

It's Alive! Haunted Houses, Humans, and the Archive.

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Introduction

The haunted house seems to be as old as time itself. Though the literary haunted house did not make its official introduction until Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, references to houses being possessed or springing to life in some way can be traced back to a letter written by Pliny the Younger to his patron, Lucias Sura. In the letter, Pliny describes a villa in Athens that had a reputation for being haunted. The philosopher Athenodorus supposedly spent a night in the villa and upon falling asleep, was awoken by the ghost of an old man. Haunted House stories are filled to the brim with ghosts, poltergeists, or demons. In the gothic tradition, houses imprisoned women, having them locked up in some dungeon or attic by a wicked male relative. Occasionally though, the houses themselves haunt their inhabitants. These houses are described with human characteristics. Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* famously opens with the titular structure being described as "not sane." This imbuing of human traits onto a structure similarly occurs in the book of Leviticus within the Bible. Leviticus 14:33-54 describes the process for cleansing a house that is "diseased." The disease is described as leprosy – a human skin condition – which logically, would not be able to affect an intimate object such as the house. For some reason, there exists a persistent idea that a house can take on human qualities. This idea finds its most solid form within fiction, where the spirits of those once alive can haunt those who have wronged them. The sins of the past are absorbed by their spaces and the past manifests within the structure, terrifying protagonist and reader alike.

In his essay "Archive Fever," Jacques Derrida examines the origin of the word "archive." He explains that it comes from the Greek "arkheion," meaning house. More specifically though, it was the house where magistrates lived – the "archons." These were the citizens who "held and signified" political power and were considered to "possess the right to make or to represent the

law” (Derrida 9). Their houses were significant due to their being the spaces where official legal documents were sent. The role of these magistrates was to interpret the law – to take those legal documents and apply them to real life. They shaped the way in which justice was brought about, thus shaping the political landscape of ancient Greece. Perhaps, though, a magistrate misused their position. Instead of bringing about justice and truth with their interpretations of the law, their actions were corrupted and led to tragedy. An archivist plays a similar role in today’s society – what they put into their archives affects how people view history, which in turn affects politics.

This project will examine how the fictional haunted house and the non-fictional archive relate to one another, and how the actions taken by the archivist can lead to the creation of haunted structures within fiction. It is an examination of how deliberately erased history affects marginalized people and the pieces of literature that they author. As a response to these erasures, writers like Toni Morrison and Carmen Maria Machado seek to reconstruct a historical past that has been hidden from them due to actions of an archivist. Morrison does this through fiction with her novel *Beloved* while Machado turns to memoir through her book *In the Dream House*. Additionally, Morrison’s essay “The Site of Memory” offers us insight into how history can be sanitized by the marginalized for the goal of appealing to the public in order to bring about political progress. To dissect the idea of a haunted house, I will be analyzing Sigmund Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” and Anthony Vidler’s *The Architectural Uncanny*. My main sources for my discussion of the archive come from *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory*, which is a collection of essays by a diverse group of archivists and historians that seek to dissect the relationship society and human beings have with the all-important, ever present archive.

Chapter One: The Uncanny House

Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny" serves as the base for every ghost story within literature. This may seem like a dramatic generalization, but the formula that he establishes within "The Uncanny" is perfect for setting the foundation of the literary haunted house. In his essay, Freud breaks down the definition of the word "uncanny" in the German language. The word, "unheimlich," stems from the word "heimlich," which means "familiar," "native" and "belonging to the home" (Freud 3). Therefore, one can conclude that the uncanny is what is not familiar to someone. However, Freud notes that "unheimlich" is also used to describe sensations and events that take place within the familiar as well. More specifically, it is used to describe the transformation from something "familiar" to "unheimlich." The uncanny is then determined by Freud to be a sensation that makes the familiar, unfamiliar. This transition into unfamiliarity comes from this familiar thing being hidden from or suppressed by an individual. When the hidden, familiar thing resurfaces, one is met with the feeling of uncanniness.

Within fiction, Freud points to spirits and ghosts as the most common uncanny manifestations. However, the uncanny can manifest through other things as well. In his analysis of E.T.A Hoffman's short story *The Sand-Man*, Freud points to the relationship between the protagonist, Nathaniel, and the lawyer Coppelius, whom Nathaniel associates with the mythical being of the Sand-Man. Nathaniel first learns of The Sand-Man through his mother's warnings as she puts him to bed. His curiosity about this mysterious being leads him to ask his nurse about it. His nurse then tells him a gruesome tale where she warns him that the Sand-Man throws sand in the eyes of children, which causes their eyes to fall out. Nathaniel is shaken by this story but is curious to find out what the Sand-Man looks like. He finds his avatar in the lawyer Coppelius, a friend of his father. Nathaniel comes to associate Coppelius with the Sand-Man, and the two

seem to merge into one being within the narrative. One night, Nathaniel eavesdrops in on a conversation between his father and Coppelius. As Coppelius and Nathaniel's father sit by the fire together, Nathaniel hears the lawyer call out "Here with your eyes!" Upon hearing this, Nathaniel screams. Coppelius grabs him and almost drops hot pieces of coal onto Nathaniel's eyes before he is saved by his father.

