something powerful that draws the characters into staring at portraits with a mix of pensive apprehension and reluctant admiration; something that feeds on their imagination and makes them act according to their half-irrational obsession for an object.

Much more than simply recognising human traits in the canvas, then, the travelling re/collectors see beyond that which their eyes reveal to them: they see themselves reflected in the portrait. This situation comes with a very tempting possibility: that of getting to know an Other's (secret) past—a past that has, by then, already become part of the narrative present. Paul, for instance, is an example of how much the gaze of the past onto the present affects not only the latter, but also the future of the characters. He looks at Venetia as if she were a gateway into his past, his salvation from the mediocrity of existence. She is his past, his present, and his future: without her (or the memory of her) there is no point in living. In like manner, most Romantic-Gothic characters, like Eben of *Portrait of Jennie* and detective MacPherson of *Laura*, behave as though they are looking through the painting onto a land of new possibilities.

Complex in nature, since its primary function is to depict a human being, the portrait, in the Romantic-Gothic, represents something that the viewer's eyes cannot escape: a fixed image of the preterite, a captured essence, a halted time that cannot be wholly transcended. Lucy cannot escape the still gaze of the Captain's eyes, eyes that will haunt her until her death—and after. In *The Cat and the Canary*, the portrait is also directly associated with death and the afterlife. At one point, a loud noise alarms the greedy heirs that had gathered in the living room: the portrait of the dead Cyrus has suddenly fallen from the wall to the ground. 'This is an evil omen—something terrible will happen tonight', says Mammy Pleasant, the faithful housekeeper. 'Just an old superstition', one of the guests quickly explains: 'When somebody's picture falls, it's a sign of death'. This calls attention to another central idea that pervades the narratives: that to look at a portrait is never a relaxed, disengaged act of aesthetic fruition. In fact, it is more than an act: it is a process of engagement, a multi-layered endeavour that will shape the lives of the characters spatially, temporally, and psychologically.

Considering their individual background stories and the way they are inserted into the narratives, we can distinguish between two kinds of portraits. Let me draw on some specific examples to clarify this. Olwen's portrait in *While I Live*, for instance, hangs in the anti-home's living room from the start of the film—from the moment we first see the young woman playing the piano. In this specific case, the portrait is therefore a part of the story from the very beginning. This is true of many Romantic-Gothics, like *Laura* and *Dragonwyck*. On the other hand, films like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Portrait of Jennie* are all about the long, strenuous process of painting a portrait and about the life-changing effects it has on the characters: the portrait *becomes* a central part of the story as the plot unfolds. Nevertheless, regardless of how and when it is integrated into the film, the portrait or the portrait-to-be centralises the action from the second the coloured or blank canvas appears on the screen.

A point of interest here is the fact that the characters mention portraits directly countless times during the course of the films, which gives them diegetic as well as textual relevance throughout. In *Dragonwyck*, Miranda, who has just arrived at the mansion to work as a governess, stops and stares at Azilde's picture: 'She looks like... like a frightened child', she comments. That face, paired with the macabre stories she will soon hear the servants whispering, ensure the portrait's centeredness in the diegesis even when it is not visible in a sequence. In conjunction with the empathy the human face naturally provokes in its percipients (the characters and the audience), the verbal and/or physical acknowledgement of its presence invariably brings the then to the here and now, and leads the characters to question the past that has begun to taunt their present.

Captain Gregg, who, for all the audience knows, might be but a figment of Lucy's imagination, is a perfect example of the kind of pressure that the past exerts over the present. He not only rejoices in scaring people off (Gull Cottage had been deemed

uninhabitable), but actually appears in human form before Lucy (and her young daughter, as we later learn). Above all, however, the Captain is most keen on being remembered at every hour of every day and thus makes sure he is close to Lucy at all times. ‘Oh, one thing more,’ he tells her when they first meet in the kitchen on that stormy night. They are now in the process of negotiating the terms under which Lucy may stay in the house. ‘I want my painting hung in the bedroom. The one that’s in the living room’. ‘I want you to put it there now. Tonight’, he continues. This is, however, far from a friendly request: it is the condition *sine qua non* Lucy will not be allowed to remain in Gull Cottage. In this way, the Captain assures he would interfere not just with the heroine’s present but with her future day-to-day life as well. Lucy, for whom the vivid eyes staring at her from the painting are more than she is willing to tolerate in the privacy of her bedroom, is not too happy with the indecency of Captain Gregg’s demand. Back in her room, after carrying the portrait to its new place, we see her carefully throwing a blanket over its surface so as to get dressed in peace, away from the prying eyes of the Captain.

In the next section, I will continue to explore that ‘something else’ that portraits possess in the Romantic-Gothic by analysing the reasons that drive the characters into looking, keeping, and creating artworks. Although my mode of analysis is built on the portrait as a representative of both works of art and memory-objects in general, I will refer to other types of artistic creations, such as sculptures, where appropriate.

### **Mobile Maps: On Why to Keep Memory-Objects**

In a museum gallery, three teenage girls are standing near the ‘Portrait of Jennie—by Eben Adams’, looking up at it. Framed in a medium eye-level shot, the group stands still before the picture and contemplates Jennie’s beauty in awe. ‘I wonder

if she was real?', one of the girls asks. 'Oh, she must have been', another replies. And as she does, the camera changes position so that we now see them from the higher angle of the portrait. There is no one else around. However, as if by magic, Miss Spinney suddenly appears from behind one of the girls, making it look as though the space of the gallery, the memory-object, and the girls' remarks had summoned her. Note that this is the end of the film, and again, as if completing the circle, just as in her first appearance to Eben, she enters the scene quietly, from the background, unnoticed by the other characters. A different girl, adding to what her friend had just said, concludes: 'Oh, well, what does it matter? She was real to him or she couldn't look so alive'. A smile appears on Spinney's lips: 'How very wise you are', she says. The girls, who had not yet noticed her, turn around, startled. Here we have a character alluding explicitly to that indecisiveness I mentioned in Chapter 1 with regard to the veracity of narrative events. After all, as the prologue to the film stated: 'Out of the shadows of knowledge and out of a painting that hung on a museum wall comes our story, the truth of which lies not on our screen but in your hearts'. Therefore, it is not the question of whether Jennie was ever real in the chronological present of the narrative. It does not even matter whether Eben actually saw her or not, just as it is not important to find out whether Peter Ibbetson and Mary really met in each other's dreams or whether Paul truly mistook Mifanwy for Venetia reincarnated. In the end, the important thing is to fulfil the unshakable desire to conquer loneliness and forgetfulness. Their actions are driven by the relentless wish to be tied to someone forever and by the belief that in re/collecting and re-arranging the past one can sustain all levels of physical and mental suffering—including death.

Going back to the museum, the camera cuts to a medium shot of the portrait, which is revealed in full Technicolor, and progressively closes in on Jennie's face. Then, as in a whisper that comes to us from out of time and space, we hear Jennie's

voice. It is an audio excerpt from a conversation she had with Eben just before she left to meet her doomed fate in Cape Cod: ‘I think it’s a fine painting, Eben’, she says. ‘I think it will make you famous. I think someday it will hang in a museum and people will come from all over the world to see it’. Jennie’s soft-spoken voice tells us that the portraitist and the portrayed alike live on, not only in the space of the museum or in the memory of the people who knew both or either one, but also in the imaginations of the visitors—the strangers who dwell amidst those memories and remember them their own way.

One fundamental thing to retain so far is that portraits move. By this, I mean that the characters engage emotionally with them—from those schoolgirls in the museum to Dorian Gray’s deadly obsession with his youth and beauty. At this point, let me briefly move away from an investigation of the whole of the portrait, with its frame, site, and background. Restricting my readings from the macrocosmic frame of the portrait to a closer look at the image of the painted face on the canvas, offers, I believe, a complementary in-depth way of perceiving and investigating the Romantic-Gothic self as articulated in the films.

Given the specificities that pertain to the determinate area of painting that is the art of portraiture, the artist cannot rely on background detail alone or on multiple figures to open up his work to dwelling, as it is possible in other types of painting. Rather, the portraitist relies solely on the human face and its pathos. On this, Gil’s description of the face sheds some light on its psychological appeal. ‘There is no such thing as the objective perception of a face’, he states, ‘because, in a way, the face does not exist, it is not a thing; it is not even an image, static and whole. It is a place, a territory where all

can be inscribed and yet remain elusive ... a mobile map'.<sup>270</sup> In other words, the face creates a *topological* space

where the place of each organ, wrinkle, mole, pore, hair ... is not defined by objective coordinates, but rather by the intensity and dynamic of its forces. ... No animal has a face; only man acquires a face-map that allows him to always escape both pure corporealisation and pure signification.<sup>271</sup>

Implicit here are two main ideas. The first one has already been stated in the previous pages and concerns the notion that any portrait captures our eye and mind simply because it represents a face. This hypothesis has been discussed at length in the neurosciences, where studies have advanced the idea that there is a region in the human brain that is selectively activated by face stimuli, creating in the subject the subconscious need to look at it.<sup>272</sup> The second argues that a finished portrait owes as much to reality as to imagination, and that it perhaps leans more towards the latter. This second argument is particularly relevant to my analysis of the Romantic-Gothic, for it makes the claim that to see and to look at a portrait is a self-reflexive act. More precisely, it is an act that sets off a search within, which in turn triggers the remembering process in the outside world. To look at a portrait is also to look into it and into ourselves, it means to give in to the dwelling provided by that 'mobile map', that 'face-map' where we find our self reflected back to us, and where we lose ourselves to the Other—or, rather, to our (imagined) idea of the Other.

In sum, since we, as human beings, are prone to identifying the artistic representation of the human face with our own 'real' face, the depicted face of the Other tends to produce emotional engagement through recognition and thus appropriates our

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<sup>270</sup> Gil, "*Sem Título*", p. 31.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>272</sup> See Nancy Kanwisher et al., 'The Fusiform Face Area: A Module in Human Extrastriate Cortex Specialized for Face Perception', *The Journal of Neuroscience*, Vol. 17, No. 11 (June 1997), pp. 4302-4311.

gaze. In fact, however, it is not just our eyes that are drawn into the portrait, but our hands as well. This is identical to what happens to the characters in the films. There is the desire to touch, to feel the texture of that ultimately intangible face: intangible because of the insurmountable gulf (physical, spatial, temporal, and material) between the face of the Other in the portrait and that of its percipient.

I have now presented the main reasons any character, even those who have never met the Other in the portrait, find themselves affectionately and synaesthetically drawn to it. This connection, in turn, soon leads to the imperative need to keep the portrait close. The specific reasons for keeping memory-objects vary, as do those for creating them. Still, we can isolate a common thread that links all of these objects together and which relates to the memorial value the self attributes to them. To begin with, the infatuation of the characters with the objects in question is rooted in a desire for omnipresence, or spatio-temporal ubiquity, so much so that, as Gil suggests, the aesthetic and metaphysical obsession with *actually* surviving death subtends the admiration for the living portrait: that which Gil describes as surviving death ‘not in a representation, not in imagination or memory, but in a metaphysical dimension of a parallel reality’.<sup>273</sup> This ‘metaphysical dimension of a parallel reality’ corresponds to the spatial and temporal threshold where the portrait lingers. Furthermore, it relates to the belief that the essence of the deceased remains unaffected by mortality. As both sights and sites of mourning to where the characters roam, the portraits represent much more than the mere wish to keep someone’s memory close. It is not, to use Gil’s words,

... simply the longing of a souvenir one seeks, but something like a permanent support of affection that survives the passage of time, as if through the endless affection the portrait accumulates one could obtain the magic formula for survival.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Gil, *Sem Título*, p. 21.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

This last aspect sends us back to the idea of the extended mourning period I discussed in Chapter 1, where I explained that the dead often remain alive in the present as ghosts and/or memory-objects that survive the passage of time.<sup>275</sup> Eternity is reached in each painted thread of the canvas, and the feeling of the everlasting presentness of the Other is created, opening the portrait up to mourning rituals. In this regard, *Dragonwyck* presents a singular scenario, for it combines the sight of the portrait with the sound of the harpsichord placed right before it. That is, of course, the same harpsichord that the woman in the painting used to play. ‘I don’t know why we keep her hanging there. And that ugly, old harpsichord... It’s just an eyesore. The servants have to be driven to dust it. You’d think it was going to bite them’, mocks the wife of Nicholas Van Ryn. She does not understand why these objects need to be kept and displayed, and this failure to acknowledge their importance will cost her her life.

Further to the aforementioned motives for keeping memory-objects close by, there are also more private reasons that account for the characters’ attachment to and admiration of a portrait. These are very straightforward and can be analysed according to two groups of characters: those who have had a direct relationship with the Other in the portrait and those who have come upon the ‘rebirth’ of the Other only as a memory-object and have since become fascinated by it. The first group looks at the portrait either to remember or to not forget, whilst the second looks because the being the portrait actualises inexplicably troubles their eyes.

As an example of memory-objects that are kept in homage to someone (having often been created by the self as a means to fight oblivion), the narrative of *Portrait of Jennie* offers a good and complex starting point for our discussion. The portrait,

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<sup>275</sup> Both paintings and sculptures are occasionally accompanied by specific musical compositions, meaning that the self also remains alive in sound form. This matter will be addressed later in this chapter.

lovingly drawn and painted by Eben, works as an emotional crutch for Spinney and Eben alike, making them feel as though they are (still) physically close to the lost one. This 'lost one', however, means a different person to each character. As for Spinney, she longs to remain close to Eben, her protégé, whilst he, on the other hand, wants nothing more than to remain close to Jennie. Keeping the portrait and, in this case, exhibiting it in a museum, allows them both, in a way, to fulfil their wishes. The portrait therefore has here an active role in a love triangle.

There is another, more mysterious, reason for preserving a memory-object, which is to do with a powerful undercurrent of voyeuristic tendencies in the films. The iconic image of a hand slowly turning the doorknob, that is, the exhilarating sense of trespassing, of peering through the peeping hole, is everywhere in the stories. Now, what does this have to do with keeping portraits? A portrait, in actuality, is often treasured as the proverbial window to the soul of the Other. The portrait of Captain Gregg, for instance, exemplifies an object that is kept by Lucy as a relic, literally as something 'left behind' by the house's previous owner whom she has never met.<sup>276</sup> It is therefore preserved as a curiosity, as an element of the simultaneously frightening and fascinating unknown. Although the portrait frightens her, she feels compelled to keep it.

The choice of the characters to co-exist with the face of the departed, regardless of the reason (curiosity, in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*; remembrance, in *Portrait of Jennie* and *While I Live*; and remorse or guilt, in *Dragonwyck*), legitimises the denial of an absence caused by death. In this context, visual stimuli (the sight of the portrait) wilfully perpetuate mourning.

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<sup>276</sup> The word 'relic' comes from the Latin *reliquus*, which means 'to leave behind', relinquish.

## The Art of Not Forgetting: On Why to Create Memory-Objects

‘To you, they are wax; but to me, their creator, they live and breathe,’ says Jarrod to both his best friend and business partner in *House of Wax*. Walking among the many waxworks in his studio, he stops in front of his Marie Antoinette and in a soft, loving, almost confessional tone, comments whilst staring at her face: ‘She is very real to me’. It becomes apparent that Jarrod creates his figures because they are his world: they keep him company and even speak with him. ‘Do you really hear what they say, Jarrod?’, his associate asks him in an earlier scene. ‘Of course!’, he promptly replies. The aliveness of his beloved wax figures means everything to him. So, when a set fire destroys not only his lifework, but also his ability to create again (his hands are severely damaged by burns), Jarrod’s world collapses and he never recuperates from both losses.

There are various motives behind the urge the characters feel to create memory-objects through art, and such motives often coincide with those for keeping them. On that note, the primary reason that leads the characters to produce artworks concerns the wish to preserve a memory (someone else’s as well as their own) and thus not forget. This means that to remember and to not forget can be understood from two viewpoints: that of the artist in regard to himself (he wants to be remembered) or of the artist in regard to the sitter (he wants to remember). Whatever the reason, the ultimate goal of all portraiture is to make an absent someone present again. With this in mind, in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, Captain Gregg—a ghost that seems to have been summoned only after Lucy saw his portrait—represents, perhaps, the most direct or literal materialisation of that goal. ‘But I am real’, he tells her. ‘I’m here because you believe I’m here. And, keep on believing... and I’ll always be real to you’.

In keeping with this basic idea of the desire for the preservation of memory, Louis Marin's assessment of the meaning and affects of representation comes as a useful text to lay the ground for the arguments that follow:

Such is the first effect of representation, to do as if the other, the absent, were here now the same, present ... . But to represent means also to show, to intensify, to redouble a presence. ... [R]epresenting someone no longer means being his herald, his ambassador, but instead it means to exhibit him, to show him. For this someone, it is a matter of presenting himself and of constituting himself by this presentation, of constructing his legitimate identity. To represent is to present oneself: such would be the second effect of representation. On the one hand, to represent is to make the absent or the dead imaginarily present once again. On the other hand, it is to construct an identity which is legitimate and authorized by the ostentatious exhibition of qualifications and justifications.<sup>277</sup>

From this excerpt we gather three main ideas. The first one (to re-actualise someone and heighten his/her presence) has already been addressed. The second point is that, apart from the social, political, and historical role that portraits took on (especially from the last quarter of the nineteenth century), portraiture began to be conceptualised as fundamentally a platform of historical record rather than just a product of artistic creativity. Third, we realise that this change of status placed portraiture as both archive and facilitator in the reconstruction of personal history and identity.<sup>278</sup> The finished portrait now exists in a different (or, as Gil mentions, 'parallel') space and time: it has become an entity that is independent from chronological temporality and from the contingencies of the human body and mind.<sup>279</sup> These ideas are vital to my work, for they reveal how specific notions of space, time, and the mind are inseparable from the represented face.

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<sup>277</sup> Marin, 'Classical, Baroque', p. 174.

<sup>278</sup> See Christopher Ondaatje, 'A Portrait of the Artist and the Sitter: Painting the Century', 24 November 2000, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/155328.article> (accessed 15 April 2013).

<sup>279</sup> Gil, *Sem Título*, p. 21.

Nevertheless, there is a significant aspect of the creative process of representation that Marin omits from his readings and that should not go overlooked.

Let us attend to the following dialogue from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

Basil—There is something I can't quite understand, something mystic about it.

Lord Henry—Mystic?

Basil—I don't know how to explain it, but whenever Dorian poses for me it seems as if a power outside my soul were guiding my hand, as if the painting had a life of its own, independent of me.

Basil is trying to explain to his friend, Lord Henry, the 'real reason' he objects to his painting of Dorian Gray being exhibited in a museum. His best explanation is that the painting reveals too much of himself. If we now look to the words of Marin transcribed above, we realise they neglect the fact that, for the *painter*, to represent is also 'to present oneself', that is, if it is the face of the sitter we see, it is only because we are looking at it through the hand of the artist. To paint and be painted is a collective undertaking of continuous exchange. In this respect, many portraits are meant to depict the artists above all (and anyone) else, and are venerated by the agents as such: as tributes to their personal worth. Certainly they serve as vehicles for the eternalising of the sitter's identity, but that at times presents as nothing more than an inevitable side effect of portraiture—not as its desired end.

Where Romantic-Gothic portraits are concerned, the defining feature of the artist coincides precisely with that idea: that the need to create resides not so much in the will to paint the sitter as in accurately representing the portraitist. There are exceptions, of course, as is the case of *Portrait of Jennie*, where Eben's mission, as the self-entrusted re/collector of Jennie's memory, is to ensure that she is not forgotten. We know, when the film ends, that Eben will also, by extension, be remembered, but what matters is that

his artistic endeavours were directed towards re-capturing Jennie—not himself—for posterity.

To wrap up these readings, let us go back to that conversation between the two friends in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This time, however, we shall look at how that sequence was described by Oscar Wilde. In the novel, Basil tells Lord Henry:

Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown with it the secret of my own soul.<sup>280</sup>

Exceptions like *Portrait of Jennie* notwithstanding, Romantic-Gothic portraits, as I have suggested, lay bare the truth behind the hand, not the face. Important as well is the idea that, to the painter, the ability to live on by portraying the model in a manner that simulates life reveals a concern with the memorialisation of his or her own identity for posterity. To conclude, the complex fusion of memory, time, and space into the portrait allows both the painter and the sitter to evade death. This cheating of death prompts a closer analysis of the relationship between the state of mind of the painters and the work of art to which they devote their lives.