Freud connects Nathaniel's fear of losing his eyes to his own personal theory of castration anxiety. The theory revolves around a male child developing an unconscious fear that he will be castrated by his father. So, when Nathaniel is worried about his eyes being stolen by the Sandman, he is subconsciously worried about being castrated. His old, forgotten anxiety comes back in the form of The Sand-Man, who seeks to do the very thing Nathaniel fears. The uncanny thing – the fear of the action of blinding/castration resurfacing - is represented by Coppelius/The Sand-Man. This character is thus an accumulation of something uncanny, which is Nathaniel's forgotten fear of castration. He as an entity is the forgotten fear that Nathaniel holds within himself. Despite Freud's insistence that the uncanniness of the Sand-Man lies within the emergence of the castration complex, there is a re-emergence of the familiar that, in my opinion, is much more obvious. The Sand-Man takes on a third identity in the form of Giuseppe Coppola, an eye doctor that Nathaniel meets years after the events of his childhood. In Coppola he is reminded of Coppelius/Sand-Man. Freud describes Nathaniel's meeting with Coppola as him recognizing his "childhood's phantom of horror" within the eye doctor. The memory of Coppelius/The Sand-Man therefore manifests itself in Coppola, bringing with it the memory of the traumatic event from his childhood. Therefore, Coppola serves as a sort of vehicle for the memory of the event itself.

Through reading Freud's *Uncanny*, we can argue that uncanniness inheres in memory, return, and recall. The etymology of the word seems to place the reversal of the familiar / heimlich into the unfamiliar / unheimlich in the home; homeliness turns into the unhomely as the familiar becomes the unfamiliar. The etymological emphasis on the home prompts me to frame my discussion of haunted houses with Freud's theory. In a haunted house story, the uncanny takes the form of an entity of some kind. This entity can be the traditional ghost or it can be something else entirely. Gina Whisker points to the ripping apart of the house's structure as an accumulation of the uncanny in her article "Honey, I'm home!" Splintering the Fabrication in Domestic Horror." Whisker uses the example of *The Shining*, the 1980 film directed by Stanley Kubrick. In one of the film's most iconic scenes, blood erupts from the elevators and halls of the Overlook, the isolated hotel where Jack Torrance, his wife Wendy, and his son Danny are living during the winter. Whisker argues that this "eruption" in the physical space of the Overlook mirrors the disturbance of the family dynamic of the Torrance's. The scene occurs towards the end of the film after Jack, who is slowly being possessed by the ghosts of the Overlook throughout the film, fully submits himself to the spirits and tries to kill Wendy and Danny. His full possession is the return of the forgotten coming back to the forefront. The "erupting and splitting" of the Overlook that takes place during the elevator scene is a visual indication of this uncanniness – something has burst through the barrier of being forgotten, and it makes itself known both by possessing Jack and by physical manifestation.

While we are able to follow the effect and consequences of a house being haunted, there are still some important questions that need to be answered: how does a house become haunted in the first place? What places the ghost in the house? Why / How does the house become the receptacle of the particular residue that haunts it? We understand that the uncanny can be

represented by a being of some kind, but how does the being come to be in the home? The answers lie in the introduction to a series of essays written by Anthony Vidler in his book *The Architectural Uncanny*. Vidler claims that there is no such thing as an uncanny house – not by itself, anyway. His reasoning for this is fascinating.

The “uncanny” is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial conformation; it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming.

(Vidler 11)

Nothing, Vidler explains, can force a structure to be uncanny. There is no design, no form of construction that causes a house to feel haunted. Instead, it is the projection of the mental state of a person onto the home. If a person projects something uncanny onto a space, then that space becomes uncanny. In terms of a haunted house, an occupant is thus responsible for the uncanny feeling taken on by the structure. Therefore, they are also responsible for the manifestations that are the accumulations of the uncanniness that they project. There is a reason a house is haunted, and it is due to human interaction.

When combining Freud’s theories on the uncanny and Vidler’s ideas on how the uncanny can affect space, the formula for a haunted house is as follows:

- 1.) Someone is in a space.
- 2.) That person projects an uncanniness onto the space. Usually, this uncanniness is a repressed or forgotten memory.
- 3.) That uncanny projection makes the space uncanny.

4.) The uncanniness accumulates into a haunting – it can be a ghost, a demon, or even the house itself. It reflects the uncanny thing projected onto the space, and its emergence in the narrative reflects this.

An uncanny house is not necessarily a haunted house, but haunted houses come about due to uncanny feelings. Therefore, all haunted houses are uncanny by nature – it is the very core of their being. There is always something returning in the haunted house. It is up to the author to decide what that something is and how it will manifest.

Chapter Two: The Archive

From 2000 to 2001, the Advanced Studies Center of the International Institute of the University of Michigan held a yearlong Sawyer Seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss the archive and, among other things, the relationship the archive has with the way “societies remember their pasts” (vii). In the preface to *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, editors Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg discuss the presentations, conversations, and debates undertaken by the attendees of the seminar. The seminar’s point of departure for discussion was that archives transcend the simple definition of historical repositories. Archives are instead “a complex of structures, processes, and epistemologies situated at a critical point of intersection between scholarship, cultural practices, politics, and technologies” (vii). Most interesting, though, is the way the attendees of the Sawyer Seminar defined the spatial boundaries of the archive. Blouin Jr. and Rosenberg state that the seminar proposed that the archive “be thought of as a place, whether or not it has an institutional form and whether or not it is organized and maintained by the state, public or private groups and associations, or individuals” (vii). It is a very logical definition, as well as a freeing one – by defining the space of the archive as separate from the state or an institution, it frees it from its oppressive past and puts the information back into the hands of the people. Blouin Jr. and Rosenberg further develop their definition, stating that at its core, “an archive is a place where complex processes of “remembering” occur, creating and recreating certain kinds of social knowledge” (vii). Blouin Jr. and Rosenberg place an emphasis on the word “remembering” by putting it in quotations. The reasoning behind this, they explain, is that the type of remembering that occurs in an archive is not brought upon simply by having access to documents, but rather comes about through the acts of acquisition, classification, and

preservation. Through this process, archives provide visitors with a “mix of materials,” orderly or otherwise, through which “particular forms of individual and social understanding are structured and produced” (vii). In other words, what makes the process of remembering occur in an archive is the actions and the methods of the archivist. By the definitions of the archive agreed upon by the attendees of the Sawyer Seminar, an archive ceases to be an archive without the process of remembering occurring, which in turn cannot occur without the actions taken by the archivist. Thus, an archive’s very existence is dependent on human interaction. This relationship causes the archive to become a dynamic rather than a stagnant entity. Since the process of remembering has been made possible by the archivist, the process is then accessible to the public - with each visitor to the archive the process of remembering occurs, setting the archive into motion again. In a way, a visitor resurrects the past written in the documents filed away in the archive. Something springs back to life due to the simple act of remembering – even if the individual was not the original source of the memory itself.