### **Art and Narcissism**

It is frequently said that there is always something of the artist in the artwork. That may be so; however, in the Romantic-Gothic, that ‘something’ (and its presence in the artwork) is not, as we have just seen, merely hypothetical but actual, and is usually

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<sup>280</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1908, pp. 12-13.

connected with a rather sombre form of egocentrism.<sup>281</sup> In the introduction to her edited collection of essays on portraiture, Woodall situates the egocentrism of the painter historically, revealing that, in the late nineteenth century, portraitists gained autonomy and authority, and began to depict the sitter according to their personal relationship to the person. We have already analysed an example from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that attests to this. Woodall, in turn, mentions van Gogh's portraiture as an example where 'the images referred primarily to the identity of the artist, as opposed to that of the sitter'.<sup>282</sup> If we take her argument further, a case could be made for the art of portraiture in general as essentially centred upon the agent. Significantly, Woodall starts by mentioning the myth of Narcissus and Echo to contextualise her affirmation that 'the first image was a portrait'.<sup>283</sup> In doing so, she positions narcissism as almost a precondition for the existence of portraits of any shape or form.

Narcissism in painting has two major sources. In some instances, the exteriorisation of egotist feelings results from an unconscious tendency, according to which the unaware self begins to experience deep melancholia and unresolved mourning. *Corridor of Mirrors* is a good example of someone whose melancholy temperament causes him to fall for a portrait he stumbled upon whilst in Italy. Although he did not paint it, he still clings desperately onto the canvas to the point of denying his own life. Alternatively, those same feelings can at times develop intentionally, in which case they might culminate in a dangerous form of narcissism that may well lead to the death of the self. Aware of the strange kinship between art and an extremely self-centred existence, John Paul Riquelme mentions 'the dark implications of the pursuit of

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<sup>281</sup> For a discussion of egotism in Romantic poetry, see Jonathan Arac, 'Romanticism, the Self, and the City: *The Secret Agent* in Literary History', *Boundary 2*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 75-77.

<sup>282</sup> Woodall, 'Introduction', p. 7.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1. When Woodall refers to the myth of Narcissus and Echo, she mentions it alongside that of 'the Maid of Corinth' described by Pliny.

beauty as a narcissistic activity'.<sup>284</sup> To pursue beauty obsessively or to compulsively re-gather an ideal is to part with a life of bliss and quietude. This is what happens with detective McPherson in *Laura*: bewitched by Laura's face, he purposely abandons his duties and compromises the investigation by becoming too invested in the events.

Both forms of narcissism are not circumscribed to a definition of the personality of the artist: they describe as well the percipients that, in the course of the films, establish an unbreakable bond with the portrait. This means that the process of remembering can, at times, be likewise classified as narcissistic. Julia, of *While I Live*, mourns her sister so hopelessly that she turns the anti-home into a shrine to Olwen's memory, displaying her portrait as the centre of attentions. On the other hand, Ann, of *Undercurrent*, amazed at the complete absence of Michael's face (in portraits or photographs), deliberately searches everywhere for clues as to his whereabouts, risking her life in the process.

Regardless of how it comes to be, the characters' unhealthy dose of egocentrism feeds on their day-to-day excess of seclusion, introspection, dreams, and fears to destabilise the precarious balance of their lives—a liminal balance between self-appreciation and self-loathing that ultimately tends towards the latter. The major outcome of this helpless and hopeless self-centredness is an extreme inwardness that the lonely artist cannot escape. This means that, in the end, all of the hard work—the struggle to perfect a work of art at great personal cost—does not compensate for deep personal unhappiness. Even in films where the act of creating memory-objects seems to be the sole provider of joy in the lives of the heroes, achieving a brilliant, celebrated work of art is an experience tainted by loss and forlornness. Not even his painting of

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<sup>284</sup> John Paul Riquelme, 'Oscar Wilde's Aesthetic Gothic: Walter Pater, Dark Enlightenment, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', in John Paul Riquelme (ed.), *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, p. 10. Jeanne Riou claims that the E. T. A. Hoffmann's novellas *Der Kampf der Sänger*, *Die Automate* and *Rat Krespel* link subjectivity 'to the "malevolence" of an absolute ego' (Jeanne Riou, *Imagination in German Romanticism: Re-thinking the Self and its Environment*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2004, pp. 17-18).

Jennie is enough to console Eben in the end: nothing can make up for the fact that she was once there and will never be again. The truth is that the portrait hangs in a museum at the end of the film rather than in his home, by his side. The only thing that lightens up his face and appears to bring him some comfort after Jennie is gone is the discovery of her scarf by his bed: the same scarf that was wrapped up in that old newspaper on the bench in Central Park that had caused them to meet. Shortly after Eben wakes up, recovering from a near drowning in the storm that killed Jennie, the scarf is at the foot of the bed: in his mind, this proved that she was real, or, rather, that she had been there with him, in the same time-space continuum.

At this point, I can round up and claim that the acts of keeping and creating memory-objects consolidate narcissistic practices and dictate as well the inescapability of the self from mourning practices and rituals. Portraits demand a never-ending mourning that allows for the definition of Romantic-Gothic portraiture as the art of not forgetting. A sentence Julia proffers in *While I Live*, as if making a promise to her dead sister, encapsulates this feeling of everlasting mourning perfectly. She says: 'For while I live, you shall not die'. With these last observations, I come full circle in the analysis of Romantic-Gothic mourning that I started in Chapter 1: the painting is a double-edged memory-object that serves at once to assuage loss but that also, conversely, contributes to a deadly obsession with the face that represents the dead Other, and which ultimately leads to a miserable existence.

### **The Face in Close-Up**

The private hours of portrayal involve a creative process in which the lives of the sitter and the portraitist alike are entwined: two co-workers participating in the fabrication of a premature relic. I have argued that their ultimate (and, as we shall see,

ultimately oneiric) goal is to eliminate death altogether by overlapping the past, the present, and the future, behaving as if the remoteness of the past was just a brushstroke away. The wish to prevent somebody's complete disappearance is one that André Bazin identified with the cinema as a medium and with the plastic arts in general. He argues that 'at the origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex', meaning that the chief aim of these media, like that of Egyptian embalming practices, is to defeat the passage of time (and thus, death) by preserving 'the continued existence of the corporeal body'.<sup>285</sup> In my chosen corpus of films, portraying the Other (or oneself through the Other) therefore represents the Romantic-Gothic re-interpretation of that age-long human quest for immortality, so dear to Romantic authors.<sup>286</sup> Given the importance of this quest, certain filmmakers choose to capture the transformative process of transference and absorption of memory in a particularly symbolic way. Let us examine the way Dieterle filmed the intimate moment of recreating the Other as an artwork.

Jennie is sitting in Eben's studio, as we have seen her do before. In the foreground, Eben's darkened profile occupies the right of the screen. He is putting the final touches on the painting. Calmly, Jennie whispers his name. He is so absorbed he does not seem to hear: 'Eben...', she repeats, 'do you think people can know what lies ahead? I mean—what's going to happen to them?' As she finishes this sentence, the camera changes to an unusual close up of her face. It is unusual because a white mist appears over Jennie's face, and the image becomes striated, as though we were looking at her through the fibres of a canvas—as though we were already seeing her portrait. As she continues talking to Eben, her speech becomes more intriguing and fatalist: 'You know how you feel sad about things, sometimes? About things that have never

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<sup>285</sup> André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' in *What is Cinema?*, Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, p. 9.

<sup>286</sup> Among authors who discussed questions of immortality are Wordsworth ('Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1804)); John Keats ('Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1819)); and Baudelaire (*Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 1863).

happened?', she asks him. And whilst her discourse carries on in this tone, the camera cuts to an even closer shot of her. Eben is so busy painting he does not reply. She smiles, and her eyes start to close. In a medium shot, with his face partially hidden in shadow, Eben has now stepped back and is admiring his work. The room has become very quiet and he calls Jennie's name, still looking at the portrait. When she does not reply, he looks over at her. The reverse shot is, again, something of an oddity: in close-up, the camera frames Jennie's face in a freeze frame, her eyes shut and her head drooping.

At this moment, all diegetic and non-diegetic sound have also abruptly stopped. No ambient noise, no dialogue, no music—just complete, overwhelming silence. What is more, the misty, textured quality of the image remains, same as before, stressing the painterly and dramatic values of the sequence. Eben immediately puts his brushes down, rushes to her and shakes her. Seconds later, she is awake, and her theremin leitmotif immediately invades the soundtrack. The portrait is now finished, and Dieterle has literally (or, rather, visually) presented the audience with the very moment of memorialisation: Jennie has become her own memory before Eben's eyes. The way the scene was shot and edited, it seems as though her life has just been extracted from her body and transferred onto the portrait.<sup>287</sup>

According to Deleuze, the close-up is not merely one type of image among others, but gives an affective reading of the whole film.<sup>288</sup> In the sequence from *Portrait of Jennie*, the use of the close-up in conjunction with the freeze frame instigates a detailed reading of the face and creates a Romantic pathos that, to borrow the words of Alain Fleischer, 'consists in seizing the unrolling of images to sense more voluptuously,

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<sup>287</sup> We can even claim that it appears as though the art of painting itself has just been (re)born into film.

<sup>288</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, London: Continuum, 2005, pp. 89-105.

more lastingly their loss'.<sup>289</sup> Indeed, the capturing of evanescence (of youth, beauty, and time) in a portrait calls to the fore issues of tactility.

Fleischer and Aumont both share the view that the close-up heightens our sensorial experiences, particularly of time. The close-up is not a question of distance, but enlargement—it is a *Zeitlupe*, Aumont argues: 'the silent-face [*visage-muet*] is an enlarged face, but also, more specifically and immediately, a face of time, a time-face [*visage-temps*]'.<sup>290</sup> In agreement with the way these authors define the close-up, I argue that the moments of close-up and stillness in *Portrait of Jennie* serve multiple interrelated purposes.

From a formal and aesthetic viewpoint, the technique of superimposing such a visual texture to the scene stresses the interaction between paused instants and mobility and lends an ethereal feel to the images. These shots, in turn, seem to move slightly away from narrative linearity to gain a status of their own. They seem to linger elsewhere, in a threshold, belonging neither purely in the manual/painterly arts milieu nor on the cinematic screen. Besides, freezing the image of the face also adds to the suspense: when Jennie closes her eyes, Eben and the audience alike are unsure about whether she is dead or merely asleep. Still regarding the stylistic properties of the images, I add that the simulation of texture conveys a double sense of proximity as well: sensory proximity between the spectator's hand and eye (the illusion that the hand of the viewer might touch the elusive cinematic 'canvas'), and an aesthetic, inter-art

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<sup>289</sup> Fleischer, *Les Laboratoires du Temps*, p. 31. In the original context, the author is referring to the technique of *ralenti*, but his words apply just as well to this sequence. The haptic visuality of the cinematic image, that 'ability to sense more voluptuously', is greatly heightened by the use that Dieterle makes of such a peculiar and innovative technique. In reality, he goes even further, and superimposes an identical kind of canvas-like texture over a few exterior shots throughout the film. In those moments, it seems as though we, the viewers, are looking at a living mobile painting. The resulting effect is that it seems almost as if Eben and the city of New York were the actual paintings, or were stuck inside a painting, just as Jennie will be. On another note, the unusual optic effect this superimposition causes, shapes the audience's perception of the film by calling attention to the cinematic apparatus rather than the diegesis. It disrupts visual fluency and momentarily destroys the optic illusion of image-continuity.

<sup>290</sup> Jacques Aumont, *Du Visage au cinéma*, Condé-sur-Noireau: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1992, p. 100. On the close-up and retardatory strategies, see also Béla Balázs, *Theory of Film*, New York: Arno, 1972.

proximity between the manual and the audio-visual—between painting and cinema.<sup>291</sup> Timothy Mathews discusses the hapticity of the artwork and writes that ‘the figure’s intangible, but also palpable power seems to lie there: made in how we see, but escaping the visibility which is our own’.<sup>292</sup> In *Portrait of Jennie*, those strange shots foment not only a desire to touch, but also, above all, the illusion that touch would be possible.

Apart from stylistic significance, Dieterle’s peculiar aesthetic choice bears implications in regard to the content of the film as well. One could say that the crude artificiality of the textured images foreshadows Eben’s impossibility of finding the earthly love for which he so desperately yearns. In so doing, it consequently alerts the viewer to the inevitability of a bitter or bittersweet ending to the re/collecting journey of the hero. At the same time, those shots also anticipate the halted temporality in which Jennie’s face (and memory) will remain, in portrait form, for years to come.

It is worth noting that the ‘halted temporality’ displayed in that scene is one of the major differences that guide the use of the close-up in the melodrama and in the Romantic-Gothic. Melodrama makes use of the close-up throughout mainly because of its power to focus attention on the (vulnerable) human face with the objective of creating empathy. In the Romantic-Gothic, however, the chief purpose for using close-ups is not the same. The intended effect is not, or not just, to arouse emotions, but rather to create an alternate temporality, that is, to momentarily reorganise experience of narrative time for the viewers.<sup>293</sup> In this regard, it is used interchangeably between people and objects. Oftentimes, it is focused on memory-objects, in which case shots of

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<sup>291</sup> Laura U. Marks discusses ‘haptic visuality’ (Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, London: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>292</sup> Timothy Mathews, ‘Reading the Invisible with Cees Nooteboom, Walter Benjamin and Alberto Giacometti’, in Timothy Mathews and Jan Parker (eds), *Tradition, Translation, Trauma: The Classic and the Modern*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 325. Note that the author is discussing a sculpture by Picasso: *The Charioteer of Delphi*.

<sup>293</sup> Laura Mulvey writes that the ‘halted frame, the arrest, discovers the moment of immobility that belongs to the frame and allows the time for contemplation that takes the image back to the brief instant that recorded “the real thing”’ (Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, 2006, p. 163).

inanimate objects, which would not usually be classified as promoters of pathos, engage the audience as thoroughly as the sight of a face. This happens because objects, in bringing the past into the present, are closely bound to memory and the senses. Given that portraits are memory-objects, sometimes the close-up of objects still involves the face, but this is the face of the dead—the exteriorisation of an idea from the mind of the painter. The living human face often needs that counterpoint of dead people’s memory-objects to create a Romantic-Gothic pathos.

Before proceeding to the next section, a clarification about my analysing the use of the portrait and the close-up is now in order. In a work where one of the main overall concerns is movement (and flows of movement), pursuing an investigation of portraits, by definition immobile objects depicting painted immobile figures, might seem as though we are steering a bit off course. However, my argument that movement underpins all aspects of the Romantic-Gothic applies to an investigation of the portraits in the films as well. Still, how can we entertain a discussion of movement and mobility when analysing a painted face in a canvas? Strictly speaking, in what way(s) is movement implicated in portraiture and, particularly, in portraits in the Romantic-Gothic mode? In the first two chapters, mobility was investigated primarily as a spatial activity regarding the dislocation of film characters and filmmakers. In Chapter 3, it was explored as an artistic and cultural practice that involved both a spatial and a temporal dimension. Taking into account yet another specificity of the Romantic-Gothic mode, I now chose to inquire into matters of mobility by proposing something rather different: an approach to the relationship between film and movement that focuses on a pre-cinematic art form—the art of portraiture. An overarching question here relates to the critically neglected movement from painting to cinema, and one of the most important contributions to this discussion is the sense of time that the film camera gives the work of art.

Movement and portraits relate to one another in a specifically cinematic manner, that is, through the relationship between the camera movements and angles, sound, and the journeying bodies of the characters. What I mean to say is that the very representation of a portrait in film makes it acquire specific properties, so that our experience of looking at a portrait in a gallery or on a cinema screen is qualitatively different. The most noticeable difference is the *mise en abyme* effect (the frame of the portrait inside the frame of the screen) that results from transmedialisation. This effect, on the other hand, creates two different types of viewer: on one side, the characters who observe the painting and, on the other, the film audience who watches the characters look at the portrait.

What interests me here is the kinetic energy that the portraits imbue in their diegetic viewers and how this is connected to camera angles, movements, and extra-diegetic sound, all of which incite the characters to move, travel, explore, and remember. The experience of motion that develops on the screen is therefore tantamount to my analysis of portraits. In examining these memory-objects, I will approach movement from three interrelated dwelling modes pertaining to the categories of space, time, and the mind, all of which are based on the characters' experience of things as dwellers. A reading of memory-objects, then, necessarily involves the three categories of sensorial travelling.

Revisiting the category of the sensuous through the lens of those three dwelling modes will help me uncover not only how portraits concern identity, but also how identity is formed and structured in the Romantic-Gothic. More generally, it will also describe in detail how memory-objects in the anti-home engage temporal, spatial, and psychological dimensions. Finally, the investigations that follow will bring together the main ideas I have been discussing throughout this project, namely my thoughts on Romantic-Gothic space and place, time and memory, forlornness and death.

## CHAPTER 4: Filming Canvases

### Spatial Dwelling and the Camera

How do portraits make the characters dwell? In the second chapter of this thesis, I defined dwelling as going through spaces. Importantly, the portraits that concern me here can be inserted into this definition too, for they provide their diegetic viewer with a specific form of dwelling whereby one experiences that 'going through' pictorially. This means that the sense of vision, aided by a thoroughly imaginative mind, is able to inhabit the painting. The camera therefore appropriates the dwelling that the art of painting allows and transforms it into something purely cinematic. In this regard, the sight of a portrait carries with it the promise of a journey, enmeshing the gazing individual in a web of spatial, temporal, and psychological movements. My readings in this final chapter aim to bring together the key concepts I have analysed throughout the project. In order to achieve this, I will continue to focus on the portrait, for it facilitates a detailed approach of space/place, temporality, mourning, and memory-objects in Romantic-Gothic routes of remembering. Let us start by seeing how detective McPherson copes with the presence of a portrait in *Laura*.

It is pouring when detective McPherson gets to Laura's apartment. As he is entering, the shadow of his head is projected high against the wall in front of him. He walks across the hall, cigarette in mouth, and stops before the portrait. Seemingly nervous, he turns his back to the painting, takes his hat off, and loosens his tie. In truth, from the moment he first laid eyes on Laura's framed picture when the investigation began, his behaviour changed and he had become more and more agitated. Making his way to the back of the room, he tosses his coat onto a chair and makes himself at home. Randomly, he starts going through Laura's things, as if to justify his presence there. He

looks first in her office and then moves to the bedroom. The camera follows him steadily in a medium shot as he moves across the house. Once in the bedroom, he opens a drawer and holds out a small see-through handkerchief in his hand. He quickly puts it back and reaches instead for a bottle of perfume. Visibly distressed, the reaction here is the same: immediately after smelling it, he puts the bottle down heavily. It is as though he feels he is crossing a line that should not be crossed. He is but a guest there, in the space of the Other. Just before exiting the bedroom, however, the detective cannot help himself and opens Laura's closet. Again, just as quickly as he had opened it, he shut it close. Catching sight of his reflection staring back at him in the mirrored doors of the closet, it is as though he has regained self-awareness and realised he has gone too far. After a pointless and ultimately unfruitful search, he returns to the centre of the living room and pours himself a drink. Once more, he turns around to contemplate the portrait. Laura's leitmotif begins playing on the soundtrack. Through touch, smell, taste, and the visual presence of Laura in the portrait, the detective slowly re/collects her memory.

Suddenly, a knock on the door disrupts the silence: it is Waldo Lydecker, an infamous columnist and friend of Laura's. He had seen the lights on from the street and had decided to come up. Finding the detective in the victim's apartment at odd hours, Waldo starts to tease him immediately upon entering, asking him if he is subletting the apartment. 'Perhaps we can come to terms now', he says. 'You want the portrait— perfectly understandable'. McPherson does not reply. Noticing the altered state the detective is in, he adds: 'Better watch out, McPherson, or you'll end up in a psychiatric ward. I don't think they've ever had a patient who fell in love with a corpse'. As this last sentence is uttered, the camera moves away from Lydecker and to the right to frame only McPherson and the portrait in close-up. The main character and his dream now share the frame to the exclusion of everything and everyone else. On this, let us take a moment to examine Lydecker's last remark, quoted above. His words are noteworthy in

that the expression 'in love with a corpse' does not really describe the relationship between McPherson and Laura with exactitude. Their situation is not that simple. To begin with, the word 'corpse' is not accurate at all, for it implies a body—it implies decomposition, putrefaction, and ultimate disappearance. There is none of that in Laura's portrait. McPherson fell in love with something very real: an image of serene and candid beauty, a mysterious presence that intrigues and entrances.