As a result of these definitions, we see that the archive is less of a solid structure and more of an idea. To be an archive, something must be 1.) a space, 2.) a collection organized and maintained by someone or something (i.e., an institution), and 3.) an entity with a direct relationship with a human being to contain the all-important process of “remembering.” However, Blouin Jr. and Rosenberg wisely point out that there is one more thing that can define an archive, and that is what they term the “silences in the archive” (viii). Upon their mention of these silences, they offer up yet another definition for the archive: “Archives are thus spatially bounded as places of uncovering and re-covering, as sites of concealment and suppression as well as of the expression, projection, and revelation of individual and social pasts and futures” (viii).

In his essay “Archives, Heritage, and History,” David Lowenthal discusses the unwarranted praise previously given to archives as “reliable repositories of truth” (Lowenthal 193). He explains that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, archives were viewed as accurate depictions of history, promising an “authentic, untampered-with past” (193). Lowenthal’s points about the archive assume that the archive provided a perfect access to the past. If we accept Lowenthal’s assumption, we accept that an archive’s only purpose was to collect and organize documents – real, historical documents – that would mean that the archive was an unedited, pure version of history. This idea is dangerous. It fails to acknowledge that the creation of an archive involves an archivist taking on the role of judge, jury, and executioner, and that the archivist’s personal biases can severely taint their judgement. As stated earlier, this may leave whole histories and lived experiences out from the general historical consciousness.

Why would someone deliberately leave something out of the archive? According to Eric Ketelaar, “there is no power without archives” (Ketelaar 144). In his essay “The Panoptical Archive,” Ketelaar links the modern archive to the rise of the nation-state and bureaucratic practice to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon. The panopticon was a design for a prison where inmates were kept under constant surveillance by guards in a singular watch tower fixed in the center of the structure. However, the main point of the design was so that the prisoners could not see the actual guards in the tower and would thus have to live under the assumption that someone *could* be watching them at all times. The idea of the panopticon spans beyond architecture. Ketelaar goes on to explain Foucault’s ideas on the panopticon and society. Under “panopticism,” power lies in a government’s ability to supervise its citizens. The more a government supervises, the more information they have on an individual. This information is then filed away to be potentially used for some purpose. The power does not necessarily come

from the collection of the object, but rather the potential the information has. This is a bleak, depressing concept, but Ketelaar turns it around. He points out that while records are instruments of power and can be used for malicious purposes, those same records can become “instruments of empowerment and liberation, salvation and freedom” (145). He uses Nazi Germany’s obsession with record keeping as an example of this switch happening in real life. While the Nazi’s extensive records were used to oppress marginalized communities, they were, and still are, “an excellent source for restitution and reparation” (145). Descendants of victims of the holocaust are able to reclaim items, such as art or diamonds that were stolen from their families years ago. Likewise, the Australian churches’ missionary societies and their extensive record keeping allowed Aboriginal people to be reunited with long lost family members. Access to the archive, Ketelaar argues, is a matter of human rights – when a person wronged by the ruling power has access to the documents that recorded the wrongs committed against them, one has an opportunity to demand those wrongs be righted. Access to these histories is just as important as “the right to life, liberty, and security of person and property; freedom from slavery, torture, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; and the freedom from any kind of discrimination” (146). When one confronts the past, there is a possibility of restoration. There is power in extensive record keeping, and that power is even more impactful when it is in the hands of the oppressed.

Just because an oppressive archive can be reclaimed, however, does not mean that the archive simply *becomes* reclaimed. When stepping into the archive, the responsibility lies in the hands of the archivist. Ketelaar places emphasis on this responsibility. He muses over the roles an archivist can take in the archive. Will they serve their role as “priest, as guard, as guardian? As accomplice of oppression and torture? As friend of liberation and justice? As warden of a temple

sanctuary or a stark prison? As purveyor or withholder of knowledge-power?" (148). The choice is up to them and them alone. By cultivating records of the past, the archivist chooses how the past will affect the future.

The relationship between archivist and archive is important. Hartman and Ketelaar link the power of the archivist to the consequences of erasing and/or maintaining history. Blouin Jr., Rosenberg, and the attendees of the Sawyer Seminar place the act of remembering within the archive on the actions of the archivist. However, the quotation that I have found most relevant to this project and that links these two ideas together is from the essay "Archives: Particles of Memory or More?" by Joan van Albada. In his essay, van Albada explores the role memory plays within the archive. He recounts his process for naming his essay, in which he decided to look up the definition of memory in the 1970 International edition of the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary. He comes across several definitions:

1. The mental process or faculty of representing in consciousness an act, experience, or impression, with recognition that it belongs to time past.
2. The experiences of the mind taken in the aggregate and considered as influencing present and future behavior.
3. The accuracy and ease with which a person can retain and recall past experiences.
4. That which is remembered, as an act, event, person, or thing.
5. The period of time covered by the faculty of remembrance: beyond the memory of man.

6. The state of being remembered, posthumous reputation: The memory of Washington will endure.

7. That which reminds; a memorial; a memento. (van Albada 216)

Van Albada hypothesizes that the definition of memory that people may apply to the archives is the last one: “That which reminds; a memorial; a memento.” This, he claims, is due to the static way in which archives are viewed. It makes sense – archives are, after all, locations where documents are held. However, van Albada does not view archives in such a static way.

Archives to me represent a kind of living organism, growing, breathing, suffering, enjoying, an organism with which one can communicate, an organism that can be belittled, burned, falsified, nurtured, exploited, used, and abused. However, this organism is not an organism in its own right; the organism reflects us-the archivist, the administrator, the records manager, the family, the politician, the owner, and the thief, the corrupted ones and those who will be corrupted. Therefore I have come to the conclusion that the memory in this essay title refers to all seven explanations and to the synonyms and antonyms together. (217)

The way van Albada views archives – the way Ketelaar views the archive combined with how Blouin Jr., Rosenberg, and the attendees of the Sawyer Seminar view them – naturally gives the archive the traits of a “living organism.” If the archive reflects the archivist, and if the archive is imbued with the process of remembering/memory due to the relationship with the archivist, *and* if the archive is always “growing” due to the influence of the archivist, then it feels only natural for it to be described as a living being with human characteristics. Through van Albada’s view

and his acceptance of all definitions, the archive transcends an old, dusty room filled to the brim with filing cabinets. It becomes an entirely separate, living thing.

These definitions of the archive are similar to Freud and Vidler's ideas on the sensation of uncanniness. The silences in the archive – the absence of a recorded history – is a part of what defines it. Archives are spaces where history is both suppressed and expressed, where certain sensations are projected onto the space due to the actions of the archivist, and where the archive fully reflects the archivist. Just as a house becomes uncanny due to the projections from the inhabitant, an archive can retain uncanniness if the archivist projects uncanniness onto it. And if these silences are a part of what makes an archive, then the archive itself is a type of uncanny space. It can be the uncanny “house of the magistrate.”

Tragically, that left out information can lead to the erasure of entire histories. Eric Ketelaar's ideas about archives being reclaimed by the marginalized are helpful only to those who had their history recorded in the first place. One cannot reclaim the oppressive archive if one was not in the archive to begin with. Of course, due to the broad definition of an archive, an archive can exist in different forms. As long as there is a space, a collection of some sort maintained by someone, and an archivist to imbue memory onto the space, an archive exists. This takes power away from oppressive institutions who may erase certain histories for their own benefit. Individuals have the ability to create their own archives, thus putting power back into the hands of the oppressed by maintaining their own histories. But as Ketelaar points out, this does not mean that an archive is automatically reclaimed. What matters is who the archivist is and their intention for their archive. A marginalized archivist could also choose to deliberately leave out bits of their own history. This leaves us with a frustrating cycle of deliberate suppression without the satisfying burst of uncanniness that comes with history's reemergence.

Once a history is not recorded, it is completely and totally lost. There is no chance to go back and retrieve it – something left out from the archive is gone forever. This is especially relevant when recording the experiences of individuals. Once that person dies, their entire consciousness is suddenly unobtainable. Memories and experiences that could have contributed to the public's understanding of history never get the chance to do so. Though these consciousness are lost, fiction gives authors the opportunity to recreate an individual's history. Toni Morrison uses this idea in her novel *Beloved*, and further discusses the issue of deliberately suppressed experiences in autobiography through her essay "The Site of Memory." *Beloved* is a story about a haunted house – a space where something suppressed has reemerged physically – as well as a story that seeks to give a voice to the silences that haunt the archive.

Chapter Three: Toni Morrison on *Beloved* and Self-Sanitization

In her essay “The Site of Memory,” Toni Morrison examines the relationship between memoir and fiction writing. Morrison explains that her act of writing fiction is built from trying to access the interior life of her subjects. These interior lives are imagined by her and built off of “remains.” These remains are things left over – the residue, so to speak – of events or people. These remains (which she also refers to as images) are not physical; they are bits of memories connected to a physical person or place. These memories can be as small or as large as needed, ranging from the recollection of a single person to the vastness of an entire day; what is important is not the memory itself, but rather the feelings it invokes within those who are recollecting it. Morrison explains how she uses these bits of memories and the feelings they invoke within her to write fiction. She calls this process a form of “literary archeology,” and describes that once you travel to the “site” where they are located and unearth them, you can then “reconstruct the world that these remains imply” (Morrison 98). To put it in other words, this “reconstruction” is filling in the blanks of history with a fictional narrative to create a complete story, and the site it is making this happen is memory itself.

Notably, Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, is written during the same period that “The Site of Memory” was published. She discusses the novel in the essay and explains how her process for writing is tracking an image (which for my own purposes I will be calling a “fragment”) and turning it into a story by the aforementioned filling in the blanks method. The fragment Morrison builds from is a newspaper article originally published in 1856 by the *Cincinnati Gazette* titled “Arrest of Fugitive Slaves: A Slave Mother Murders her Child rather than see it Returned to Slavery.” The article recounts an event in which Margaret Garner, an escaped slave, killed her young daughter as the owner of the plantation that Garner escaped from and U.S. Marshalls

surrounded the house she was staying in, threatening to bring her and her family back to the plantation in Kentucky. Morrison came across this article in *The Black Book*, a book she published while employed at Random House. She writes in the foreword to *Beloved* that she wanted to write a novel about what “free” meant to women – especially Black American women – and that Garner’s story was the perfect site for her to build upon.