As representations of those who are dead (or presumed so), portraits can be regarded as images of death, but whoever falls in love in these circumstances, falls for the portrait, not the actual human being. This distinction bears even greater significance in that it applies to the whole of the Romantic-Gothic canon of films. The fact is that, from Eben and Jennie to Paul and Mifanwy, Mrs Muir and the ghost of Captain Gregg, Prof Jarrod and his Marie Antoinette, or even Michel and his (imaginary) Juliette, being in love with an image of death is a pivotal aspect of the narratives. Going back to that same sequence in *Laura*, a fade out followed by a fade in indicates that some time has passed. Lydecker has by then left. The detective walks towards the portrait once more, only this time he pulls up a chair and sits before it. As he sits there, gazing at Laura's face, he falls quietly asleep. The camera closes in on him slowly, accompanied by Laura's leitmotif in the soundtrack. Moments later, the camera zooms out and we hear a door opening. Laura has just come in and will soon wake him up.

I said earlier that the portrait centralises the action. From this example, we learn that it also coordinates the dwellings of the characters. The central position of the portrait, then, highlights this object among all others in the *mise-en-scène*, in terms of both the space it dominates and the content of the plot. Moreover, we can draw two general conclusions about portraits in the Romantic-Gothic from that sequence. First, that the portrait is assigned a circumscribed space in the films, notably the anti-home's living room. It is worth noticing its location, because the living room is the centre of the

house, the place of dwelling *par excellence*, and thus the typical vortex of narrative action. It not only occupies an already privileged place in the anti-home, but it furthermore hangs high on an otherwise usually bare wall. Therefore, it always stands out: the Romantic-Gothic portrait is never just *there*, hanging on a wall in the background as little more than a *mise-en-scène* prop—that haunting represented image stands before one’s eyes in its overwhelming bareness, always irremediably visible and in constant surveillance.

Unlike ghostly apparitions, the portrayed face does not appear and disappear, which means that its being there incessantly triggers re/collecting expeditions in its onlookers. In short, the portrait radically transforms the behaviour of the re/collector. Let me reiterate that, although it is the sight of—or sensuous contact with—the portrait that alters behaviour, this does not mean that the dweller needs to be in the presence of the portrait to be lured in. In *Laura*, for instance, detective McPherson becomes increasingly restless and unprofessional in the course of the film, which testifies to the fact that the portrayed face extends its grip beyond the instant of perception. This hold that the portrait has on the characters is clearly expressed in *Corridor of Mirrors* as well, when Paul, having finally revealed Venetia’s portrait to Mifanwy, explains to her when and how he came across the painting. It turns out he had been wounded during the war and taken to the hospital for treatment:

All the times I lay in bed, she looked down at me. At night, I dreamt about her. She filled my imagination. After the war, I went back to England. I found no peace and no happiness. That girl’s face haunted me. She drove me back to Italy. I had to possess her. The day I bought her, an infinite peace and happiness enveloped me for the first time in my life.

The face therefore lingers in the mind even when out of sight. To summarise, amidst all the spatial peculiarities of the anti-home, one thing is certain: if there is a

portrait, the house's numerous rooms, corridors, and hidden passages have been built around it and always seem to somehow lead to it. It is indeed as if the perspectival lines of the house all converge at the vanishing point that is the wall of the room where the portrait hangs. This also means that everyone's spatial dwellings in the anti-home are in a way coordinated by the geographic location of the portrait. Stated simply, the painting foments constant ceremonies of remembrance, so that the site of the portrait is characterised by the characters' compulsive movements of continuous return. Julia, for instance, is consistently filmed sitting in the living room, close to the portrait of her sister. Detective McPherson, as we have just seen, keeps coming back to (and walking back and forth in) Laura's apartment to stare at her picture: once the characters are in the space of the portrait, the rest of the space is cancelled out.

What we gather from this is that the figure the painting represents is the veritable owner of the anti-home and the sole true host to its guests. Guy Crucianelli notices the centripetal forces of the portrait in *La chute de la maison Usher*, remarking that 'often, as characters move forward to admire the painting, the camera tracks behind or in front of them, as if the camera/portrait itself is pushing or luring them onward'.<sup>294</sup> As if a set of strings were dictating their movements, I would say. A departed body but a very much 'alive' face, the portrayed being is a kind of master puppeteer that controls the dislocations of the characters and forces them, to a certain extent, to acknowledge it, to stare at it—and even to hear it.<sup>295</sup>

In Preminger's *Whirlpool*, a psychoanalyst's wife, Ann, is hypnotised and framed for murder. The victim, Teri, is the wife of the hypnotist and was also a patient of Ann's husband. Under the suggestion of the hypnotist, Ann steals two recordings of

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<sup>294</sup> Guy Crucianelli, 'Painting the life out of her: aesthetic integration and disintegration in Jean Epstein's *La Chute de la maison Usher*', in Richard J. Hand and Jay McRoy (eds), *Monstrous Adaptations: Generic and Thematic Mutations in Horror Film*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 29.

<sup>295</sup> I will pursue this idea of hearing a portrait further along.

the victim's sessions from her husband's safe. Those recordings could compromise the murderer, and so he makes Ann go to Teri's house (after he has committed the murder) to hide them from the police, certain no one would think to look for them there. When she is ready to leave the crime scene, a steady camera follows her from behind in a medium shot whilst she walks slowly towards the stairs. Once she starts climbing down, however, the camera distances itself from her and remains at the top of the staircase. When she reaches the living room, midway between the staircase and the door, the camera tracks to the right. In that same moment, we notice that Ann has stopped her movement towards the front door and is calmly turning around. Like a character eager to find out what has made Ann delay her exit, the camera continues to follow her actions from above by moving anti-clockwise along the walls, curving slightly and gradually changing from a high angle to a lower, eye-level, one. We lose sight of Ann for a second as the camera moves behind a column and, when it again reveals the heroine, she has turned her face towards us and is looking up at something. Now, we can clearly see what it was that captured Ann's gaze: hanging on the wall in front of her, just above a lit fireplace, is an imposing portrait of Teri.

A curious element at this stage is the fact that, as far as we are aware, Ann did not look at the portrait when she first came in. Moreover, she had never been to that house before. Those puppet strings I was discussing earlier are quite visible here: Ann does not know about the portrait, she is on her way out of the house (her back to the painting), under hypnosis and after unwillingly helping to cover up a murder, whilst suddenly—inexplicably—she stops and turns around only to stand there, gazing at the picture for a few moments. It is like the portrait is pulling her in its direction. Note that we are dealing here with Ann's *body*, not with Ann the individual. The hypnotist has seized her free will, so that she truly is a puppet here, manipulated by both the invisible strings of the hypnotic spell she is under as well as by Teri's haunting presence. During

the course of the sequence, the camera forms a semi-circle around the character, enveloping her in a presence that is simultaneously visible (the portrait) and invisible (Teri's) and which controls whoever enters its space. Important here, then, is the role of movement, which establishes a silent dance between the dead (Teri) and the living (Ann). It does so by coordinating the absence of movement in the canvas with the flow of camera movements that follow Ann climbing down the stairs, stopping, and turning. Overall, it appears as though Teri's memory-object (the portrait) is acting as a guardian of space—her space—even after her she has died.

From this sequence, then, we can infer two sets of complementary states that organise the spatial dwellings of the characters in sequences that revolve around portraits. These are: stillness (the absence of movement in the portrayed face) and movement. The latter involves the movements of the characters in relation to the portrait and the movements of the camera in relation to how the portrait (and the characters who look at it) is framed. The engaging power of such sequences stems primarily from the manner in which those two antithetical states—movement and the lack thereof—meet, rather than clash (hence the word 'dance' I used above).

I mentioned the physical stillness of the Romantic-Gothic portrait. The study of such objects is indeed indissociable from the notion of absence, not only of movement in the canvas, but of the being they represent. We have seen how stillness articulates the spatial dwellings in *Whirlpool*. Relevant as well is the fact that in the films, as in real life, the absence of movement is usually paired with another kind of stillness—the kind that the contemplation of any one work of art implies: the stillness of the onlooker. In effect, the visual appreciation of the beautiful requires the immobility (however brief) of the perceiving subject, who is brought to a halt before the portrait. The portrait therefore has a double role: it is at once an instigator of movement, of dwelling, but also its censor, its destroyer: it promotes movement only to slow it down and finally eradicate

it. In *Whirlpool* the interruption of motion is blatant and is also responsible for a particularly striking effect: the inanimate object seems to gain agency. This is achieved by the coordinated rhythmic interaction between the camera, the body of the dweller, and the still memory-object, which seems to set off responses from the latter.

*Peter Ibbetson* provides another example of the way the camera infiltrates a sequence and brings memory-objects to life. I have already mentioned Peter's (or, perhaps more accurately, Gogo's) arrival in his childhood address in Paris. At the time, I discussed that strange shot that seemed to mimic the point of view of the home as he approached the entrance. Moments after this sequence, there is a similar effect, derived from Peter's contact with another memory-object. He is walking along his childhood yards, his and Mimsey's, remembering memories of hideouts, people, and events. In a full shot, we watch Peter suddenly come to a halt before a large tree trunk. Slowly, he raises his hand and touches it. This old tree is engraved in his memory as the place where he last saw Mimsey; the place where he was forced to leave her, sitting among the branches, crying hopelessly for her young friend not to be taken away. So many years later, the tree is still there.

The shots that follow create an intimate silent dialogue between grown-up Peter, his younger self (Gogo), and the memory of Mimsey (the tree). The next shot is a close up of Peter's face, framed by the entwined branches of the tree. The camera is placed exactly in the place where the branches form a small niche—the exact spot where the children had tried to hide from Peter's uncle in the hopes of preventing him to take Peter away to London. This close-up of Peter, shot from a slightly higher angle, may as well have been the point of view of Mimsey on that day. Then, from the same position, the camera closes in on his face: filled with awakened memories, he is now smiling fondly and looking straight at the tree (at us). To him, the old tree is now substituting

for Mimsey, and so a word comes out of his lips—the word he would always say to his friend whenever he saw her and which she would always repeat back to him: ‘Hello’.

In sum, portraits in the Romantic-Gothic exist in a close relationship to the mobile human body and their chief function is to literally re-place someone, that is, to place someone somewhere again. In other words, portraits radically reorganise the existence of the characters spatially by relocating the physical, tangible, and tri-dimensional human face to the static, textured, one-dimensional canvas.<sup>296</sup> The face of the dead Other never ceases to exist: it is merely transferred from one material reality to another. The characters therefore construct their mode of dwelling in space in that act of constant negotiation between presence and absence, moving and standing still, life and death.

### **Temporal Dwelling: Staring Death in the Face**

There is another layer to the issues I have been discussing, for the stillness that is requested of the onlooker implicates not only stasis and space, but time and temporality as well. Put differently, it implicates not only a spatial, but also a temporal mode of dwelling. What is more, the re/collector might experience temporal travelling whilst standing still in the same place, gazing at a portrait. This does not mean, however, that temporal dwellings are independent from spatial mobility. Just like place and temporality, spatial and temporal modes of dwelling are very closely connected. In fact, keeping in consonance with one of my main arguments in Chapter 3 (that space shapes time in Romantic-Gothic anti-homes), I suggest here that the characters travel in

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<sup>296</sup> In regard to the one-dimensional properties of the canvas, it is also useful to recall that, in *House of Wax*, there are lifelike, tri-dimensional memory-objects that substitute for portraits: sculptures. In the inauguration of Jarrod’s wax museum, Sue tells her boyfriend: ‘It’s her face. That’s Kathy’s face, Scott. I know every line of it. I’ll wake up at night and see it, and I can’t get it out of my mind’. ‘It’s more than a resemblance’, she adds.

time *because* they have moved spatially, away and towards the portrait/memory-object, in a movement of continuous return to the place of remembrance. There, in the site of the memory-object, time travelling becomes possible. The heroes therefore dwell in time insofar as they dwell in space, and they dwell in space through objects from a different time. The main idea is that, in the Romantic-Gothic, temporal travelling involves sensory spatial discovery: it involves the contact with and the manipulation of memory-objects.

Still, the question of how temporality works in the limen that is the portrayed human face arises. Aumont addresses this question via an investigation of the sense of sight. He defines the human eye as ‘variable’ rather than accepting the more commonly theorised idea of the eye as ‘mobile’, given that, according to him, the latter designation refers to the appropriation of space but lacks the inclusion of that which he considers to be a vital dimension: time. The word ‘variable’, on the contrary, involves time and its experience by the percipient subject. Aumont acknowledges that ‘all representations, immobile or not, are related to time in a multitude of ways’, and discusses the three different but interlinked times (or levels) of temporality involved in a careful and detailed analysis of an artwork: the material or physical time of contemplation; the spectatorial time, always within our reach; and the complex time of creation, of production.<sup>297</sup>

To these times, I would add one more: the time of shared homage. This level differs from the material time Aumont mentions, in that his description seems to assume that the act of contemplation is private to each individual. In my view, however, the aura of the portrait is kept alive by the act of shared homage or shared contemplation, that is, by the unanswered (sometimes unanswerable) questions that surround it, and by the feeling of mystery it invokes. The need to co-exist and acknowledge the presence of

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<sup>297</sup> Jacques Aumont, *L’Oeil interminable*, Paris: Éditions La Différence, 2007, pp. 89-90.

the portrait is taken to the extreme in *While I Live*, with Julia forcing her guests to talk about and pay homage to her dead sister Olwen. Furthermore, she ritualistically puts fresh flowers in the mantelpiece under the portrait as one would in a cemetery grave, which only makes mourning a shared experience as well. The time of the joint experience of the face in the portrait is definitional in the organisational and aesthetic structure of the films. In this regard, the spectator of the painting travels not only through a world of colours, shapes, and hues or through the words of the co-spectator, but also across the thresholds of time, space, life, and movement in the irrational hope of re-inserting that bodiless face into a context he or she can understand.

Similarly to Aumont, Gil relates the portrayed face to both space and time, and likens it to the living face.<sup>298</sup> The portrait, he argues, suspends time and makes absence present by resurrecting the dead model.<sup>299</sup> ‘Of course, it’s a painting. I thought for a moment...’, Lucy comments after catching a first glimpse of Captain Gregg’s picture in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*. As I have previously stated, the affinities between the face in the portrait and death are drawn in part from this idea of ‘resurrection’. Given that we are currently discussing temporality and time in the portrait, it is important to go back to this idea of death as an integral part of any artistic representation of the face. ‘It is *time* we look for in the face’, Aumont claims, ‘but only to the extent that it represents death. To lose one’s face ... means to be deprived of death’.<sup>300</sup> Identification, or likeness, is always needed to confirm death, and in the portrait the wandering re/collector can observe a lifelike anatomical similarity to the deceased individual. Following this line of reasoning—that portraits display anatomical likeness and thus point to an indexical

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<sup>298</sup> Gil, “*Sem Título*”, pp. 20-22.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>300</sup> Aumont, *Du Visage au Cinéma*, p. 197 (‘Le visage est donc l’apparence d’un sujet qui se sait mortel. Ce qu’on cherche sur le visage, c’est le temps, mais en tant qu’il signifie la mort. La perte du visage ... est ... la privation de la mort’) (my translation and emphasis).

presence—I argue that the process of painting, or of art making in general, is a gradual process of entombing.<sup>301</sup>

According to Gil, the need for likeness in the portrait means ‘more than a concern with the erosion of time that leads to death: it is a metaphysical and aesthetic concern that goes beyond inscribing more or less lasting images (depending on the nature of the support) in a surface.’<sup>302</sup> It is rather about creating ‘a time that survives time’, for ‘even if the physical support does not last more than a minute’, he claims, ‘the portrait has managed to build an “eternal”, invulnerable time within chronological time—a “living” time’.<sup>303</sup> There is another dimension to time in the portrait that defies temporal contingencies with the primary intent of preventing the irreparable erasure of a memory. This further connects the image in the portrait to the concept of mourning.

The physical reality of one’s existence is forever encapsulated in the painting: one’s life and one’s death, both of which are experienced simultaneously by the percipient. Julia’s nephew, Peter, says of the portrait of Olwen: ‘It’s fascinating. To me, it always seems to live’, to which his wife quickly (and sarcastically) adds: ‘You and Julia keep it alive’. The portrait already ‘seems to live’, but its aliveness is prolonged by the constant re-visiting of its site. Continuing his discussion, Gil asserts that the portrait constitutes ‘a singular way of building a time beyond time itself’.<sup>304</sup> To put it otherwise, as long as the past lingers *physically* in the diegetic present, unsettling the characters and affecting their actions, time never truly passes; it never really disappears, but hovers about and lingers around. *Portrait of Jennie* offers a good example of this. It starts with images of the sky whilst a deep acousmatic male voice tells us:

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<sup>301</sup> Woodall situates this in a broader social context, and identifies it with a more general aim of all portraiture that has been acknowledged since antiquity. She eloquently sums up her argument as follows: ‘The desire which lies at the heart of naturalistic portraiture is to overcome separation: to render a subject distant in time, space, spirit, eternally present. It is assumed that a “good” likeness will perpetually unite the identities to which it refers’ (Woodall, ‘Introduction’, p. 8).

<sup>302</sup> Gil, “*Sem Título*”, p. 21.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

Since the beginning, man has looked into the awesome reaches of infinity and asked the eternal questions: What is time? What is space? What is life? What is death? Science tells us that nothing ever dies, but only changes; that time itself does not pass, but curves around us, and that the past and the future are together at our side, forever.

Concluding his argument, Gil argues that the portrait creates an ‘atemporal temporality’, and is at core a particular device for ‘fabricating an eternal real time within time itself’.<sup>305</sup> In my opinion, however, the portrait is too immersed in time for the singular temporality it creates to be called atemporal. In fact, the depicted face not only possesses a singular temporality in its traits, but it opens the characters up to a substantially different temporal experience. In *Corridor of Mirrors*, for instance, the portrait points to the future as well as to the past and present, in that Paul makes plans for his life based on Mifanwy’s physiognomic resemblance to Venetia. Additionally, the portrait has also been used as an omen to foretell tragic events that are soon to happen. This is the case in *While I Live*, where, from the very first sequence of the film, the portrait of Olwen hangs on a wall behind her piano. Olwen, as it were, is represented by the *mise-en-scène* as already dead. She and her painted double (her memory) co-exist for a brief diegetic moment (Olwen dies soon after that sequence), so that the introduction of the portrait so early on serves only to augur Olwen’s premature demise a few sequences later. Here, then, the portrait actually signals the doomed happiness of both sisters: the tragic physical death of Olwen and the emotional death of Julia, the *re/collector* of Olwen’s memory.

All things considered, it seems to me that, despite its function as a conveyor of memory for generations to come and its consequential bid for eternal existence, a more appropriate definition for the Romantic-Gothic portrait would be trans-temporal rather

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

than atemporal. As we have now seen, the portrayed face indicates the presence of conjoined and juxtaposed temporalities—past, present, and future—and calls attention to one’s existence within time. In this respect, rather than highlighting its impact and resilience by focusing on de-contextualisation and the fact that it points to no specific time period, I believe we should stress the notion that the portrait breaks boundaries, congregating myriad times within itself. But what are the implications of this for the re/collector? Quite simply the reiteration of a threshold: the all-encompassing trans-temporality of the represented face opens the subject up to a whole range of possible paths, of possible travels from which to choose.

From the present to the past and from the past to the future, the characters are consumed by a state of ceaseless temporal dwelling. Mifanwy expresses it best towards the end of *Corridor of Mirrors* when, tired of Paul’s ramblings and erratic behaviour, she finally confronts him and comments cynically: ‘Stop this nonsense. This bringing of something of the present back into the past, to the past back into the present, whichever way you put it. It’s becoming a bit of a bore’. Looked at closely, Mifanwy’s remark lacks introspection: she is accusing Paul of doing something she does herself. In truth, over the course of the film, she is the one who keeps coming back to him, to his house, to his things, and to his hands.

Flashing back to the narrative present—in which she is married with children—we notice how she cannot live without her past constantly taunting her dreams and waking life. The past is there with her, every step of the way. With regard to this resilience of the past (that subsistence of pastness I mentioned before), we could argue, as does Timothy Mathews, that ‘perceptions of the present and in the present cannot be preserved or protected from their recollection, as much part of the now as perception

itself'.<sup>306</sup> In applying this statement to the Romantic-Gothic, we realise that an overall consequence of the immediacy of a perception that is already also past is the feeling of being permanently haunted, permanently in touch with all that has been and yet still lingers. It is to conceive of oneself as being already part memory—a repository of the bygone, a living testament to yesterday. Read in this way, temporal dwellings inevitably lead to the daily mourning of the past. The portrait is, in short, a constant reminder of death, a dark shadow hanging over the characters. It represents the ticking of life's clock getting ever louder, always reminiscent of an ever-lingering, ever-present past. In this respect, I argue that the words of William Faulkner aptly describe the Romantic-Gothic world: 'The past is never dead. It's not even past'.<sup>307</sup>

Another important aspect to retain with regard to the temporal dwelling mode and the portrait is that, although it represents all temporal possibilities, the passage of time is traditionally absent from the portrait, which is to say, time does not go by visually.<sup>308</sup> As a rule, it is the chronological and textual discourse or the *mise-en-scène* that alert the characters and the viewers to the fact that they are looking at an image from the past, because there is usually no aesthetic or formal evidence of this in the portrait itself.<sup>309</sup> Quite the opposite, in fact: the viewer of a Romantic-Gothic portrait immediately discovers in it the trans-temporality its maker has given it while creating it. In *Portrait of Jennie*, Mr Matthews (Spinney's business partner) says of Eben's first draft of Jennie's face:

You remember my saying that there ought to be something eternal about a woman—something that is not of the present, nor of the past? Well, here you

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<sup>306</sup> Mathews, 'Reading the Invisible', p. 328.

<sup>307</sup> William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2013, p. 139.

<sup>308</sup> The notable exception to this is, of course, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the portrait becomes the symbolic *topos* of the protagonist's physical transformation.

<sup>309</sup> Like anachronistic clothes, for instance.

have caught it—it is the face of that same little girl—and yet what you have seen in that face is without age—or time.

We have seen earlier that the process of representation is based on the ability of the artist to freeze time, or, in other words, to suspend the depicted being in time, so that the face of the sitter remains exactly as it was at the time of portrayal. Mrs Muir, for instance, will always see the Captain's face just like it was when the portrait was painted. I am revisiting this idea to reiterate that, from a narrative point of view, although time is frozen in the portrait, this in no way invalidates the aforementioned experience of the adjoining temporalities it encompasses. The object itself might not change, but its presence is a constant reminder of the passage of time (or, rather, of *a* time) and, as such, of life's fragility and ephemerality.

What about the films where there are no portraits? How can the characters benefit from a similar type of trans-temporal travelling? The fact is that there are other elements that allow for an identical kind of liberation. In *Peter Ibbetson*, for instance, there are no portraits, but a close equivalent: dreams. Freed from the constraints of the body, the heroes are also liberated from the boundaries of time and are able to remain together—and forever youthful—in their shared dreams. Prof Jarrod, in turn, has his sculptures, in which he gets lost but also finds himself. When he starts killing people to bring his sculptures to life, trans-temporality is brought to a whole different level.

To recapitulate, this section analysed the way in which the subject's immobility at the moment of aesthetic appreciation involves not only time but the creation of alternative (and alternate) temporalities whereby the chronological time of the narrative melds with the trans-temporality of the portrait, compressing both past (that of the one in the portrait) and future (that of the re/collector) into the narrative present. By promoting temporal travelling, portraits work as time-condensing devices that allow memory, personal history, and imagination to be compressed into the face that the

characters see. On the other hand, they also work as temporality-expanding devices that stretch out and extend from the distant or recent past to the present in order to guide the future wanderings of the living characters. We have likewise observed that portraits (and memory-objects in general) actualise the past into the present via the re/collector's sensory perception of them, which, in turn, only happens because the self moves in space. Touch, time, and space therefore come together in the portrait. Paraphrasing Elizabeth Edwards, portraits 'retemporalise' and 'respatialise' the subject's experience.<sup>310</sup> I stated that death in the Romantic-Gothic does not equal disappearance, that is, spatial and temporal erasure, but rather transference from a living human body onto an object. To be painted is therefore to be transported, transformed, re-configured, and, more importantly, resurrected.

### **Psychological Dwelling**

After having analysed the close relationship between spatial and temporal modes of dwelling, let us now investigate how the characters engage in psychological dwelling. This mode is often used as a means of conveying moments of remembrance, which, in turn, appear on the screen through superimposition. A striking example is the train sequence near the end of *Undercurrent*, which combines editing techniques with voice-over and music. The actuality of the past is expressed through 'memory montage', as Ann lies still, remembering excerpts of conversations, which in turn appear on the screen in rapid succession. As the train moves forward, the camera slowly closes in on her face, whilst lights are intermittently cast upon it. The chiaroscuro that results lends a feeling of hauntedness to the scene. All the while, we hear Brahms's

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<sup>310</sup> The author is discussing the photo-object. Elizabeth Edwards, 'Grasping the Image: How Photographs are Handled', in Classen (ed.), *The Book of Touch*, p. 423.

Third Symphony, the film's leitmotif, as well as the voices of the people in the situations she recalls, on the soundtrack.

Already implicit in my description of temporal travelling (of that going back and forth in time without moving spatially) is the idea that portraits also concern movement in relation to a travelling in the mind, that is, in relation to the effect memory-objects have on the imagination of the characters. Portraits, a newspaper left on a park bench, a tree in an old abandoned Parisian home—all of these will become part of the journey of re/collection of the characters: a voluntary quest to remember those who left through the things they left behind. This is to say that memory-objects demand physical (spatial) and temporal, but also psychological, engagement: the act of looking at a portrait, for instance, sets off moments of involuntary remembering, in the sense that the view of a face from the past provokes curiosity about said past, making the re/collectors travel through their own recreation/re-imagination of past events.

Imagination therefore plays a significant role in the process of putting a memory together. In other words, the dwelling self infers a past history (an Other's past history) from the face of the deceased Other he or she contemplates and is thereby sent on a psychological journey—a journey through the joys and woes of an Other's life. The view of Laura's portrait, for instance, sends detective McPherson on a voyage through the supposed life (and loves) of that beautiful, mysterious face. In reality, for all we know, detective McPherson, who coincidentally fell asleep in front of the portrait just before Laura (re)appeared, might have been dreaming (that is, imagining) for the remainder of the film.

From this example, we can say that, typically, memory and temporal travelling go back to the past, to the unearthing of events and lives gone by, whilst imagination

points towards the future, or, at least, to the on-going present.<sup>311</sup> Both nevertheless involve a certain level of fabrication. More precisely, imagination makes the Other exist as a construct of the percipient's mind. Also, memory and temporal travelling entail a meticulous work of archaeological nature that bears immediate consequences on the present—because it is in their spatial surroundings that the characters look for clues to aid in the reconstruction of the past. Imagination, on the other hand, although it is triggered by something of the past, like a painting, it is usually formulated in the future tense: it involves a wish to be somewhere, a need to do something or a dream to become someone.

Laura's face, for example, makes the detective live through her past in his present. Likewise, the face of Venetia has the power to bewitch Paul in such a way that he lives his life believing Mifanwy to be the reincarnation of a woman in a 400-year-old portrait. He has fallen in love with a painting and with the story he imagined of the woman there depicted. His present self lives and breathes his imaginative interpretation of Venetia's existence. Entranced by someone who, in the end, was nothing more than a complex fabrication of his mind, Paul nevertheless attempts, at all cost, to bring to life every single detail of his muse's existence, namely through the sumptuous recreation of a private 'backyard' Venice for Mifanwy. In Paul's mind, Mifanwy is a link between his past, present, and future selves and only real to him as the imaginary Venetia, for whom he buys fabulous dresses and ball gowns. He believes that only Mifanwy-as-Venetia has the power to awake his past (real) self that is dormant in the narrative present or, better still, entombed within his body. Paul lives in dreams of what never was and never will be.

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<sup>311</sup> This is in accord with Casey's understanding of the terms as explained in the introduction to this project (see Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p. xvii).

The idea of an individual so seduced by the alluring portrait that he or she starts living *through* it is, indeed, a characteristic of the Romantic-Gothic and reminiscent of Marguerite Yourcenar's tale of Wang-Fô, the magical artist who painted with such skill and grace that his paintings (said to be more beautiful than the real things) ultimately became alive to their viewers.<sup>312</sup> And just like Wang-Fô's paintings, the portrait can mean either salvation or doom. Writing on *La chute de la maison Usher*, Crucianelli notices this impressive power of the portrait, claiming that the female protagonist, Madeleine, 'begins as an alternate or double which ends up replacing the original in the affections of the artist'.<sup>313</sup> We realise, then, that to look at a portrait in the Romantic-Gothic mode is to engage in a process of cognition: of the self, of the Other, and of the otherness in the self.

The description and analysis of the three modes of dwelling—spatial, temporal, and psychological—in relation to the image in the portrait brings us to an investigation of the series of negotiations between diegetic reality and representation. As Crucianelli explains, these affect the relationship between subject and object, so that the boundaries that separate them eventually 'deteriorate until the object becomes the subject and vice versa'.<sup>314</sup> Crucial here is the blurring of identities that comes about as a result of those negotiations. I will end this project with an analysis of identity insofar as it relates to the main topics I have been exploring. Specifically, I will address the questions of who the self is, who the Other was, and why sound (or the idea of it) forms such an intrinsic and important part of the films.

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<sup>312</sup> Marguerite Yourcenar, 'How Wang-Fo Was Saved', *Oriental Tales*, trans. Alberto Manguel, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

<sup>313</sup> Crucianelli, 'Painting the life out of her', p. 26.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

## Forget Me Not: Reshaping Identity

A pivotal image that runs through Romantic-Gothic works is that of an individual, framed in a long shot, wandering alone outside (in a park, a cemetery, or a city street) or inside the anti-home (in a corridor), submersed in darkness. There is Belle, wandering around the Beast's castle; Heathcliff, in *Wuthering Heights*, hopelessly searching for his Catherine in the deserted moors; Mifanwy, randomly and frantically opening doors to try and escape from Paul's house in *Corridor of Mirrors*; or Lisa, who night after night haunts the vicinity of Stefan's apartment to get so much as a glimpse of him in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. All of these characters, at least at a given point during the narrative, need to rely on and believe in the identity of an Other to survive.

The immense difficulty in asserting one's identity is a vital idea in Romantic-Gothic stories and a major motor of narrative action. I hinted at this in Chapter 1 when I discussed Romantic-Gothic heroes as amnesiacs. There are nameless protagonists, like Mrs de Winter in *Rebecca*, who is never addressed by her first name (thus losing identity to her husband) and those whose names are changed by other characters. Names and corresponding identities are altered for contrasting reasons: in *Peter Ibbetson*, where Gogo and Mimsey become Peter and Mary, this change symbolises the parting with their childhood. In *Corridor of Mirrors*, however, it relates to Paul's sickening obsession, whereby he manages to (at least temporarily) metamorphose Mifanwy into Venetia. A substantially different approach to a change of name is found in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, where the Captain re-baptises Lucy out of love. 'And I shall call you Lucia', says Captain Gregg. 'My name is Lucy', she replies. 'It doesn't do you justice, my dear. Women named Lucy are always being imposed upon... but Lucia, now there's a name for an amazon... for a queen'. The process of constructing and keeping identity

therefore relies on battling oneself and the Other, and involves a long journey of remembering whereby the travelling re/collector is repeatedly challenged, hurt, and pushed to the limits of sanity. The lonely paths of remembering I have described in the previous chapters—those intense travels of searching and finding—are, at core, a quest for selfhood: in re/collecting the Other, the characters are also, in fact, re/collecting themselves. But how is this quest for identity expressed in the films? What is it that defines it?

‘She sat exactly where Olwen used to sit’, Julia tells Nehemiah in *While I Live*, referring to the amnesiac woman in her living room. ‘Her movements, her technique belong to Olwen. There’s no real resemblance, and yet tonight I saw my sister’. Julia ‘saw’ Olwen reborn through sound, through the music that those foreign yet familiar hands were playing, but also through behavioural aspects of where and how: where that body sat and how it moved. Sound, as we are beginning to see here, plays an important part in the allocation of identity to a character. We will explore the relation of sound and identity further along. For the moment, let us focus on the uncanny situation presented in the sequence: that of certain characters suddenly feeling they know someone they have not met before. The amnesiac woman is—physically—a complete stranger to Julia. In *Undercurrent*, Ann proffers a commentary identical to that of Julia’s above. She and a young woman she has just met are in a restroom at a restaurant. Sylvia is an old friend of Ann’s missing brother-in-law, Michael. They exchange pleasantries and then Ann looks at her and remarks: ‘You know, Miss Burton, this is funny. When I first met you, I wondered who it was you reminded me of’. She pauses. ‘It’s me. Not our features, exactly. Nothing you can put your finger on—just something intangible. Have you noticed it? Maybe it’s the way we dress or walk or something’.

Identity, as these two unusual conversations reveal, is not defined by facial features, but is instead intimately linked to a certain manner of being, which might

range from the way one speaks to the clothes one wears. In other words, identity is here related to how one looks—to how one is perceived—rather than to one's actual physiognomy. Following this line of reasoning, it is not surprising that Julia sees her dead sister in the shape of a person who behaves and *feels* just like Olwen, or that Ann recognises herself in Sylvia, both of whom are infatuated with the same mysterious man. The use of mirrors in the sequence from *Undercurrent*, particularly the fact that Ann talks to Sylvia whilst looking alternately into both their reflections, heightens the haunted atmosphere of the film by disclosing the self as the Other.

We have now established the conceptual proximity between the notions of identity, behaviour, and perception, but there are three other elements that complete any one definition of identity in the Romantic-Gothic world: space, time, and memory. The analysis of these three aspects in regard to the impact they have on ideas of identity and selfhood is of great significance in that it proves, once again, how tightly organised the Romantic-Gothic mode is. Regardless of the prism through which we look at it, the same central concepts keep turning up, interlinking with one another—each a point of tangency between separate plots and a key component in understanding the films.

Tom Conley argues that, defined in a narrow sense, identity is 'the consciousness of belonging (or longing to belong) to a place and of being at a distance from it'.<sup>315</sup> According to this statement, place shapes identity; yet, the feeling of belonging to a place needs to be counterbalanced with the knowledge that although we feel we belong, we need also to distance ourselves so as to preserve the 'otherness' that defines us. In the context of the Romantic-Gothic, we can understand the 'place' Conley mentions in two different ways: as referring to the travelling filmmakers and their loss

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<sup>315</sup> Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 3. Harold Proshansky coined the term 'place-identity'. See Proshansky, 'The City and Self-identity', *Environment and Behavior*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1978), pp. 147-169; and Proshansky et al., 'Place-identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1983), pp. 57-83. For a more recent approach to the subject, see Owain Jones and Joanne Garde-Hansen (eds), *Geography and Memory. Explorations in Identity, Place and Becoming*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

of home (in which case I am defining place as country and culture) or to the geographical places on the screen (in which case I am analysing cinematic places proper). I have argued in Chapter 1 that the crossing of boundaries on the part of the filmmakers was, to an extent, replicated in the successive journeys of the characters throughout the films. The unapologetically dark, melancholy, and mournful tone of certain stories suited the representation of the struggles of many film artists to find their place in a foreign country. In the cinema, they found a suitable means (and medium) to express their loss (of country, of national identity). What interests me in this chapter is the second situation I presented above: the manner in which place proper, particularly the anti-home, relates to the characters in terms of defying and defining their identity. We need only look at the story of *Peter Ibbetson* to understand that the places the characters inhabit mean more to them than would be expected in a normal situation. Let us recall the conversation between Colonel Forsythe and Peter, or Gogo, as he was then fondly called. After his mother's death, the Colonel, Peter's uncle, arrived in Paris. His purpose was to take him away to London to raise him.

Colonel—Now, sir, we'll be on our way to your new home.

Gogo—What new home?

Colonel—Wait until you see it.

Gogo—But where is it?

Colonel—Now, that's a surprise.

Gogo—The home is not here in Paris? I don't want to go away from Paris.

Colonel—Little boys don't choose where they want to go.

Gogo—But I can't leave Paris.

Colonel—And why not?

Gogo—Because I can't.

Colonel—What?!

Gogo—I can't!

Granted, it is not just a place Peter is refusing to leave: place, in truth, means home, and home means the people that make it so. Just before he utters his last 'I can't', his dear friend, Mary (then Mimsey), who had been standing behind him, steps timidly

forward, and a close-up shows her taking Gogo by the hand.<sup>316</sup> Not long after this, the Colonel comments to Mimsey's mother: 'The desperate love between children. Is there anything in the world forgotten so soon?', to which she replies: 'I would say, Colonel, it was forgotten the last thing of all!'. This was surely the case for Peter and Mary.

The built environment where he spent his childhood shaped who Peter would become, a fact that the storyline makes quite evident. As a child, Gogo liked to build things, and the film starts precisely with both children moping about a fight they had had: he wanted to build a wagon whereas she wanted a dollhouse. The worst part of the fight was over construction material, in particular Gogo's shortage of wooden boards to build his wagon properly. After he is forced to leave Paris for London following his mother's death, the loss of identity is blatantly explicit, as signalled by his uncle who went as far as anglicising his name, telling him he would be called Peter, rather than Pierre, from that day on. Years after moving to London, we find him working as an architect—in a way, he ended up building those dollhouses after all. At work one day, he tells his employer he is tired of London, and 'fed up' with everything he can think of: 'plans, and buildings, and people, and fog'. There and then, he decides to go to America, but ends up going to Paris instead—the Paris of his home; the Paris (and the people) he wished never to have left. The moment he chooses Paris as his destination marks the beginning of a re/collecting journey to seize back his memories and his identity.

The image of someone being forced away from home is reprised in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, where teenage Lisa firmly resists moving from Vienna to Linz. Predictably, she cannot help but to run away from her family at the railway station and go back to her old apartment. 'Suddenly, I knew I couldn't live without you', we hear

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<sup>316</sup> Towards the end of the film, after Peter kills the Duke of Towers (Mary's husband), their hands clasp each other again, mirroring the earlier scene. Here, too, it signals that they are to part physically once more.

her saying in voice-off. Once inside the building, she rushes up the stairs and knocks on Stefan's door. He does not answer. With no intention of giving up, she goes around and tries the backdoor—still no answer.

These rooms where I'd lived had been filled with your music. Now they were empty. Would they ever come to life again? Would I? Only you could answer. So, I waited... and waited. For what seemed endless hours, I sat outside your door, trying to keep myself awake, afraid I'd fall asleep and miss you.

When Stefan finally arrives, in the early hours of the morning, he is not alone. Lisa hides in the shadows and, sorrowfully realising there is nothing left for her there, leaves for Linz. A few years later, however, she is back in Vienna—still very much in love with her former neighbour and with the music that had once filled her dreams.

From these two examples, we notice that space can indeed be used as an analytical category to reflect upon identity. Lisa, for instance, equates the emptiness of the rooms she wanders around with that of her own life. We also gather that it is generally after that first journey to a different, unknown place (London for Peter and Linz for Lisa) that the characters start to (re-)construct their identities. Geographical distance, nonetheless, does not weigh in on their determination not to let go of the past. In fact, displacement or detachment from one's roots has one main effect on the characters: they soon begin to reveal an altered personality because of where they are now, and also become aware of whom they want to be because of where they long to be. Furthermore, with the mention of Peter's home and Stefan's apartment, we realise that the construction of selfhood is related not only to open spaces, but to closed infrastructures as well.

A co-related angle to understanding the performance of identity where it concerns place is, indeed, to look into architectural structures. More precisely, it is not just the place that matters (Paris or Vienna, for instance), but also its edifices (like the

home and the anti-home). Every basement, attic, corridor, living room, yard, park, and church, for instance, are at once influenced and modified by its inhabitants to accommodate (or sublimate) their needs and moods—they are tailored to their identities. Mark, for example, relishes in secretly building exact replicas of rooms where murders have been committed, and his house is made to suit his murderous fantasies. In Dieterle's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, it is amidst the frightening, grotesque gargoyles that Quasimodo finds his home: he can see the city and the people without drawing attention to himself and thus, with the help of the medieval architecture of his Gothic sanctuary, he can even overcome the limitations of his crippled body.