I would invent [Margaret Garner’s] thoughts, plumb them for a subtext that was historically true in essence, but not strictly factual in order to relate her history to contemporary issues about freedom, responsibility, and women’s “place.” The heroine would represent the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom. The terrain, slavery, was formidable and pathless. To invite readers (and myself) into the repellant landscape (hidden, but not completely; deliberately buried, but not forgotten) was to pitch a tent in a cemetery inhabited by highly vocal ghosts. (3)

The very nature of *Beloved* is rooted in the idea of uncanny; something that was once familiar comes back, and the reappearance of this thing produces the feeling of uncanniness. Through the return of *Beloved* Morrison submits the history of American slavery into the uncanny canon. The words she uses in her foreword to describe it – “hidden, but not completely; deliberately buried, but not forgotten” – is reminiscent of how Freud discusses the sensation of uncanniness. By writing *Beloved*, Morrison takes on the role of a necromancer; she resurrects the past, weaving it into a fictional story to create a narrative that combines a historical uncanniness with a fictional uncanniness. Most important to *Beloved* is the act of remembering a traumatic past and history. The novel is an observation in how memory exists and the spaces it exists in. Sethe, while physically haunted by the ghost of her dead daughter, is simultaneously haunted by the *memory*

of her daughter, as well as the traumatic events that led up to her death in the haunted space that is 124 Bluestone Road. Beloved as a character is so much more than a dead child; she is the accumulation of Sethe's trauma, and her journey into physicality is what leads Sethe to at first her downfall, and then her salvation.

Beloved is a novel obsessed with the act of remembering. The narrative weaves in and out of the present as a character remembers a certain event, taking the reader with them as they do so. With this act of remembrance comes a character who seems to be made of memory itself: Beloved. She is the uncanny manifestation that haunts the house at the center of the novel. We are first introduced to Beloved as a spirit haunting 124 Blue Stone Road. She exists incorporeally – the family is haunted by a ghost and her scattered actions of haunting. Her spirit is heard climbing up the flight of stairs; her handprints appear on a cake. In a more violent action, the spirit of Beloved throws the family dog, Here Boy, into a wall. For most of the family's stay at 124, Beloved is a fragment. In fact, she is not even given a name. She is instead referred to as a "ghost" or "the baby." The non-physicality of Beloved resembles the hauntings in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. Like Hill House, 124 is described at first with human characteristics – it is "spiteful," for example, and the house is described as performing certain actions such as "listening" and "waiting." Similarly, Denver regards 124 as "a person rather than a structure" (28). Also like Hill House, we see that the hauntings of the structure are connected to a single individual. Andrew Hock Soon Ng connects the paranormal activity in 124 to Sethe perfectly in his article "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Space, Architecture, Trauma." He begins first by analyzing the moment when Paul D first arrives at 124. He insightfully connects the ghost's reaction to Paul D's suggestion that Sethe and Denver move out of 124 to Sethe's own feelings about moving and house ownership, which the house reflects in its actions when it "pitches"

(Morrison 18). The haunting is therefore “a refraction of Sethe being there” (Soon Ng 234). Soon Ng then analyzes the way in which Morrison describes the hauntings with human characteristics, focusing on a scene towards the beginning of the novel where Denver watches Sethe interact with the spirit through a window. The spirit takes on the form of a white dress, kneeling beside Sethe and wrapping its arms around her waist while she prays. Denver, who the narrative has described as viewing 124 as a “person rather than a structure” in the same paragraph, once again compares the spirit of 124 to a human, observing that “The dress and her mother together looked like two friendly grown-up women—one (the dress) helping out the other” (Morrison 29). Soon Ng points out that 124 seems to jump from haunting the entire house to only Sethe, and that it “permeates the entire architecture to culminate in a haunting” (Soon Ng, 234). The spirit of 124 being connected to Sethe is pivotal to the aliveness of the house and later the physical manifestation of Beloved. 124, with its human characteristics and actions directed at Sethe, is then connected to Sethe’s memories.

Beloved is the novel’s most compelling articulation of memory. To understand Beloved and her physical manifestation, one must first understand the events leading up to her resurgence. The entrance of Paul D into the narrative is what sets the rest of the events of the novel into motion, and what he represents is why Beloved appears the way that she does. Paul D represents a potential future for Sethe and Denver, a moving on from the past and from memory. His first action upon entering 124 is to exorcise the ghost that has been haunting it – he literally rebukes the past in order to usher in the future. It is with Paul D that Sethe and Denver go on their first outing since the death of Beloved to the fair. Paul D is the potential to start over – him telling Sethe that he wants to start a family with her is a fantastic example of this. Beloved’s entrance into the narrative comes directly after the scene at the fair – in fact, she is sitting on the steps

waiting for the family to arrive back home. One could read Beloved's physical entrance into the narrative as I first did: Beloved, not wanting to be moved on from, becomes physical in order to engulf Sethe into herself, therefore engulfing her into memory. She sees Paul D and what Paul D represents as a threat to their haunting/haunted relationship, hence her emergence after the outing to the fair, as the fair teases Sethe and Denver's reentrance into society. However, to assign complete malevolence to Beloved would also suggest that the resurgence of traumatic memory is always a terrible thing when, ultimately, the resurgence of memory is what contributes to Sethe and Denver's healing. Soon Ng explains this best in his article.