As these examples illustrate, one's life is very much ingrained in the architecture of a place, so much so that, in the Romantic-Gothic mode, specific topographies expose the problematic of identity. The dark recesses of the Romantic-Gothic mind are mirrored in the internal composition of the dwelling spaces the characters favour. 'On the barren Yorkshire moors in England, a hundred years ago, stood a house as bleak and desolate as the wastes around it'. This is the line that accompanies the first images of *Wuthering Heights*. As Heathcliff grows old, embittered by and obsessed over the loss of his beloved Cathy, the family house that had once known happiness and laughter changes dramatically as well. The way it is presented at the beginning of the film, in all its cobwebbed decadence, *Wuthering Heights* appears as an extension of Heathcliff's body, with its broken windows, worn out curtains, and dusty, vacant rooms.

In the Romantic-Gothic, importantly, identity concerns time as much as space. We could add to Conley's statement earlier that identity is also the consciousness of belonging to a certain time period. In this respect, I am employing the term 'identity' in very much the same way Heidrun Friese uses it: as synonymous with 'continuity of

selfhood' over time.<sup>317</sup> This means that the characters need to realise that they are always here now in order to form their identity—their *personal* identity, rather than someone else's. Put otherwise, if they lose themselves completely in the past, the characters will re/collect that which is mostly the identity of the Other and will consequently start incorporating the Other's past as their own. This is what happens to Paul in *Corridor of Mirrors*, who wholeheartedly believes he is the reincarnation of Cesare Borgia. In this regard, when the heroes believe (or long to believe) that they live in a time that is not the chronological time of the present, they lose track of who they are because they cannot accept/remember who they used to be before succumbing to the memory of the Other. To deny one's past is to deny one's memories, and doing so will greatly compromise who one will become. Finally, then, identity is also memory. In order to better analyse identity as memory, let me start by attending to the role of objects.

Following on from my analysis of memory, material space, and memory-objects in Chapter 1, I reiterate that the history of objects is the history of people's lives throughout the centuries. Objects have been around from time immemorial, and to learn about their journeys is to learn about us, about our socio-cultural identity. Dánae Fiore, Inés Domingo Sanz, and Sally K. May claim that 'identity in art does not involve imagining situations but rather tying interpretations and theories to material correlates'.<sup>318</sup> Drawing on this, we can speak of an archaeology of objects, whereby the Romantic-Gothic dwellers are adventurers charged with the responsibility of unearthing dispersed memories. Jeanne Riou, in turn, tells us that, in literary Romanticism, selfhood is 'a phenomenological relation, not a stable set of co-ordinates', suggesting

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<sup>317</sup> Heidrun Friese, *Identities: Time, Difference, and Boundaries*, New York: Berghanhn Books, 2002, p. 34.

<sup>318</sup> Dánae Fiore et al. (eds), *Archaeologies of Art: Time, Place, and Identity*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008, p. 16.

that identity is constructed gradually by our establishing a relationship with objects.<sup>319</sup> This logic proceeds from objects to memories and from memories to self-formation. In the Romantic-Gothic mode, this process goes from memory-objects (external) to personal memories (internal), and from inside the mind of the self to the formation of a sense of identity (a sense of having memories and belonging to a specific time and place).

*Juliette ou la clef des songes* is paradigmatic in its treatment of Romantic-Gothic identity, for it conjoins the importance of place, time, memory, imagination, and forgetting. In a village without a location where temporality is lost and memories are repeatedly forgotten, imagination is the only refuge of the characters. I analysed Juliette's description of the photos in that second-hand album and the way she began to believe the stories she made up. We realise that it is not possible to find or form identity in this way. Symptomatic of this is the commentary from a cop who is about to arrest Michel in his 'dream': 'C'est terrible de vivre sans souvenirs; alors, on se rattrape avec des souvenirs des autres', he tells him.<sup>320</sup>

To remember is the one essential faculty so that a proper sense of selfhood can begin to develop. Without the memory of past events, of situations lived and people met, the characters cannot successfully construct their identity. The memoryless inhabitants of that village are forever lost in the atemporal fluidity of placeless events. They do not have an identity because they cannot remember: the date, where they are or who they once were. After all, the narrator symbolically calls that village 'le pays de l'oubli', 'the land of oblivion', at the beginning of the film. Re/collection is not possible in this context. Correspondingly, when analysed in this sense, to forget means to lose a part of oneself, of one's identity.

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<sup>319</sup> Riou, *Imagination in German Romanticism*, p. 18.

<sup>320</sup> 'It is terrible to live without memories, so we cling onto the memories of others' (my translation).

For all this, we can conclude that identity in the Romantic-Gothic is not considered inherent to human beings. In other words, it is understood not (or not just) as the outcome of a successful socialisation process, that is, as an internalised set of behavioural and moral norms, acquired and shaped by one's social, personal, and artistic experiences. On the contrary, it is presented as something that is acquired through a constant flow of interactions with objects, places, and temporalities. With these interactions, nonetheless, comes a call for self-examination: a need to understand oneself in relation to the memory of the Other. In truth, to assume that identity is multi-faceted, constructed, and re/collectable carries the risk of it also being acknowledged as something susceptible to manipulation and duplication—as something that can be shared or even stolen.

### **Identity and Alterity: I am Many**

I don't know how many souls I have.  
I've changed at every moment.  
I always feel like a stranger.  
I've never seen or found myself.  
From being so much, I have only soul.  
A man who has soul has no calm.  
[...]  
Each of my dreams and each desire  
Belongs to whoever had it, not me.  
I am my own landscape,  
I watch myself journey --  
Various, mobile, and alone.<sup>321</sup>

Given the multi-layered and transpersonal properties of identity, the heroes constantly strive to find and keep a sense of selfhood. In order to do so, they literally need something to hold on to: they need memory-objects and the challenge of piecing

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<sup>321</sup> Fernando Pessoa, *Fernando Pessoa & Co. – Selected Poems* (1930), trans. Richard Zenith, New York: Grove Press, 1998, p. 243.

together the puzzle-like identity of the Other. Only in this way can they hope to form or preserve their own. Simply stated, the identity of the dwellers is built in relation to that of the Other. Paradoxically, it is also when attempting to reconstruct a fractured self that Romantic-Gothic characters end up destroying themselves.<sup>322</sup> Mrs de Winter in *Rebecca*, for instance, immersed as she is in the memory-objects of the Other, becomes (physically) more and more like her husband's dead wife. The transformation reaches a point where he can no longer stand her, because he can no longer look at her without seeing Rebecca. So the question arises: how are the re/collectors able to assert their identity against that of someone who is dead and whose memory they are trying to seize?

For all that I have said so far, it becomes apparent that the characters constantly challenge the limits of their self-identity by engaging in a fruitless pursuit of someone else's corporeal memory. By 'corporeal memory' I mean much more than the physical vestiges of the dead, left behind as relics, heirlooms, and totems. I mean the actual physiognomy of the departed one, complete with clothes, mannerisms, and general demeanour. Incidentally, a comment Deleuze makes regarding the work of Vincente Minnelli is just as appropriate here to characterise the heroes that populate the Romantic-Gothic. He writes that Minnelli's cinema follows 'the obsessive theme of characters literally absorbed ... [by] the past of others'.<sup>323</sup> Mrs de Winter's metamorphosis, for which she is responsible, is indicative of a character swallowed up by the past of Others (in this case, the turbulent pasts of her husband and his first wife). She loses herself in the past of the Other. By being so susceptible to 'absorbing' the memory of the Other, the re/collectors inadvertently promote their own self-obliteration.

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<sup>322</sup> This destruction can range from heartbreak to the death of the self, and both can be more or less intense. Exemplifying the former, we have Eben, in *Portrait of Jennie* and Peter, in *Peter Ibbetson*. In this last film, heartbreak is more extreme, in the sense that it leads to Peter murdering Mary's husband. To illustrate the second outcome of the search for identity, there is the case of Paul, from *Corridor of Mirrors*, who is sentenced to death by hanging.

<sup>323</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema I*, p. 122.

Over the course of the narratives, we become aware that the characters are not given the chance of inhabiting only their own memories: there is a pervasive need for them to live with and *through* somebody else's recollections. Indeed, whilst pursuing a memory, the dwellers imagine themselves part of the Other's past—a past that they readily accept and build upon. In this dialectic, the Other slowly but steadily takes form at the expense of the self. As the memory of the Other becomes clearer, the self runs the risk of succumbing completely to it and of becoming Other as well. This leads the re/collectors into a journey of self-discovery through gradual self-effacement, as we will see.

This erasure of the self through the blurring of identities precipitates the appearance of the double, a figure that pervades the films. *Rebecca*, *Undercurrent*, *Gaslight*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Laura*, *Dragonwyck*, *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, *While I Live*, *Vertigo*, and *Corridor of Mirrors*, to name only a few, are telling examples of the use of the double to signal a disrupted (and disruptive) identity. When Mifanwy (from *Corridor of Mirrors*) discovers Paul's collections of old jewellery and wears the anachronistic dresses he gives her or the new Mrs de Winter puts on Rebecca's ball gown, when Ann begs Alan to teach her what to wear and how to behave in *Undercurrent* or Madeline/Judy does her hair in the same way Carlotta did in *Vertigo*, they are all, in fact, voluntarily trying to recreate and embody their own doubles; they are attempting to recreate themselves to the image of a dead woman.<sup>324</sup> The platonic love between Waldo Lydecker and *Laura's* heroine provides a specific example of the

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<sup>324</sup> I say 'voluntarily' despite the fact that, in films like *Rebecca*, *Dragonwyck*, and *Corridor of Mirrors*, there is another character pressuring the self into becoming his or her idea of a different someone. In fact, whilst a character is trying to establish a sense of individuality, battling with the memory of the Other, there is often another character who wants, at all cost, to subordinate him or her to a utopic ideal. This pressure notwithstanding, it all begins when the re/collectors accept gifts, clothes, and so on, of their own free will. Towards the end of *Corridor of Mirrors*, Mifanwy acknowledges that her dramatic change was nobody's fault but her own, and says: 'Paul didn't force me. I came and stayed of my own free will'. And later adds: 'You played up to my vanity. Yes, of course... It was my vanity which made me take part in all this madness'.

latter situation: 'I selected a more attractive hairdresser for her. I taught her what clothes were more becoming to her. Through me, she met everyone, the famous and the infamous'. Lydecker, with Laura's consent, fabricated a new social identity for her and, in the process, turned her into someone who lived up to his standards and expectations.

In the course of the narratives, we notice, then, that the fragmentation of the self is mirrored in the recurrence of a variety of carefully selected imagery, inclusive of the often-mentioned windows, doors, and mirrors, but also of dresses, jewellery, and portraits, all heavily connoted with the process of doubling. In the list of identity transformations I mentioned above, there is an impressive emphasis on attire. The layers of clothes in these sequences act as a sort of double skin that serves to stress the imprisonment of the self.<sup>325</sup> The garments and accessories carry in them the weight of the memory of their rightful owner and seem to impose a terrifying responsibility on their new recipient: the responsibility of actually becoming the Other. Dream-Juliette in *Juliette ou la clef des songes* and Mifanwy, in *Corridor of Mirrors*, for instance, reflect, in physiognomic likeness, the omnipresence of the Other. Hiding out under a fake skin of flawed memories, the re/collectors become revenants: the embodied ghosts of the departed.<sup>326</sup> Edgar Morin notices this relation between the double and death and writes that 'all the associations of the double—shadow, reflexion, mirror—evoke death'.<sup>327</sup> Doubling patterns furthermore point towards loss—the loss of one's uniqueness, of memory and identity, and of a physical and psychological space that is one's alone.

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<sup>325</sup> Catherine Spooner used the expression 'imprisonment in cloth' in a paper titled: 'Catsuits, Corsets and Funeral Veils: Women's Costume in Gothic Cinema', delivered as part of a study day on Gothic Style at the BFI on 8 January 2014. At the same event, Royce Mahawatte, in his paper 'From Cape to Skin: Gothic Male Bodies and Fashion Studies', discussed how clothes and bodies operate in a continuum, 'as a membrane between the self and society'.

<sup>326</sup> I write 'flawed memories' because, as I explained in Chapter 1, the memory of the Other can never be fully apprehended through the sensorial contact with objects. Partly fabricated by the self, the real/whole memory of the Other will always be ultimately out of the perceiving subject's reach.

<sup>327</sup> Edgar Morin, *L'Homme et la mort*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1951.

In narratives of subjective duplicity, the intersection of memory, death, and the oneiric is patently clear whenever the characters are framed against their doubles. A particularly striking example is found towards the end of *Corridor of Mirrors*, when Paul presents Mifanwy with an engagement ring. She looks at it, puzzled, and does not speak. Surprised, Paul asks her if she did not like it. The reverse shot frames Mifanwy's face in close-up against the portrait/double. Reality and the dream are, at this point, side by side. 'How very amusing. It's awfully cute', she mocks. 'It's just like hers, don't you see?', he exclaims, turning his gaze to the portrait. The camera, however, does not follow his look: the dream has ended for Paul. Mifanwy never was and never will be Venetia.

As a rule, the drastic metamorphoses of the characters appear to numb their senses, so that they are not, at first, conscious of the magnitude of their change. During that time, the self becomes a living dead subject, a kind of Hoffmannian automaton, cruelly manipulated by a series of invisible otherworldly hands. Again, the body of the woman supposedly possessed by Olwen in *While I Live* is a revealing example of this kind of trance: she cannot remember who she is or why she is where she is. Her body has effectively become that of the Other. She has lost her memory and, consequently, her identity, because she no longer belongs to herself. It is Julia who remarks upon the likenesses between her and Olwen: it is she who discovers the doppelgänger within. From this example, we conclude that the identity of the Other may also be 'caught', like a disease, and triggered by the *mise-en-scène*, that is, by the way in which the re/collectors relate sensuously to memory-objects.

Mifanwy is nonetheless an atypical case, for it is the protagonist herself (rather than a secondary character) who realises she is transforming into someone entirely different and therefore tries to recapture her already vanishing sense of self. In voice-over, we hear her murmuring: 'I was beginning to think like him, speak like him, *feel*

like him. Paul was turning me into someone I could not stand. I was becoming like a wax figure, all head and shoulders'. Throughout the film, Paul treats her as an incomplete real-life version of Venetia: a version that, he believes, he can and should improve. However, the realisation (on the part of the re/collector) that these changes correspond not just to an exterior, but mostly to an inward transformation leads to a turning point in the narrative. Still in voice-over, Mifanwy adds: 'It wasn't so much Paul who frightened me, but what I knew was happening to me'. Indeed, the profound changes the characters undergo, not just in *Corridor of Mirrors* but in Romantic-Gothics in general, permeate every aspect of their lives and go much deeper than merely dressing up as someone else: they always involve a behavioural and psychological dimension.

As we have seen, the acquisition of the social identity of the Other is typically presented as the culmination of a rather sinister makeover, whereby the body of the self seems to meld with the Other's. The journey of becoming Other therefore discloses the ghostliness inherent to the human condition as seen through a Romantic-Gothic lens: a ghostliness that is partly self-inflicted and partly imposed by another character. Specifically, the active process of transformation signals not only innocent curiosity about the life of the Other, but also, and especially, the human capacity for (and proneness to) erasure. Masquerading is itself a cumulative process of self-erasure, which means that, in becoming someone else, the characters jeopardise the coherence and unity of their identity. *Vertigo* offers a singular approach to these matters, given that the heroine impersonates someone else for monetary gain. The interesting fact here is that, as she writes in her unsent letter to Scottie, Carlotta was 'part real, part invented', but we will never know where the dividing line was. What we do know is that, in the end, Judy dies moments after having reasserted her identity to Scottie and that the question of who Judy actually was remains unanswered.

The typical scenario, as I have described it, is having the main female character undergo a progressive transformation until she becomes dangerously (and uncannily) like someone else. By no means, however, does this implicate that extreme modifications of one's persona or the creation of a doppelgänger are limited to newly married young women. Sequences where we have a character whose identity is severely threatened pervade the Romantic-Gothic world, proving thereby that identity is malleable and transmissible. And no investigation of such sequences would be complete without looking at a male transformation.

*Wuthering Heights* is a case in point. In the course of Heathcliff and Cathy's tragic tale, both characters go through a profound metamorphosis. 'Make the moors and you and I never change!', Cathy exclaims. 'The moors and I will never change. Don't you', Heathcliff replies. This exchange is symptomatic of a process of becoming Other that acquires different proportions for each of them. Cathy, on the one hand, suffers a complete transformation—from the way she dresses to the way she behaves and talks. Heathcliff, on the other, goes far away to become Cathy's fantasy. His change, however, is only skin-deep, for although he replaces his old ragged clothes for a clean aristocratic look his identity remains intact. Moreover, Cathy's selfhood is not only corroded but, upon Heathcliff's return, becomes corrosive as well: unable to cope with the presence of the past (her past) and the memories it brings back of who she used to be, Cathy eventually dies, destined to haunt the moors she so dearly loves until she is reunited with Heathcliff.

Ophüls, in the first of the three episodes that form *Le Plaisir* (1952), offers viewers another peculiar but striking example of a male self-reinvention.<sup>328</sup> Come nightfall, an elderly man puts on a mask before going out to hide his real age. Disguised

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<sup>328</sup> All three episodes were based on tales by Guy de Maupassant set in late-nineteenth-century France about the boundaries of pleasure—pleasure and youth, pleasure and innocence, and pleasure and death.

as a young *bon vivant*, he is confident enough to go to balls and flirt with beautiful girls. On one such night, he faints from exhaustion on the dance floor and the truth of his appearance is revealed as soon as the doctor starts to examine him. On the mask, Aumont comments that it is usually intended to cover the face and somehow replace it, although a mask will never possess more than mimetic power. In this respect, Aumont argues, it has a double and contradictory effect of symbolisation: to resemble without ever becoming the thing itself.<sup>329</sup> Val Scullion also discusses masks, and notes that they ‘limit the vision of the wearers, deceive onlookers about the identity of the wearer and give licence for temporary aberration and transgression’.<sup>330</sup> In Maupassant’s story, as adapted by Ophüls, this licence for transgression is quite visible: the long takes of the protagonist’s dizzying dance and subsequent fall reveal his inability to cope with the passing of time unless he presents himself through the Other, here depicted as a lifeless mask. Only, mind you, this is no ordinary mask: it contains the aura of the man’s past; of the youth that has deserted him. The transitoriness of the ‘powers’ of the mask that Scullion mentions does not matter to the old man, as long as, for a few hours, night after night, dance after dance, he is able to go on denying his identity.

This last example confirms that Romantic-Gothic characters possess different personas (or identities) within themselves: they are at once one and many. This alterity within the mind does not allow identity to be preserved and is, instead, responsible for the radical splitting of the self into the Other. This Other does not necessarily implicate another human being, as we have seen in *Le Plaisir*. There are likewise some films where the Other is a part of the self, with both identities coinciding in space, time, and body. One of the most remarkable and extreme examples of this can be found in *Dr*

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<sup>329</sup> Aumont, *De l’esthétique au présent*, p. 13.

<sup>330</sup> Val Scullion, ‘Kinaesthetic, Spastic and Spatial Motifs as Expressions of Romantic Irony in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman* and Other Writings’, *Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2009), p. 9.

*Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, where the locus of transmutation (the body) is the same and yet it morphs to the extent that the original identity is almost unrecognisable.<sup>331</sup>

The malleable frontiers between ‘I’ and ‘the Other’ are at the centre of Stevenson’s novel, ‘a psychodrama of lethal duality in the human spirit’, as Mary Ellen Snodgrass describes it.<sup>332</sup> The Hollywood versions of the tale—a tale that narrates the failure of re/collecting one’s own memories—lend an incredible visuality to the visceral transfiguration of the self. Through a skilled superimposition of sequential images in close up, Fleming’s version conveys the disturbing process of losing identity whilst simultaneously welcoming a new one. By focusing on ‘the Gothic nightmare of psychic disintegration’, this film clearly shows us ‘the dark side of the Romantic quest for unity’, to use Brennan’s words.<sup>333</sup> Indeed, whenever Dr Jekyll turns into Mr Hyde, the camera enacts the paradigm of disunity, and the audience witnesses the shocking revelation of the otherness within. By the end of the story, the doctor’s rational acknowledgment of his loss of control seems to come too late—the breakdown of identity has already gone too far and he can no longer merge the two selves back into one.