Paul D's arrival may signify promise for Sethe, but it does not guarantee her escape from trauma as long as she is unwilling to confront her past. As she solemnly declares to Paul D, her future lies "in keeping the past at bay" (42). Beloved's recurrence, this time as flesh, provides the needed catalyst to compel Sethe into admitting her repressed memory, something which 124 has failed to accomplish in the last eighteen years because Sethe has persistently ignored and misrecognized the significance of its haunting. The house wants her (and by extension, even Paul D and Denver) to face her trauma, but she conscientiously refuses; in the process, she gradually contributes to the annihilation of her history, and inevitably herself and Denver. Paul D's arrival, however, sets the house in concentrated motion: it will henceforth focus all its energy into an embodiment of trauma—the figure of a young woman—that Sethe, Denver, and Paul D cannot deny. (Soon Ng 239)

As we established in the previous section, the uncanny manifestation that appears in a haunted structure can take on a variety of forms. Beloved is that very manifestation. Soon Ng connects

Beloved to Sethe's memory, and her entrance into the narrative is the repressed coming back to light. Through Beloved, Sethe is able to confront her repressed memory directly.

Despite her becoming a physical being, Beloved is unable to assist in Sethe's healing as Sethe does not seem to understand what Beloved truly *is*. She does not confront Beloved. Rather, Sethe submits herself to the vastness of her memory. Upon her submitting herself to Beloved, Sethe also submits herself to the memory of guilt, as that (understandably) seems to be the most prominent emotion associated with Beloved's murder. Beloved quite notably tortures Sethe by forcing her to recount events of the past, bringing up her murder over and over again, which Sethe attempts to repent for.

Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons: that Beloved was more important, meant more to her than her own life. That she would trade places any day. Give up her life, every minute and hour of it, to take back just one of Beloved's tears. Did she know it hurt her when mosquitoes bit her baby? That to leave her on the ground to run into the big house drove her crazy? That before leaving Sweet Home Beloved slept every night on her chest or curled on her back? Beloved denied it. (216)

Instead of helping her heal, Beloved's physicality and association with her murdered child forces Sethe to reach back into memory, which in turn forces her to confront the feelings associated with those memories, which then causes her to be locked in a vicious cycle of remembrance. The problem is that Sethe is bearing the weight of the memory by herself, and her isolation from the surrounding community contributes to her engulfment.

Despite the thing haunting it becoming physical, 124 remains a haunted structure. Upon her realization that Beloved is her dead daughter, Sethe begins to spend more time in the house. We

are told that she begins arriving to work later and later, eventually getting fired, which in turn allows her to not have to leave 124 at all. It is during this time that Sethe falls deeper into the clutches of Beloved. Presumably, Beloved's resurrection would have taken away from the house's ability to oppress those within it. However, the two go hand-in-hand. Beloved is Sethe's memories personified, and 124 is the structure that holds those memories. So, what is the significance of 124 Bluestone Road? Why is the structure tied to Beloved and her memory? The simple (and boring) answer would be "it's a ghost story and it is following the tropes of the genre." However, the *better* answer comes from Morrison herself; While Beloved is *the* memory, 124 is the *site* of memory. 124 contains that "interior life" that Morrison is so fascinated by in her essay. The structure of 124, thus acts as an oppressive force, trapping Sethe in with her own memory, forcing her to confront what she has repressed. Soon Ng also discusses the alive-ness of spaces in his article, where he draws upon Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny*. He explains what we have established previously - that through Vidler's view of viewing spaces as uncanny, it is not the structure that is uncanny, but rather the feelings projected onto it that make it uncanny. The house itself as a holder of memory cannot spring to life without someone assigning memory to the space, as the inhabitant of the space "projects her own uncanny onto the lived space, which in turn, harbors it as a constant presence that discomfits her" (Soon Ng 253). Therefore, uncanniness is not necessarily an externally influenced sensation that brings repressed feelings to light but is rather an internal sensation that can be separated from the self and projected onto an area, thus having an uncanny feeling take on an almost symbiotic relationship – the self and the area are always locked in an endless cycle of uncanniness. Soon Ng takes Vidler's idea and applies it to *Beloved*, using the idea of a symbiotic relationship and applying it to Beloved, Sethe, and 124 Bluestone Road. Sethe is the host of memories, and 124 is the

uncanny space she projects those feelings onto. The physical manifestation of those memories is Beloved, whom both Sethe and 124 are a host to. The three of them operate as one unit yet are completely separate from each other. Therefore, the uncanniness of the haunted 124 can transcend a single space – Sethe’s memories themselves are uncanny. Sethe’s engulfment into the structure is thus her engulfment into memory itself.

If the thing haunting 124 is Sethe’s memories, would not the narrative want her to move away from the structure as soon as possible? The goal of the haunted house story is to separate the individual from the structure, as it can be assumed that once someone is free from the structure, one is also free from the hauntings associated with it. We see this in Shirley Jackson’s novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. Eleanor Vance’s potential salvation from Hill House is tied to her leaving the physical space. It is assumed by Dr. Montague, the professor running the experiment that Eleanor is a participant in, that once Eleanor leaves her relationship to the house will be severed. Eleanor seems to understand this as well, hence her deciding to commit suicide instead of leaving Hill House entirely. Morrison, however, like Soon Ng, understands that the power of memory transcends the need for physical space. 124 is a site of memory, yes, but so is Sethe herself. Morrison address her own ideas about the alive-ness of spaces in a conversation between Sethe and Denver.

"I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place--the picture of it--stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside

my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."

"Can other people see it?" asked Denver.

"Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm--every tree and grass blade of it dies.

The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there--you who never was there--if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over--over and done with--it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what."

Denver picked at her fingernails. "If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies."