Other significant vehicles of transmission of identity are memory-objects, specifically the portrait. In fact, when there are no human doubles, the theme of self-identity is usually explored through the image in a portrait. The following section is structured around the Other in the portrait and the way its presence influences the development of a sense of selfhood in the mind of the dweller.

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<sup>331</sup> Another example is *The Student of Prague*, where the otherness within divides the same body into two. Refer to Chapter 2 for a more detailed analysis of the film.

<sup>332</sup> Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature: The Essential Guide to the Lives and Works of Gothic Writers*, New York: Facts on File, 2005, p. xv.

<sup>333</sup> Brennan, *The Gothic Psyche*, p. 146.

## The Pathic Value of Portraits

[A] portrait is a likeness which is seen to refer to the identity of the person depicted. If this is the case, then the history of portraiture will be closely connected with changes in beliefs about the nature of personal identity, and in ideas about what aspects of identity are appropriate or susceptible to portray. ... [this] means that a vivid physiognomic likeness cannot represent the identity of the sitter in the satisfying way claimed by Aristotle and Alberti. Bodily resemblance comes to seem a barrier to union with the sitter, rather than the means whereby it can be achieved.<sup>334</sup>

Portraits are powerful vehicles of identity, as Woodall suggests in the citation that opens this section. As I have explained when analysing the three modes of dwelling, they provide a journey not only through the face of the represented Other, but through one's own life, past and present, in the sense that the viewer of a painting is always free to imagine all that is beyond the canvas—beyond the fibres, brushstrokes, and hues. As a result, he or she will inevitably recreate the identity of the Other. The problem that frequently arises from this re-identifying of someone is that no other person seems to be able to ever live up to that untouchable being in the frame. As it turns out, there are two identities at stake here: one real and one imagined. Laura is not as spellbinding as her portrait, Mifanwy is no match for Venetia, and even Dorian Gray envies his portrait so intensely that it ultimately destroys him. As Lydecker astutely points out to Laura in Preminger's film, 'When you were unattainable, when he thought you were dead, that's when he wanted you most'. McPherson, in truth, did not seem to fall instantly in love with Laura, the person, as he did with Laura, the portrait. A woman is never lovelier, more alluring, or deserving of obsession as when she is dead. Imagination and oneirism always surpass reality.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Woodall, 'Introduction', p. 9.

<sup>335</sup> In addressing the fiction of Hawthorne, Wilson describes the 'tragic tendency of the nineteenth-century male to prefer the visionary embodiment of his own creation to the complex, vibrant, and human female' (Wilson, *The Romantic Heroic Ideal*, p. 124).

What about the films where the process of representation figures as a central element of the narrative? In such cases, the recreation of identity is threefold, as we have hinted at in the previous sections. Out of a desire to preserve the other person as he sees him/her and for as long as he wants to, the painter reimagines the identity of the sitter. In addition, he also expresses narcissistic impulses by representing himself through the Other. We are here again reminded of Basil's words in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

Lord Henry—It's a great painting. You ought to send it to the Grosvenor and let everyone admire it.  
Basil—I shall not send it anywhere.  
Lord Henry—But why?  
Basil—I've put too much of myself into it.

The artist thus willingly and vehemently incorporates the aesthetic essence of the Other and melds it into his work as he paints. In doing so, he recreates his own identity on canvas. Lastly, the portraitist recreates identity (his and the sitter's) by allowing other people (who either knew or did not know the sitter) to view the portrait. I have already discussed the final sequence in *Portrait of Jennie*, where Eben and Jennie are reinvented by new onlookers—the schoolgirls who arrive in the museum and are confronted with the painting. In the sense that it is partly 'acquirable' by others (the artist and any random percipient), I consider identity to be something that can be easily gained and lost. From this point of view, the process of painting someone can be described as a game of gaining and losing selfhood, which means that selfhood in the Romantic-Gothic is conceived of as a by-product of artistic creation.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Scullion offers a complementary reading of the themes of fragmentation and splitting of identity, associating the body in space and the creation of art. She claims that if kinaesthetic awareness (awareness of the body in relation to itself and the surrounding space) is associated with writing poetry, painting or composing, 'then, conversely, bodily disintegration or spasticity is symbolic of loss of creativity'. There are few cases that meet all of those criteria in the Romantic-Gothic, that is, films where kinesthesia is linked to the arts and where bodily disintegration is equated with loss of creativity. Scullion's statement is

The creation of multiple identities is, in turn, tied to the idea of the double. In actuality, the face in the portrait, regardless of how we interpret it, is always a double of the model. A film that imparts particular intensity to portraits and doubles is *Portrait of Jennie*. Besides the portrait Eben paints, there is also Jennie, who, as a ghost, is (as all ghosts are) a double of herself, a vestige of who she once was. There is, however, another less obvious double of Jennie: Miss Spinney. When looked at carefully, we notice that the caring gallery owner is meticulously characterised as Jennie's alter ego throughout the film.

We can start by remarking their physical likeness, which is very clearly stressed by the manner in which they are both introduced to the audience. Miss Spinney begins the film as nothing more than a shadow, following Eben closely the moment he enters the art gallery. In the museum at the end, she makes an identical entrance. Jennie, in turn, is shown throughout the film as emerging out of the darkness: as a shadow that slowly becomes clearer and defined. There is also the fact that they are both deeply in love with Eben, but earthly love is unreachable to them: Jennie lived too soon and Spinney, too late. Their opinions are aligned, too: when each of them goes through Eben's paintings, in different occasions, they are both disappointed by the lack of something—love, according to Spinney. Upon their first meeting, she had in fact already commented on this flaw of his pictures:

Ever read Robert Browning? Remember his poem about Andrea Del Sarto, the perfect painter? Proportion, anatomy, colour... he had everything. And he had nothing. He could paint a perfect hand, where Raphael drew a formless claw. But Raphael loved his work, and poor Andy Del Sarto...

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nevertheless true of *House of Wax*, given that, after being disfigured by severe burns, Prof Jarrod loses the ability to sculpt and finds himself killing in order to again achieve the beauty he had once been able to create (Scullion, *The Sandman and Other Writings*, p. 7).

The similitude between the two characters goes even further: the way the dialogue is constructed across the narrative links physical traits of Spinney and Jennie, particularly the eyes. ‘You’ve got beautiful eyes’, says Eben to the middle-aged woman at the beginning of the film after she has decided to buy one of his creations. Jennie, on the other hand, is repeatedly described as a girl with ‘big, sad eyes’. Another similarity concerns the negative (ominous) connotation that seascapes have for both women. Jennie is from the start frightened by Eben’s sketches of Land’s End Light, the deserted lighthouse on Cape Cod: ‘Each time I think of them my—my heart seems to stop’. ‘I’m afraid of the ocean’, Spinney confesses to Eben. ‘You’re tough’, he tells her. ‘The sea wouldn’t get you’. Then, as if a presage, she remarks: ‘Tough ones drown too, you know’. Finally, note that Jennie and Spinney are never in the same sequence together and that, after Jennie is swallowed up by the ravaging sea disappearing yet again, the unshakable truth of her existence (in Eben’s view) is entrusted to Spinney: as he wakes up in a hospital bed, with Spinney by his side, she is the one holding Jennie’s scarf, which was miraculously washed ashore. The memory-object, the relic, was left behind with Spinney. This links back to her role as gallery keeper, as the one entrusted with protecting memory-objects—a portrait that is, in this case, the memory of both Jennie and Eben.

Taking into account the analyses of doubles in Chapters 1 and 2, I want to suggest that there are various ways of approaching the matter of doubles in the Romantic-Gothic. The physiognomy of doppelgängers can be like that of the self or, conversely, they can have the appearance of an Other to whom the dwellers possess an uncanny resemblance (physical and/or psychological). They can furthermore be presented as memory-objects, like portraits, or ghosts with whom the characters share material, genealogical, and/or spiritual affinities, like, respectively, a house, in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*; family ties, in *While I Live*; or love, in *Portrait of Jennie*.

Whatever shapes the double acquires, one thing is certain: if and when the physical body is destroyed, identity is preserved.

### **Sights of Mourning: Portraying the Mirror<sup>337</sup>**

Although not as pervasive as portraits, mirrors hold a central position in many Romantic-Gothic spaces, from bedrooms to halls and living rooms. In reality, in the absence of portraits, mirrors and mirrored surfaces are usually given a central role in the stories. As soon as we start investigating the two objects, some likenesses come to light, namely that both offer phenomenological evidence of one's existence. Dynamic though static, they help prolong the mute sufferings of mourning whilst also extending the oneiric or paranoid delusions of the characters by acting as persistent reminders of the ephemerality of life. In addition, they contribute to dynamise spatial and temporal perceptions by playing with the visual perception of the now and then, the finite and the infinite. Also, there is often the illusion or feeling that there is a space and a time beyond the portrait or mirror, ready to swallow the characters up.

The meeting points between the two objects notwithstanding, there is one fundamental difference: mirrors and portraits present the characters and the audience with, respectively, ever-changing reality and everlasting immutability. In other words, mirrors show their reflection aging, whereas portraits preserve the elusiveness of beauty and youth. One of the most prominent qualities of portraits is, indeed, to aid in the preservation of the vanished moments of the past by placing remembrance and imagination firmly within the coloured contours of a still face. In short, as we have seen, they preserve pastness and bring back the dead.

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<sup>337</sup> In order to properly address the subject of mirrors in the Romantic-Gothic, I would need to devote an entire chapter to its study, as I did with portraits. Yet, I believe it is important to look at mirrors, however briefly, so that we can more fully understand the many challenges posed to identity in the films.

Mirrors, on the contrary, place remembrance and imagination within a constantly metamorphosing present. They are powerful symbols of impermanence that point to the present or even to the future, rather than to the past. Appropriating the words of Deleuze, I argue that mirrors produce ‘a recollection of the present, contemporaneous with the present itself’, which succinctly means that they uncover the pastness in the present moment.<sup>338</sup> To look in a mirror, then, is to witness oneself slowly disappearing—it is to watch time and death happen, and be powerless to stop it.

‘Beware of mirrors’, Heurtebise reminds Orphée in the film of the same title. ‘No need to tell me’, he replies. Here, mirrors hold the ability to take life: if Orphée does not obey the orders he was given and looks at his wife, she will be claimed by Death. Avoiding her reflection, as Heurtebise well knows, presents the greatest challenge for the couple. In the end, Orphée catches a glimpse of his wife’s face in the rear-view mirror of their car and she dematerialises on the spot. Heurtebise addresses this raw cruelty of the mirror very elegantly when she says to Orphée: ‘Mirrors are the doors through which death comes and goes. Look at yourself in a mirror all your life, and you’ll see death at work, like bees in a hive of glass’. This feeling of watching ‘death at work’ whilst staring at one’s reflection leads to a forced confrontation with oneself. ‘But the horrors of her encounter with St. Germain left a mark on her soul for the rest of her life’, says Captain Suvorin in a voice-over narration. As he speaks, the image on the screen focuses on the young Countess Ranevskaya, looking at her image reflected in a mirror shortly after having sold her soul to the devil. *The Queen of Spades* is, indeed, exemplary in its pervasive use of mirrors over the course of the film and, in key scenes, the protagonists find themselves confronted with their reflection. From the outset, Suvorin is presented as incapable of staring at his own reflection for more than a

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<sup>338</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, London: Continuum, 2005, p. 77.

few seconds. Lizaveta, uncertain as to whether or not she should reciprocate the Captain's advances, seems to search her reflection for answers, as though her double in the mirror would know what was best for her. This experience of observing one's physiognomy as something exterior to oneself often results in feelings of aversion, of loathing, towards all that the characters have lost inwardly. From these examples, we can conclude that mirrors might also serve to warn the audience of the duplicity of the soul.

In some narratives, the presence of mirrors serves as a warning not only to the audience, but to the characters as well. A particularly striking example of this duality within the soul is found in the third episode of *Dead of Night*, directed by Robert Hamer. This is the story of a mirror that a woman gives to her fiancé. There is, however, something wrong with its reflection, for every time Peter Cortland looks in it, the room that appears is not the room where he is standing. It looks like a sumptuous Victorian bedroom, with warm colours, carpets, an antique bed, and a log fire. Reluctantly, after his private and public lives have been affected by his obsession with the mirror, he confides in his wife-to-be and tells her:

At first, if I made an enormous effort of will, the reflection used to change back to what it ought to be. But lately, however hard I try, it doesn't change anymore. The only thing to do is to try not to look in it at all. But in a queer sort of way, it fascinates me. I feel as if that room, the one in the mirror, were trying to... to claim me, to draw me into it. It almost becomes the real room—and my own bedroom, imaginary. And I know there is something waiting for me on the other side of the mirror, something evil, monstrously evil. As if I cross that dividing line, something awful will happen.

She suggests they get rid of the 'beastly thing', but he replies it would be of no use, because the problem is in his head. In an effort to help, she walks with him into the bedroom and forces him to look in the mirror with her. He stares at the reflection and says it is worse than ever: he still sees the other room and she is not there with him. But

she does not give up, and instead clasps his hand tightly and makes him look again. Then, just like that, the spell seems to have been broken, and he finally sees his room and his fiancée. Shortly after, they get married and move into a new house. He insists in taking the mirror along with him, saying he has lost all fear of it. Soon, as expected, he will begin to see the other room once again.

Peter's description of what was happening to him and how he feels about it, along with the subsequent series of events, encapsulates a number of Romantic-Gothic traits, such as the appeal of the threshold (to look in the mirror), the crossing of said threshold (keeping the mirror), the sense of impending danger ('something awful will happen'), and the painful loneliness (his reflection in the other room is always alone). By losing himself in the contemplation of his own double, he is both freed and imprisoned. The perceptual ambiguity of his reflection and the uncanny fascination for the forbidden unknown—for the mirror that seems to want to 'claim him'—brings forward the Janusian dichotomy that plagues the mind of the Romantic-Gothic dweller.

Certain films achieve a greater sense of terror by combining the images of the mirror and the portrait in specific climatic scenes. *Corridor of Mirrors* is one such film. Moments after Mifanwy rejects Venetia's ring, Paul becomes enraged and fully assumes, at long last, the identity of his supposed Italian alter ego. He intimidates her by recounting how much 'he', Cesare, loved Venetia's hair and how he strangled her with it. Mifanwy tries to defend herself by tossing a candleholder at him, which gives her just enough time to rush into the adjacent room. When she does, she finds herself in a large corridor steeped in darkness, where the only sources of light are a series of full-length mirrors dispersed all around the hall and a few lit candles. She looks around, disoriented. Behind each mirror there is a door.

The mirrors promote an overpowering sense of visual endlessness.<sup>339</sup> The illusory, seemingly endless, space of the corridor symbolises the extraordinary difficulty in escaping, not just the anti-home and the Other, but also (and especially) one's own fears. Like a grown-up Alice, Mifanwy needs to find the right door to which to go through. Frightened in the illusory infiniteness of the corridor, she runs towards one of the doors. The camera shows her trying to find a way out by filming her reflection through a different mirrored door. She opens it but does not go in. Instead, she turns around and runs towards the door that the camera has been focusing on. This time, the camera remains in the same position. As soon as she opens the door, a mannequin Paul had stored there falls on her, which seems to just add to the issue of doubling and surreality in this scene. Scared, she immediately shoves the door in a fruitless attempt to close it. As the door opens again, we see Paul's reflection advancing menacingly towards Mifanwy. The camera now frames her in a medium shot, leaning against another door, and alternates shots of her with close-ups of Paul's impassive face.

There is no way out. In a last desperate attempt to save her life, she remembers how profoundly the sound of laughter disturbs Paul; moreover, how he cannot stand it. So, as the close-up focuses in on her face, she starts to laugh loudly and nervously. As she does, the walls and mirrors carry the sound, which is thus prolonged and echoes repeatedly across the room. That hall of mirrors not only expands bodies and objects, but sounds too, confusing the senses. This sensory simultaneity, or synaesthetic moment, is more than Paul and his madness can bear. The camera, in turn, conveys his insufferable anguish by multiplying shots of Mifanwy's face, each slightly superimposed over the next, laughing uncontrollably whilst Paul grabs his head and

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<sup>339</sup> Minnelli frequently used mirrors as motifs, and *Undercurrent* was no exception. I mentioned the Washington party sequence before, which is nonetheless also notable for the use it makes of mirrors. The effect is equivalent to that achieved in this sequence from *Corridor of Mirrors*. Ann is desituated, as is her reflection in the mirrors around her. Here, the windows contribute to her nightmare and show reflections too, multiplying the guests *ad infinitum*. These ghostly doubles disclose the theme of division and the ambivalence of the heroes toward reality.

presses his hands against his ears. When the loud, terrifying laughter stops, Paul awakes from this nightmare of repetitive reflections and sounds alone in the corridor. There is no sign of Mifanwy.<sup>340</sup>

Sound, I argue, specifically the sound of laughter, is part of Mifanwy's identity, and Paul had previously warned her that she should give that up whenever they were together. The act of laughing is something that he identified with Mifanwy, not Venetia, and should therefore be abolished to preserve the illusion. Laughing, and thereby claiming her identity through sound, ended up saving her life. This brings us to the final part of the chapter: how identity is transmitted through sound.

### **Identity through Music and Speech**

Two effective ways of identifying someone (both the self and the Other) are attached to sound, more concretely, to speech and music.<sup>341</sup> It is important to note from the start that when I write 'sound' I am not excluding from my analysis the so-called silent films. As it has been widely and comprehensively discussed, this term is misleading, for there has always been sound in cinema: from noisy projectors to the

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<sup>340</sup> The relationship between mirror reflections and sonic repetitions can again be traced back to the myth of Narcissus and Echo, as described, for instance, in Felicia Miller Frank, *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice and the Artificial in the Nineteenth-Century French Narrative*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 35.

<sup>341</sup> As in the previous section on mirrors, I will also be very succinct here. My aim is to keep in consonance with the main topics of the chapter, particularly identity. My readings of sound here do not attempt to scrutinise the magnitude of the importance of this element in the Romantic-Gothic, but instead try to understand specific themes through the roles of the leitmotif and the voice in the narratives. There are two other central sound-related topics that invite an in-depth approach. One is the way the voice acts as a guiding agent in the narratives, that is, how it 'finds a way between the images' and directs the plot (Lépingle, 'Quelle horreur!', p. 13). Another topic is the absence of sound. In order to introduce an auditory dimension into the films, there is no need for music or dialogue—and I am not referring exclusively to silent cinema. In sound cinema, identity can, in reality, be just as vividly expressed through silence. Silence is, after all, a way of interaction, albeit a more atypical other.

audience and the vocal and/or instrumental musical accompaniments.<sup>342</sup> When the ear cannot make out actual sounds coming directly from the moving images, the eye and imagination are strengthened and brought into play with revived acuity. In this regard, we can easily make a case for on-screen sound in silent films: we can hear (because we can see) the whistling winds, the knocks on the doors, the maddening screams, the bloodcurdling cries, and the frightful howling of dogs and wolves. Sound, and its visual illusion, has been an intricate component of cinema since its inception and of the Romantic-Gothic mode in particular.<sup>343</sup>

Sound—a definition which comprises ambient noise, music, and dialogue— informs the ways in which the characters and the viewers relate to the unrolling of events on the screen. The complex dimension (or layer) provided by the soundtrack, together with camera movements and angles, envelops the viewer in the long re/collecting journey of the characters.<sup>344</sup> Young Lisa, in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, is a good example of this, in that she falls hopelessly in love with Stefan through his music. Even before she ever saw him, she was already entranced by the beautiful sounds coming from the piano in his apartment. She would lie awake in bed every night, listening to the bewildering pieces he played. There is a particularly symbolic sequence where she gets up and goes into the corridor to open the window only so that she can listen more clearly to his rehearsal. This way, she could feel closer to him—a closeness mediated by the sound of his piano, shared by them both. Music,

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<sup>342</sup> For more on this, see, for instance: Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004; and Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>343</sup> Marks uses the term ‘haptic hearing’ to describe the series of undifferentiated sounds that are presented to us before we choose which ones are more important to hear. She writes that ‘we cannot literally touch sound with our ears, just as we cannot touch images with our eyes; but as vision can be optical or haptic, so too hearing can perceive the environment in a more or less instrumental way (Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, p. 183).