Sethe looked right in Denver's face. "Nothing ever does," she said. (35)

The "picture" Sethe refers to is similar to Morrison's images. Despite the physical space of Sweet Home being different from when Sethe lived there, the memory of what happened there remains. Sethe implies that it is the same for all physical spaces -anyone can stumble into the residue of a memory at any time. To Morrison, both people and physical places are conduits of memory - both contain that rich interior life she speaks of. Both house fragments of memory. Both, it seems, are alive. As Morrison describes a physical structure holding memory, she also

describes Sethe's relationship to her own memories. As Denver says, "nothing ever dies" because humans are monuments to memory. At any time someone can "bump into" their own memory within *themselves*. 124 and *Beloved* represent an encounter with Sethe's traumatic past. She confronts her trauma head on *as* a monument to memory *in* a monument to memory.

We cannot continue to discuss *Beloved* and its connection with "The Site of Memory" without acknowledging the reason why Morrison seeks to fill in the blanks of history through fiction. In her essay published in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, a collection of essays on the art of memoir and autobiography. Morrison begins by acknowledging that her contribution to the journal may seem out of place due to her being a fiction writer, but that the relationship between memoir and fiction is closer than one may think – there are places where these two crafts "embrace and where that embrace is symbiotic" (Morrison 85). In fact, a large part of Morrison's literary heritage is rooted in the autobiographical narrative. She explains that Black American literature began its history with the slave narrative – autobiographies and memoirs that were written to say two things:

One: "This is my historical life - my singular, special example that is personal, but that also represents the race." Two: "I write this text to persuade other people - you, the reader, who is probably not black - that we are human beings worthy of God's grace and the immediate abandonment of slavery." With these two missions in mind, the narratives were clearly pointed. (Morrison 86)

She examines Olaudah Equiano's memoir, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*. As stated by Equiano himself, his purpose for writing about his experiences was to "have the satisfaction of seeing the renovation of liberty and justice resting on the British government" and that he hoped and expected "the

attention of gentlemen of power” (87). Simply put by Morrison, Equiano wanted to use his writing to change things. And change things he did. Morrison explains that Equiano and his colleagues laid way to social change through their writing, giving “fuel to the fires that abolitionists were setting everywhere” (87). These personal narratives not only provided a real life look into the horrors of slavery, but they also displayed the intelligence of the writer. Black writers had to fight against the movement of scientific racism. White political figures like Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson believed that Black people were incapable of intelligent thought. By writing a memoir or an autobiography, the Black author could prove that they were equally as intelligent to those in power. This, of course, meant that the Black writer of the memoir had the pressure of representing their entire race – if they could be seen as intelligent and worthy of empathy, then those who were still enslaved could be too. The public’s idea of slavery could be altered if they were exposed to these self-written accounts.

The public was receptive. The slave narrative was extremely popular with the public. Equiano’s book, for example, had thirty-six editions published between 1789 and 1850. Fredrick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* sold five thousand copies in four months. In order for these narratives to explode as they did, the authors had to be strategic in how they told their own, personal story. Morrison explains that slave narratives were often slammed by critics for being “biased” and “improbable.” Narratives that toned down the more graphic experiences of slavery were praised – Morrison quotes an 1836 review of Charles Bell’s *Life and Adventures of a Fugitive Slave*: “We rejoice in the book the more, because it is not a partisan work ... It broaches no theory in regard to [slavery], nor proposes any mode or time of emancipation” (88). Popular taste “discouraged the writers from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience” (90). The authors then omitted these

“sordid details” from their autobiographies, often acknowledging that terrible things did happen, yes, but that they would spare the reader the gruesome details. An appeal to popular taste was in turn an appeal to those in power, and those in power would potentially be able to advocate for the abolition of slavery. Thus, the author’s sanitization of their own history would lead to positive political change.

Morrison, however, is not willing to let the forgotten stay forgotten. She seeks to resurrect the dead the best way she knows how to: through fiction. By way of explaining her truth-telling resurrection, she quotes Lydia Maria Child in her introduction to Linda Brent’s story of sexual abuse. Child explains that she is aware that she may receive pushback from the public due to the intensity and delicacy of the subject. Child pushes that this aspect of slavery has been “kept veiled,” and that the public ought to “be made acquainted with its monstrous features, and [she is] willing to take the responsibility of presenting them with the veil drawn [aside]” (91). Morrison decides to get rid of the veil entirely.

For me - a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after Emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman - the exercise is very different. My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over "proceedings too terrible to relate." The exercise is also critical for any person who is black, or who belongs to any marginalized category, for, historically, we were seldom invited to participate in the discourse even when we were its topic. (Morrison 91)

Through fiction, Morrison seeks to reinvent the interior life of those who never had the opportunity to share it – an interior life that has been lost to the “the deliberate excising of it from the records that the slaves themselves told” (92). Her “filling in the blanks” method of writing comes about due to the historical practice of omission. She rejects the idea that things

that are lost should *stay* lost. Therefore, she combines historical event and historical individual with her imagined interior life. *Beloved* seeks to weave together a past that has been deliberately suppressed, and the uncanny, haunted house is the perfect setting for Morrison to explore this idea of suppression and memory confrontation. This project of truth-telling makes the character of Beloved all the more powerful; Sethe confronting her own personal trauma – her repressed interior life – in the form of the physical manifestation of Beloved is an important act when so many Black memoirists did not choose to do so in their own work. Earlier, I quoted a section from Morrison’s introduction to *Beloved* where she discusses finding inspiration for the novel through Margaret Garner, the protagonist Morrison imagined would transcend the historical figure through her invented interior life. She would represent “the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom” (4). By confronting Beloved, this is precisely what Sethe does.

We have reached a time in literary and political history where authors that belong to marginalized communities have decided to rebel against this idea of self-sanitization within memoir and autobiography. Carmen Maria Machado’s memoir *In the Dream House* specifically discusses the idea of sanitization in the archive, and how this practice led to her not having a history to look back on.