<sup>344</sup> For a detailed analysis of auditory properties in the Gothic (including Gothic film), see Isabella van Elferen, ‘Sonic Gothic’, in Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (eds), *The Gothic World*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

then, or, rather, the hapticity of sound, takes an active role in the story by allowing Lisa to surmount the boundaries that separate her from Stefan, thus also helping in the shaping of her identity. One could argue, however, that these attributes (to bring characters together) apply to many other films. Therefore, we should ask what it is that makes sound such a vital component of Romantic-Gothic works. To answer this question, I will focus on a specific type of musical composition (the leitmotif) and on speech (the voice). Given that the general research interest in this chapter revolves around portraits and identity, I will provide a more detailed investigation of musical repetitions and speech in their relationship to the portrayed face and the creation or idea of a sense of selfhood.

The metadiegetic space of sound in film is punctuated by melodic phrases that create specific soundscapes for certain characters, emotions or situations. Music scholar Justin London suggests that a leitmotif has two defining features: it has both a short and a distinctive opening.<sup>345</sup> This guarantees that the audience is able to quickly identify a character, for instance, insofar as that short, distinctive passage is always repeated in association with that same character or with a situation that concerns him or her. Let us look at an unusual employment of the leitmotif. From the very first scenes in *Undercurrent*, for instance, Ann is associated with a passage from Brahms's Third Symphony. Later on, as the plot unfolds, she becomes aware that other characters identify this particular music with Michael, her husband's brother, so much so that when she starts playing it in the anti-home, they rush to the piano believing the person playing to be Michael. This is an atypical case of a shared leitmotif.

In my canon of films, I distinguish between two categories of leitmotifs, the second of which builds upon the first: those that signal danger or revelation and those

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<sup>345</sup> Justin London, 'Leitmotifs and Musical Reference in the Classical Film Score', in James Buhler et al. (eds), *Music and Cinema*, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000, p. 92.

that represent the long-gone voice of the Other. The use, for example, of the ‘Merry Widow Waltz’ by Franz Lehár in *Shadow of a Doubt* heightens the feeling of suspense by alerting the viewers to the possibility of impending danger. On the other hand, the haunting melodies repeated in *Dragonwyck*, *While I Live*, *Undercurrent*, and *Portrait of Jennie* are elucidatory examples of how the dead are consistently re-actualised in the present as haunting sounds.

Another point where the Romantic-Gothic differentiates itself is in its insistent use of the leitmotif as a means to signal danger and serve as a warning to both the audience and the characters, which is to say: the leitmotif crosses the whole of the sonic space and alternates between non-diegetic and diegetic music.<sup>346</sup> In so doing, it brings forward the threshold where film music lingers, always on the verge of trespassing, of flowing subtly from one world into another, interlocking the narrative sensory experiences of the heroes with those of the audience.<sup>347</sup> In other words, using musical motifs that cross the boundary from the intra- to the extra-diegetic, both the viewers and the characters participate in conjoining audio-visual practices.

Bernard Herrmann’s melody for that strange, mystifying song in *Portrait of Jennie*—‘Where I come from’—is her recurring theme. It is curious to note that her leitmotif has the particularity of having lyrics, and, moreover, of those lyrics being sung by the protagonist, making the leitmotif ever more present in the minds of the viewers. It becomes, in fact, an element of the plot that is directly mentioned in the dialogue on

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<sup>346</sup> The cinematic tradition of representing characters musically is not exclusive to the Romantic-Gothic. The use of musical leitmotifs dates back to the beginning of the sound era. In this regard, Wagner’s pioneering operas paved the way for the cinema like no other art form before it: the longing for the utopian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, for the integration of music, sound, and text into a perfectly coordinated whole, arguably found its most accurate expression yet on the film screen from the 1930s onwards. Fritz Lang’s *M* (1931) was one of the first films to use the leitmotif. Perhaps it was not by chance that it was an Austrian filmmaker, who lived and studied in Germany during the 1910s (and actually served in the First World War), who was one of the first to apply the Wagnerian ideal to the cinema.

<sup>347</sup> The liminality of musical spaces is analysed in James Buhler et al., ‘Roundtable on Film Music’, *Velvet Light Trap*, Vol. 51 (Spring 2003), pp. 73-91. See also Robynn Stilwell, ‘The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic’, in Daniel Goldmark et al. (eds), *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, p. 190.

at least three different occasions. Jennie's song accompanies each of her appearances throughout the film and, just as the visual aspect of those moments depicts her figure emerging out of the shadows, so too the sonorous space is invaded by her leitmotif, as if both image and sound were needed to conjure up the ghost.

Music effects the resurrection of the dead: through music, the departed find a way of voicing their *presentness*, so that the past is heard as well as seen, either in the form of a ghost or a memory-object. When I discussed 'Gothic eyes' and 'Romantic ears' in the first chapter, I addressed this matter of the manifestation of death through music when I suggested that the memory of the Other often transpires in the songs they play or sing. I mentioned, for instance, the case of the accordion player in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, whose memory is strictly procedural, meaning that he remembers only how to play his tunes, but does not recall anything else. We can find another example to illustrate the kinship between the leitmotif and death (or the dead) by looking at *While I Live*. Indeed, by playing Olwen's unfinished piece, 'The Dream of Olwen', the hands of her newfound human host (the amnesiac woman) speak that which the mouth of the dead composer cannot. Olwen, as an ever-present ghost in the portrait on the living room wall, comes to life through music.<sup>348</sup> Musical excerpts can thus haunt the characters just as effectively as ghosts. The voice, in particular, has an invasive quality and is often used in conjunction with the leitmotif and the portrait to achieve that same haunting effect.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> In fact, a way of integrating the past into the present (besides painting it) is to stress the existence and the space of the portrait more emphatically by employing means other than visual. Music, and particularly the leitmotif, emphasise the magnetism of the portrait and give it the kind of movement it otherwise lacks. Implicit here is the fact that, as I have previously mentioned, the characters do not have to coincide geographically with the painting nor do they have to even look at it in order to feel its presence. I discussed those 'strings' that seem to tie the characters to the portrait, wherever they are in the anti-home. Filmmakers have used sound—music, ambient noise, and dialogue—to accentuate that inescapable grip of the portrait.

<sup>349</sup> The inescapable voices of ghosts recur in the Romantic-Gothic as well, and are used effectively in *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*, where the Captain's voice can be both frightening and loving, and in *The Queen of Spades*, where the menacing voice of the dead evil aunt reeks apart the hero's room and shouts him the numbers of the three magic cards that will bring him fortune and despair.

In *Dragonwyck*, Nicholas Van Ryn suffers from a different kind of haunting than the journalist of *While I Live*, in that his body is still his own, though not his house. His desperation, brought on by a nightly phantasmagorical chant, is intensified by the fact that Azilde's face is always there, in the portrait, 'spying' on him. When she moved to Dragonwyck, Azilde brought her harpsichord along with her.<sup>350</sup> 'She played it always,' Van Ryn says at the beginning of the film, to which his wife, Johanna, sarcastically adds: 'If you listen to the servants, they'll have you believe she still does'. Some nights, the harpsichord melody Azilde used to play echoes throughout the anti-home accompanied by an acousmatic operatic voice that deeply frightens its dwellers.

L. Andrew Cooper explains that 'ghost sounds have a revelatory purpose, a testimonial concern with truth that reinforces their ghostly validity'.<sup>351</sup> I agree with this statement: it is quite ingenious, in truth, to have ghosts validate their presence as absences via sound, to the extent that we associate the dead with quietude in all respects (physical, temporal, and psychological). Jennie, for instance, first appears as a voice: a voice that calls out to Eben when he grabs that creased newspaper in the park. Moreover, sound seems like an adequate medium to convey otherworldly thoughts, given that it can be present whilst the body is absent: sound travels, even when the body cannot. Continuing in this line, I would add to Cooper's more general word 'sound', the remark that the dead can *speak*, and that it is often through the voice they utter that they make themselves 'present'. As Lépingle writes, 'the voice is ... that which remains of the departed as a living presence', and it therefore actualises the past.<sup>352</sup> It acts as the

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<sup>350</sup> Oftentimes, the piano is the diegetic instrument of choice to convey the complex dynamics of the Romantic-Gothic world. The manner in which it involves the dexterity of the hands, paired with the layered sound of the keys and the way it can, unlike other instruments, meld each sound into the next make it a favourite among these narratives.

<sup>351</sup> Cooper, *Gothic Realities*, p. 149.

<sup>352</sup> Lépingle, 'Quelle horreur!', p. 13.

‘conducting agent’ between the world of the living and that of the dead.<sup>353</sup> Shortly after entering her room in the Beast’s castle, a male voice startles Belle: ‘I’m your mirror, Belle’, it whispers. ‘Reflect in your heart for me, and I will reflect for you’. She raises her hands slowly, and hesitantly touches the frame of the mirror, grabbing it and turning it towards her. As she does, the camera cuts to a close-up of the mirror, in which the faint figure of Belle’s father, ill and alone, appears, calling out her name. The first voice we hear (the one coming out of the mirror) cannot be placed (it is neither of the past nor of the present), whilst the second is familiar and very dear to the character: it brings back her past and thereby reminds her of her old life outside the walls of the anti-home.

The disturbing recalling of the past into the present by means of the sense of hearing is highlighted in the final minutes of *Whirlpool*. Earlier in the film, the police caught Ann next to a murdered body after breaking into a house (unknowingly under a hypnotic spell). Hoping to prove her innocence, she later revisits the crime scene with a detective and Dr Sutton, her husband. Their intent is to find the missing recordings, which contained the recordings of Teri’s (the victim) private sessions with Dr Sutton. These are believed to supply her husband, the hypnotist, with a motive for murder. After trying to retrace her steps, Ann finally remembers where she hid the recordings. Everyone is eager to hear the incriminating evidence.

There is a record player in the living room, right next to the wall where Teri’s portrait hangs. As the needle touches the vinyl, her voice echoes throughout the mansion, and the presence of that imposing picture on the wall intensifies the daunting feeling that the voice we hear is coming directly from the portrait.<sup>354</sup> The combination of the two memory-objects, one visual and the other sonic, recreates Teri’s identity in a

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<sup>353</sup> Lépingle is analysing how director Eugène Green captures the motifs that suggest the passage from one world to the other in the film *Le Pont des Arts* (2003).

<sup>354</sup> For more on the relationship between the phonograph and the reanimation of the dead, see Douglas Kahn, ‘Art and Sound’, in Mark Michael Smith (ed.), *Hearing History: A Reader*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004, pp. 38-39.

complex, multi-layered way.<sup>355</sup> Indeed, the feeling of mobile stillness that the portrait exudes is most striking when accompanied by an audio dimension that prolongs the ephemerality of the voice.

To conclude my reading of the portrait as virtually speaking, let us attend briefly to that which is, perhaps, and according to Gil, the most common adjective used in literature about portraiture to describe the finalised artwork: alive.<sup>356</sup> Gil believes that the finished portrait needs to meet one specific requirement so that it can be considered 'alive'. He claims it is imperative that the resemblance borders the threshold of speech in order to fully legitimise itself, because the aliveness of a portrait 'is situated between the muteness of the image and its imminent speech', between the lifeless image of an unaccomplished portrait and that which is too real and appears therefore mortal.<sup>357</sup> Between the two, there is the illusion, the appearance, and the magical. In John Brahm's *The Lodger* (1944), it is clear that the journey through time is likewise a journey through memory and the senses: the protagonist says that each time he looks at his brother's portrait it is as though he can still hear his voice. These considerations about the represented image of the face and the ability to speak (which is strictly human) thus call our attention to how intricately the visual and the auditory are entwined, so much so that, if we believe the portrait to be on the verge of speech, it will appear uncannily real.

To wrap up the investigations in this section, I would like to reiterate that identity in the Romantic-Gothic is understood as possessing a historical, cultural, philosophical, psychoanalytical, geographical, and aesthetic dimension. Furthermore, the way irreconcilable dualisms, such as love-hatred and remembering-forgetting, are played out in narrative time and space shapes the sense of identity of the characters by

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<sup>355</sup> We could also refer to *While I Live* for a different example of a portrait communicating through sound. Here, it seems that Olwen is reaching out to the world of the living through the piano piece.

<sup>356</sup> Gil, "*Sem Título*", p. 20.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

constantly calling it into question. Through the use of memory-objects, doubles, leitmotifs, and speech, the Romantic-Gothic reinvents models of selfhood. The voice has a particularly decisive role here, for it is an incomparable means to accomplish individuation: each voice is different and identified with a specific person. It is, in the end, through the senses that memories are created and awakened, and it is also through them that the characters learn to know themselves and the Other.

## CONCLUSION: Wayfarers and Their Routes of Remembering

... and in the morning and the years after, you'll only remember it as a dream.  
And it'll die, as all dreams must die with waking.

from *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*

Throughout this thesis, one of my primary aims has been to show how cinema draws on and emerges out of the broader tradition of Romanticism, which includes the period of proliferation of the Gothic novel. This kind of approach invites an exploration of Romanticism as a movement that shaped a particular form of cinema I call the Romantic-Gothic. This mode constitutes a locus of condensation of Romantic and Gothic features, whereby Romantic dreams and oneiric imagery meld with the Gothic's gruesome fascination with death and gore. In addition, the fallibility of memory is here highlighted and the macabre overshadows traditional moral values. Importantly, the Romantic-Gothic draws on narrative strategies and the generic repertoire of Romanticism and the Gothic, but it rewrites the way their reciprocity of influences is effected in the medium of film. With this in mind, I suggested the revision of certain assumptions (derivative of standard academic criticism) that have been automatically applied to the cinematic rendering of Gothic and Romantic stories and imagery. In this regard, I claimed that classifying certain works as merely Gothic or Romantic detracts from their singular presentation of both traditions and grounds them in the literary field. I reiterate at this point that it is for these reasons—the belief that Romanticism and the Gothic came together in a very singular way in cinema and should therefore be investigated according to the specificity of their relationship—that I chose the hyphenised term Romantic-Gothic to designate this mode. More precisely, I reserve the term to refer to a trans-periodic or transhistorical movement that straddles

epistemological spheres as well as cultural and geographical borders in a transnational consideration of the representation of death, memory, and oneirism in the cinema.

The aesthetics of the audiovisual is a key element of the Romantic and Gothic doctrines, which makes them a priori well suited to the cinematic medium. I provided readings of chief visual and sonic qualities in the films by focusing on specific sequences, which, I hope, has allowed for an understanding of the extent to which these sensorial dimensions are imbricated in the Romantic-Gothic discourse. I argued that this is particularly well articulated in the association of inanimate objects (like a portrait or a mirror) with acousmatic sounds. I added that the exploration of Romanticism and the Gothic as cross-related aesthetics discloses the tight relationship between pre-cinematic art forms and cinema technology, at the same time as it allows for a particular way of thinking about the past: both the personal past of our memories and the cultural/historical past of the late 1700s to the late 1950s.

The Romantic-Gothic, as I hope to have shown, is marked by migrations and transactions. The agents of its dissemination were, in their majority, European exiles and émigrés who, in American soil, created a singular way of appropriating and externalising the dialoguing histories of Romanticism and the Gothic. In doing so, these artists ensured the continuation of those two movements into the twentieth century, meaning that both traditions were able to live on in filmic form beyond their widely accepted end with late-nineteenth-century poetry, music, and literature. All these cultural transmissions underscore the fact that the Romantic-Gothic is very much about location; about places very clearly delimited and spaces carefully described. Its stories revolve around journeys to secret locked rooms, old hidden passages, damp city streets, peaceful moors, and picture-laden corridors. Whether by roaming the city streets from place to place looking for the traces of the Other, like Scottie in *Vertigo*, dressing up in a ‘travelling coat’ to make pretend journeys to places they will only ever dream of, as

do Lisa and her father in *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, or by singing strange enigmatic songs about uncertain pasts, like Jennie in *Portrait of Jennie*, Romantic-Gothic characters are constantly travelling.

In Chapter 1, I investigated those travels as based upon the process of putting together the memory of the Other. I argued in this regard that memory is made concrete through objects, which, in turn, allows for an interpretation of objects as an afterlife for people. Interpreting memory as being embodied through objects means that the appropriation of the memory of the Other is effected primarily via the senses. To address the role of the sensorial, I sustained a phenomenological approach throughout this project and paid special attention to the role of touch and tactility by focusing on one of the most powerful synecdoches of the human body: the hand. In this respect, I conducted an analysis of memory-objects in their relationship to the bodies of the characters. Frequently, the objects seem to draw the dwellers in by appealing to the senses: ‘Instinctively, I found myself approaching the bench in the park—Jennie’s bench’, we hear Eben musing in voice-off as he walks around Central Park one wintry evening. That was the bench where he had found Jennie’s scarf, wrapped in a newspaper, and which had caused them to first meet. ‘And yet’, Eben continues, ‘I was conscious of an unaccustomed atmosphere, as though time were melting with the snow. Were the sobs that I heard part of the illusion?’ In this sequence, the hero ‘instinctively’ revisits a specific place where he experiences a peculiar temporality, only to condense both time and place into a particular sound: the acousmatic sound of Jennie sobbing. In *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, the importance of sound is taken one step further, and Stefan remembers the identity of Lisa solely through the words in the letter she has left for him, and which is presented to the audience in voice-off. Memory and identity are here enacted through language. We realise, then, that memories are not limited by materiality and can be dispersed through sounds, for instance. Through a careful process

of perception of each detected sensation, memories that are seen, touched, heard, smelled, and felt can be remembered. Close sequence analyses throughout the chapters revealed that Romantic-Gothics trade in images of sensorial knowledge and are extraordinarily self-conscious in their conveyance of (and reliance on) the way the characters engage with manifold tactile, auditory, olfactory, and visual sensations in their search for memory.

Their search is rendered more poignant and confusing inside the walls of the anti-home, with all its furnishings, tunnel-like corridors, vast halls, and spacious living rooms. In Chapter 2, I classified the anti-home as the privileged place in which to hoard and re/collect memories. I demonstrated as well that the architectural has the faculty of agency and that it guides the inquisitive indoor walks of the characters. This was achieved through an analysis of the host-guest dynamic established between its structures and the bodies of its simultaneously helpless and intrepid denizens. *Mise-en-scène*, especially sound, lighting, and camera movements and angles engender fear and coordinate the perceptual monitoring of the rooms. Lighting, in particular, illustrates the way space choreographs the afterlife: based on *chiaroscuro* techniques, it creates the sharp contrasting shadows that populate the interstices of the building, now riddled with the flickering movements of unappeased ghosts.

Aware of the sensory environments within the house, the characters display an almost museological or archaeological reverence towards objects, as their circuitous wanderings in that morgue-like space awaken the echoes of the long ago. Reanimating the dead (and thus re-enacting the past) becomes the most pressing objective in the stories. The dwelling self is in a way elected as the custodian of a memory, of the heritage of the Other: a watchful guard in a large museum responsible for the spatial construction of the memorial. The corporeal cognition of place therefore plays a defining role in the production of memories. An invisible trope of ephemerality, the

sensuous contaminates each space of the Romantic-Gothic. The sensorial interaction with human and non-human sources is established via spatial, temporal, and psychological modes of dwelling, meaning that, in searching for the Other, the re/collector travels in space, in time, and within his or her mind. These journeys of remembering, in turn, have implications at all those levels as well. Spatially, houses may come tumbling down, as the evil architect's mansion in *The Black Cat*; temporally, the characters may chose to live in an alternative temporality, like Michel in *Juliette ou la clef des songes*; psychologically, the characters' obsessions may drive them insane, as happened to Paul in *Corridor of Mirrors*.

Unapologetically melancholy, these films build on the idea of pastness as the one fundamental aspect of the present. Romantic-Gothics centre, indeed, on the journey of bringing back to the chronological present the memory of the past. They are imbued with images that point to the experience of duration, namely the movements of time passing, of things changing, and of the body aging. The narratives are, then, punctuated by symbols of impermanence that bear the traces of the passage of time, operating as conveyors of the dystopian Romantic-Gothic world: the cobwebbed rooms of *Wuthering Heights*, the long takes of waves in *The Uninvited*, the red rose in *Ludwig II: Glanz und Ende eines Königs*, clouds rolling by in *Portrait of Jennie*, snow in *The Queen of Spades*, and ruins in *Peter Ibbetson*, to name only a few cases. These elements, as I explain in Chapter 2, attest to the way time is spatialised in the films. Temporal complexity is also effectively communicated in instances where time either drags or speeds up. An example of the former is the slow-motion sequence of Belle entering the Beast's castle and, with regard to the latter, we have the image of young Jennie, hurrying to grow up so she can be with Eben.

To the itinerant subject, the past validates the present, and, by extension, previous events that have been remembered can also be fully re-experienced, relived.

We learned, however, that this is not the case: remembering is, ultimately, a spatial act, which hopelessly undermines its viability as a completely reliable action: certain memory traces might not be found or might be misinterpreted. In the end, the memory of the Other lies within the Other and is never wholly re/collectable by a foreign body. This impossibility of reassembling the past exactly as it once was is at the origin of a transformative process of identity negotiation. In other words, awakening the disunited memories of the Other results in an existential inquiry into one's own life. The individualised existence of the self becomes increasingly menaced by the overwhelming ubiquity of the Other who, desperate to be remembered, gradually imposes its presence on the re/collector, using material and/or immaterial means, like objects and sounds or smells, respectively. In Chapter 4, I explored these matters along with the implications of seeking freedom and love by exploiting the fragility of identity and its discourses. Moreover, through an investigation of the impact of temporal, geographic, and psychological travels on the self, I provided a comprehensive reading of how a sense of identity develops in relation to processes of othering (of becoming Other).

I argued that to cause the transmutation of someone into the image of the dead Other through a process of repeated masquerading (like that of Mifanwy in *Corridor of Mirrors*) reinvents the notions of selfhood and otherness. From here, I concluded the inseparability of memory and selfhood, both of which are presented as something acquired, extruded from sensory experiences. Following this line of reasoning, I claimed that when the past of the Other has become the dweller's present, to deny the Other's past is to deny one's own life. Associated with this is the idea that the disintegration of memory-objects (the letting go of memories, of the past) means to die. It means engaging in a process that involves not just an emotional, inner acceptance of loss—and, therefore, a psychological dwelling—but an actual destruction of relics: of portraits, and gloves, and mirrors, and scarves. It means to destroy a part of oneself

along with the Other. This, in turn, links with the twinned relationship between the Romantic-Gothic mode and death, which is anchored in mid-nineteenth-century Romanticism, as we observed. To the characters, death does not constitute an ending; it is rather, Serge Chauvin remarks, a point of departure, as confirmed by the voices from beyond the grave in *Laura* and *Sunset Blvd.* ‘Death’, he writes, ‘is the passage to the myth, the final reunion, as if the world were but a ... *rehearsal* of immortality’.<sup>358</sup>

Most of this last chapter was dedicated to looking into the ways in which memory-objects, specifically portraits, are integrated into the narratives and perform the work of mourning by offering the self a posthumous existence. In other words, by capturing the spirits of the living and translating them into a disembodied and inanimate form, portraits stress the absence of bodily life of the Other and thus re-invoke loss. In this sense, they are *memento mori*—echoes of the past—that disclose a feeling of timelessness whereby the unending past joins the here and now: the dead remain exactly as they were when they were caught on canvas. Taking this into account, they furthermore offer a complex rendering of subjectivity, depicting identity as an on-going process of exchange between interacting subjects (painter-sitter; face in the portrait-percipient). In order to better clarify how the dwelling re/collectors fuse a sense of selfhood with memories and imagination in myriad routes of remembering, I completed my study of the Romantic-Gothic by bringing together the concepts of identity, the sensuous, space, time, and memory-objects, which run in tandem with the many permutations of waking life, death, and dreams.

At this point, I would like to reassert what I mentioned in the opening pages of this thesis: that I would not be delving into a discussion of the Gothic or its recurrent appeal with regard to how it (supposedly) identifies and comments on the abuse of

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<sup>358</sup> Serge Chauvin, ‘L’Éternel Retour de la fiction’, in Bourget and Nacache (eds), *Le Classicisme hollywoodien*, p. 55 (my translation).

power, capitalist modes of production, social status, the destruction of nature by humankind, and so on. I wrote that I would be examining other aspects instead; more concretely, the qualities that connect the films and that show not why, but *how*, the Gothic in conjunction with Romanticism has been represented from 1907 to 1958. Indeed, my aim was not so much to set the films in the context of their period through documentary research, but to study them first hand through a formal-aesthetic approach, that is, by considering their internal elements of structure and style. This kind of approach also makes it possible to hint at the idea that the Romantic-Gothic is not strictly time-bound in cinema history and that it is still present today, albeit in a different form. Although the heyday of the Romantic-Gothic proper corresponded to the period under examination (and thus to the combined efforts of émigré and exile artists), the intersection of Romanticism and Gothicism survives today, permeating a range of genres and styles. Having traced the specific kind of ambiance or cinematic tenor that can be readily identified as Romantic-Gothic, we now have the tools to understand what it is that aligns such apparently divergent works as *Nosferatu*, *Juliette ou la clef des songes*, Robert Aldrich's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), Robert Mulligan's *Inside Daisy Clover* (1965), Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* (1974), and the many film and TV adaptations of *The Addams Family*, for instance.

The Romantic-Gothic mode is about that which the re/collector can rescue from time and place, and thus salvage from oblivion. It is therefore invested in trying to understand the processes of remembering and forgetting, which are, in turn, related to mental and sensory experiences. Correspondingly, it is about how we perceive, how we mourn, and how we cope with loss in a world where uncertainty reigns and everything is always turning into something else. In this respect, it is also about questioning the unknown, the unknowable, and about boundary transgression. The films typically describe tales of loss that feed on obsolescence where one or more wandering selves,

estranged from society, powerlessly try to cope with the past, its ghosts, and the new societal demands. Having chosen to sever all ties with normalcy, these dwelling bodies generally prefer a life of self-imposed isolation to the enduring bitterness of an utterly dismal reality. To a certain extent, as they modify and are modified by place, time, and memory, Romantic-Gothic heroes seem to build their own torturing mazes of unhappiness. They are lonely ambulatory bodies persistently searching in hidden rooms, deserted alleyways, secluded mountains, poorly-lit streets, and menacing seashores for something that is conspicuously lacking, all the while trying to adjust to a reality that is permanently changing and never seems to accommodate them. Briefly, they are wayfarers, travelling mourners always in transit between divergent mental and physical realities striving to find their path among the paths of others. Despite their diligence in trying to overcome the feeling of loss resultant from the widespread pursuit of memory (through obsessive artistic practices, for instance), the heroes do not succeed in finding closure or avoiding the macabre events that befall them. Trapped inside a mind that is trapped inside a body, in turn trapped inside a house, it becomes clear that, as Vine explains, ‘the self becomes the cemetery of its own hopes, the graveyard of its own ambitions, the sepulchre of its own desires’.<sup>359</sup> Nowhere do they seem to find a way to appease their pain, not even in death: they are faded silhouettes against the décor—non-adaptive beings in an unwelcoming environment. To round off my readings of the Romantic-Gothic mode, let us go back to *Corridor of Mirrors*, more precisely to the sequence that takes place shortly after the grandiose Venetian masquerade ball with which I opened the first chapter and Mifanwy’s subsequent escape from the frightful corridor of mirrors.

A long shot frames a man sitting in a tall wooden chair before a large portrait. Although his back is to the camera, we realise it is Paul, biding his time after

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<sup>359</sup> Vine, ‘Romantic Ghosts’, p. 106.

discovering the murdered body of Caroline, one of his guests and aspiring lover, the previous evening. The alluring painting hangs in front of him, but it has been damaged: the canvas is torn, almost ripped to shreds, and Venetia is barely distinguishable in the frame. With Mifanwy forever gone from his life, he has lost Venetia all over again—and with her, his dreams. Veronica, the omnipresent housemaid who had earlier succeeded in scaring Mifanwy against Paul, is standing quietly on the left of the screen. She walks towards Paul and softly lets him know that the police are waiting for him. Calmly, he tells her that Caroline Hart has been murdered. The camera next cuts to a close-up of Veronica, who does not react to the news and merely asks why he did it. Paul does not reply. Moving closer to him, she repeats the question: ‘Why did you do it, Mr Mangin?’ At this moment, there is a slow zoom-in on Paul’s face. He turns to her without getting up and, smiling cynically, tells her to let the two policemen know that he would be ready in five minutes for them to take him away. The irony, as we later learn, is that Veronica was the one responsible for the murder. Paul gets his hat and cane and joins the officers on top of the staircase. He neither struggles nor contests the charges. Once his sublime utopia has been shattered, Paul appears indifferent to his fate. We then watch as the camera, placed in front of the characters, steadily follows them descending the long stairway. The two policemen are framed side by side, behind Paul. The whole scene looks like a strange cortège of death that brings to mind the better-known end of *Sunset Blvd*, shot two years later. Once Paul reaches the bottom of the stairs, he pauses, and the camera frames his face in a long close-up. His eyes peruse everything around him: he is getting emotionally ready to leave that space, the space of the house and everything in it, including Venetia and the memories of her. This shot exposes the dualistic divide of interior and exterior, individual and memory-object, past and future. The outside world is thus equated here with both emotional and physical death. After a few seconds, Paul carries on and leaves, but the camera does not: it

lingers immobile inside the house for a little while longer. This reticence of the camera furthermore signals the tragic end of the film: Paul left never to return and only Veronica's white cat remains in the image, the faithful guardian of that deserted mausoleum. The safe haven that harboured the fantasy represented his refuge—the place where he could nourish mourning at will and indulge in impossible unending reveries. To Paul, this meant his vast estate with all its belongings; to Heathcliff and Cathy, on the other hand, it meant the outdoors, specifically those treasured moors where they always found peace—and each other. The ending of *Corridor of Mirrors* unrolls quickly, as it should, for the moment Paul crossed the threshold that stood in between the world he had created in the anti-home and the natural world, he was already dead. There is no point in living unless the dream remains. Using the words of Flaubert in Minnelli's *Madame Bovary*, the Romantic-Gothic dweller is forever doomed to have 'one kind of dream, another kind of life'.

## PRIMARY FILMOGRAPHY

*La Belle et la Bête* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1946)

*Ben-Hur* (Harry T. Morey, Sidney Olcott, and Frank Rose, USA, 1907)

*The Black Cat* (Edgar G. Ulmer, USA, 1934)

*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*) (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1919)

*The Cat and the Canary* (Paul Leni, USA, 1927)

*Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1929)

*Corridor of Mirrors* (Terence Young, UK, 1948)

*Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden, and Robert Hamer, UK, 1945)

*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, USA, 1931)

*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Victor Fleming, USA, 1941)

*Dracula* (Tod Browning, USA, 1931)

*Dragonwyck* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1946)

*The Fall of the House of Usher* (*La Chute de la maison Usher*) (Jean Epstein, France, 1928)

*Frankenstein* (James Whale, USA, 1931)

*Freaks* (Tod Browning, USA, 1932)

*Gaslight* (George Cukor, USA, 1944)

*Gaslight* (Thorold Dickinson, UK, 1940)

*The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA, 1947)

*The Golem: How He Came into the World* (*Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam*) (Henrik Galeen and Paul Wegener, Germany, 1920)

*The Hands of Orlac* (*Orlacs Hände*) (Robert Wiene, Germany/Austria, 1924)

*House of Wax* (André De Toth, USA, 1953)

*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (William Dieterle, USA, 1939)

*Juliette, or Key of Dreams (Juliette ou la clef des songes)* (Marcel Carné, France, 1951)

*Laura* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1944)

*Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1948)

*The Mad Emperor (Ludwig II: Glanz und Ende eines Königs)* (Helmut Käutner, West Germany, 1955)

*Madame Bovary* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1949)

*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1922)

*Orphée* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1950)

*Peter Ibbetson* (Henry Hathaway, USA, 1935)

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Albert Lewin, USA, 1945)

*Le Plaisir* (Max Ophüls, France, 1952)

*Portrait of Jennie* (William Dieterle, USA, 1948)

*The Queen of Spades* (Thorold Dickinson, UK, 1949)

*Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940)

*Secret Beyond the Door* (Fritz Lang, USA, 1947)

*Shadow of a Doubt* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1943)

*The Student of Prague (Der Student von Prag)* (Henrik Galeen, Germany, 1926)

*The Student of Prague (Der Student von Prag)* (Paul Wegener and Stellan Rye, Germany, 1913)

*Sunset Blvd* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1950)

*Undercurrent* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1946)

*The Uninvited* (Lewis Allen, USA, 1944)

*Vampyr* (Carl T. Dreyer, Denmark, 1932)

*Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958)

*Le Voyage à travers l'impossible* (Georges Méliès, France, 1904)

*While I Live* (John Harlow, UK, 1947)

*Whirlpool* (Otto Preminger, USA, 1944)

*Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, USA, 1939)

## SECONDARY FILMOGRAPHY

(The following works are mentioned in the thesis but were not analysed)

*The Addams Family* (Barry Sonnenfeld, USA, 1991)

*Addams Family Reunion* (Dave Payne, USA, 1998)

*Addams Family Values* (Barry Sonnenfeld, USA, 1993)

*The Assassination of the Duke of Guise (L'Assassinat du duc de Guise)* (André Calmettes and Charles Le Bargy, France, 1908)

*Caught* (Max Ophüls, USA, 1949)

*Le Château hanté* (Georges Méliès, France, 1897)

*Christian Schrøder i Panoptikon* (unknown, Denmark, 1911)

*The Chronicles of the Gray House (Zur Chronik von Grieshuus)* (Arthur von Gerlach, Germany, 1925)

*College Chums* (Edwin S. Porter, USA, 1907)

*Esmeralda* (Alice Guy-Blaché and Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset, France, 1905)

*Fantômas, à l'ombre de la guillotine* (Louis Feuillade, France, 1913)

*Frankenstein* (J. Searle Dawley, USA, 1910)

*Genuine, die Tragödie eines seltsamen Hauses* (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920)

*The Golem (Der Golem)* (Paul Wegener, Germany, 1915)

*Der Golem und die Tänzerin* (Paul Wegener, Germany, 1917)

*Häxan: Witchcraft through the Ages* (Benjamin Christensen, Denmark, 1922)

*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Wallace Worsley, USA, 1923)

*Inside Daisy Clover* (Robert Mulligan, USA, 1965)

*Jane Eyre* (Robert Stevenson, USA, 1943)

*King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, USA, 1933)

*Der König ihres Herzens* (Ludwig Trautmann, Germany, 1917-18)

*König Ludwig II., ein königlicher Sonderling* (Otto Kreisler, Austria, 1922)

*The Lodger* (John Brahm, USA, 1944)

*Ludwig* (Luchino Visconti, Germany/Italy/France, 1972)

*Ludwig der Zweite, König von Bayern (Die Tragödie eines unglücklichen Menschen)*  
(Wilhelm Dieterle, Germany, 1930)

*Ludwig der Zweite, König von Bayern, oder Das Schweigen am Starnberger See* (Rolf Raffé, Germany, 1920)

*Ludwig II.* (Marie Noelle and Peter Sehr, Germany/Austria, 2012)

*Ludwig II., Requiem für einen jungfräulichen König* (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1972)

*M* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1931)

*Magic Fire. The Story of Richard Wagner* (William Dieterle, USA/Germany, 1954-55)

*Le Manoir du diable* (Georges Méliès, France, 1896-97)

*The Mummy* (Karl Freund, USA, 1932)

*The Musketeers of Pig Alley* (D. W. Griffith, USA, 1912)

*Die Nibelungen: Siegfried* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1924)

*Parsifal* (Hans Jürgen Syberberg, Germany, 1982)

*La Petite Marchande d'allumettes* (Jean Renoir, France, 1928)

*The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, USA, 1925)

*Le Pont des Arts* (Eugène Green, France, 2003)

*The Prodigal Son (L'Enfant prodigue)* (Michel Carré, France, 1907)

*The Razor's Edge* (Edmund Goulding, USA, 1946)

*Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954)

*Schloß Vogeloed* (F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1921)

*Stenka Razin* (Vladimir Romashkov, Russia, 1908)

*La Tendre Ennemie* (Max Ophüls, France, 1936)

*The Testament of Dr Mabuse (Dr Mabuse, der Spieler - Ein Bild der Zeit)* (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1933)

*Under Capricorn* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1949)

*Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* (Leo Birinsky and Paul Leni, Germany, 1924)

*What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, USA, 1962)

*The Woman on the Beach* (Jean Renoir, USA, 1947)

*Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, USA, 1974)

### **Documentaries**

*The Movies Begin: A Treasure of Early Cinema, 1894-1913* (Dave Shepard, Film Preservation Associates, British Film Institute, Kino International Corporation, 2002)

### **Television**

*The Addams Family* (various, USA, 1964-1966)

*The New Addams Family* (various, Canada, 1998-1999)

### **Other Films**

(The following titles are not mentioned in the thesis, but constitute a relevant part of the research process)

*Abismos de Pasión* (Luis Buñuel, Spain, 1954)

*L'Âge d'or* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1930)

*Amor de Perdição* (António Lopes Ribeiro, Portugal, 1943)

*Betty in Blunderland*, (Dave Fleischer, USA, 1934)

*The Bishop's Wife* (Henry Koster, USA, 1947)

*Blithe Spirit* (David Lean, UK, 1945)

*Bluebeard* (Edgar G. Ulmer, USA, 1944)

*Breathless (À bout de souffle)* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1959)

*The Dark Mirror* (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1946)

*A Double Life* (George Cukor, USA, 1947)

*Dracula* (Terence Fisher, UK, 1958)

*Dreams That Money Can Buy* (Hans Richter, USA, 1947)

*Experiment Perilous* (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1944)

*The Fall of the House of Usher* (J.S. Watson Jr and Melville Webber, USA, 1928)

*Frei Luís de Sousa* (António Lopes Ribeiro, Portugal, 1950)

*The Ghost goes West* (René Clair, USA, 1935)

*Le Golem* (Julien Duvivier, France, 1936)

*Hoffmanns Erzählungen* (Max Neufeld, Austria, 1923)

*Hoffmanns Erzählungen* (Richard Oswald, Germany, 1916)

*I Married a Witch* (René Clair, USA, 1942)

*Inês de Castro* (José Leitão de Barros and Manuel Augusto García Viñolas, Portugal/Spain, 1944)

*The Invisible Man* (James Whale, USA, 1933)

*Journey into Fear* (Norman Foster, USA, 1943)

*Leaves out of the Book of Satan* (Carl T. Dreyer, Denmark, 1921)

*Lola Montès* (Max Ophüls, France/ West Germany, 1955)

*Mad Love* (Karl Freund, USA, 1935)

*A Matter of Life and Death* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1946)

*Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid, USA, 1943)

*Murders in the Rue Morgue* (Robert Florey, USA, 1932)

*Notre-Dame de Paris* (Albert Capellani, France, 1911)

*The Penalty* (Wallace Worsley, USA, 1920)

*Phantom* (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1922)

*Phantom of the Opera* (Arthur Lubin, USA, 1943)

*The Private Affairs of Bel Ami* (Albert Lewin, USA, 1947)

*Pursued* (Raoul Walsh, USA, 1947)

*The Raven* (Lew Landers, USA, 1935)

*The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1948)

*Le Royaume des fées* (Georges Méliès, France, 1903)

*Le Sang d'un poète* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1930)

*Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1958)

*Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1945)

*Spiral Staircase* (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1945)

*A Stolen Life* (Curtis Bernhardt, USA, 1946)

*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (George King, UK, 1936)

*The Tales of Hoffmann* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, UK, 1951)

*Testament d'Orphée* (Jean Cocteau, France, 1960)

*Le Testament du docteur Cordelier* (Jean Renoir, France, 1959)

*The Two Mrs Carrolls* (Peter Godfrey, USA, 1947)

*I Vampiri* (Riccardo Freda, Italy, 1956)

*Les Visiteurs du soir* (Marcel Carné, France, 1942)

*The Woman in the Window* (Fritz Lang, USA, 1944)

*Les Yeux sans visage* (Georges Franju, France, 1959)

### **Other Documentaries**

*Au bonheur des dames, l'invention du grand magasin* (Christine Le Goff and Sally Aitken, France, 2011).

*Visions of Light: The Art of Cinematography* (Todd McCarthy, USA/Japan, 1992).

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