Chapter Four: Machado's In the Dream House

Carmen Maria Machado begins *In the Dream House* with a discussion on archive. She begins by talking about Saidiya Hartman's essay "Venus in Two Acts." In her essay, Hartman discusses the idea of the "violence of the archive" or "archival silence," pieces of history erased intentionally – or unintentionally – by those who have the power to control the historical narrative. These erasures leave gaps in the collective consciousness of society, leaving entire groups of people without a recorded collective history. Machado also discusses the etymology of the word archive as told by Jacques Derrida. As we know, Derrida states that the word archive comes from the ancient Greek "ἀρχεῖον" or "arkheion" which means "house of the magistrate" The word "house" stands out to Machado.

I was taken with the use of house (a lover of haunted house stories, I'm a sucker for architecture metaphors), but it is the power, the authority, that is the most telling element. What is placed in or left out of the archive is a political act, dictated by the archivist and the political context in which she lives. (Machado 4)

Houses and archives are the core of Machado's memoir. Her memoir, *In the Dream House*, centralizes the notion of the architecture of a relationship as it explores Machado's abusive relationship with another woman. Throughout the text she weaves in historical examples of queer domestic abuse, always emphasizing that the stories were hidden from the historical consciousness in the interest of constructing an acceptable, if sanitized, queer history. "Intimate violence" as Machado calls it in her preface, takes on forms that differ from what society is accustomed to. As more and more stories of domestic abuse resurface she finds that they involve victims and perpetrators that do not fit into the conventional idea of intimate violence; these

concepts “reveal [themselves] as another ghost that [have] always been here, haunting the ruler’s house” (6).

Machado understands that there is a specific relationship between space and memory, and she displays this understanding with the titling of her chapters. Each chapter begins with “Dream house as” and ends with a different word or phrase. “Dream house” is a “Perpetual Motion Machine,” a “Day Dream,” “Time Travel,” “Undead,” a “Choose Your Own Adventure,” and, of course, a “Haunted Mansion.” It is a million and one contradicting things, all assigned roles and titles by Machado herself. Each chapter is no more than a few pages and all chapters feel as if they are little snapshots of *something*, whether that something is a childhood memory, an episode of *Star Trek*, or a historical event. No chapter reads directly into the other, and they can stand alone as their own pieces. Yet, the only way for these chapters to have a full, emotional impact on the reader is to place them in a book – in one cognitive narrative space. All chapters then come together to form a greater narrative, an archive, which is the overarching story of Machado’s personal experience with queer domestic abuse, which in turn is a small part of the greater history of queer domestic abuse in lesbian relationships. In other words, Machado takes fragments and puts them together to form a story, or disconnected memories to form a coherent archive. She claims in her prologue that by writing her memoir she “[enters] into the archive,” but I think that she is participating in the archive by creating one. Machado’s role in her own memoir goes beyond being its author – she becomes an archivist. As Morrison used fiction to fill in the blanks of a lost interior life that history erased, Machado seeks to race against historical annihilation by refusing to be silent. She adds her own interior life – warts and all – to the queer canon through memoir.

In the chapter titled “Dream House as Queer Villainy” Machado says that she thinks a lot about queer villains and the “problem and pleasure and audacity of them” (46). She explains that she understands that she should think of them in a certain way; that queer villains serve as terrible representation and can alter the ways in which the public perceives queerness. However, she cannot help but love them. “After all,” as she says, “they live in a world that hates them. They’ve adapted; they’ve learned to conceal themselves. They’ve survived” (46). Machado examines the idea of queer villainy further through a short analysis of Alain Guiraudie’s *Stranger by the Lake*. The film follows Franck, a young gay man, and his relationship with Michel, a murderer. Machado describes the villainy of Michel as refreshing. *Stranger by The Lake* explores queer life by telling a story about a popular cruising site and the people that frequent it. Throughout the film, many gay men are introduced and are given motives and personalities. In the midst of other queer characters, the queer villain becomes even more interesting. Thanks to context, the viewer understands that morally deprived gay characters are an outlier – they no longer represent the entire queer community. Machado calls this “expanding representation.” When a person already has an established view of who queer people are, one can then begin to tell stories of queerness that are not focused on portraying the entire group in a certain light in order to further the cultural understanding of the queer community. In other words, you no longer must sanitize your stories to appeal to the public. This expansion is imperative if we are to view queer people as human beings. Machado explains it best:

[Queer people] don’t have to be metaphors for wickedness and depravity or icons of conformity and docility. They can be what they are. We deserve to have our wrongdoing represented as much as our heroism, because when we refuse wrongdoing as a possibility for a group of people, we refuse their humanity. That is to say, queers—real-life ones—

do not deserve representation, protection, and rights because they are morally pure or upright as a people. They deserve those things because they are human beings, and that is enough. (47)

Though this feels like a simple statement, what Machado is stating is actually very radical. As we discussed with Morrison's work, marginalized people are often forced to sanitize their own histories in order to appeal to the public. This appeal to the majority could then lead to political progress. Machado discusses this through her liberal use of footnotes. She places two within this section. In the first footnote, she describes the role being assigned to queer people as "icons of conformity and docility" as a "cliché born of a necessary evil" (47). As with race, gender, and able-bodiedness, "the trope of the saintly and all-sacrificing minority is one that follows on the heels of unadulterated hatred, and is just as dangerous (though for different reasons)" (47). Machado's second footnote gives an example of the danger this cliché leads to. She explains that the image of queer people as morally pure and upright was important when advocating for gay marriage in the United States. Unfortunately, the pushing of the always moral queer person onto the public leads to confusion when a queer person is the source of tragedy and questionable behavior.

It is, for example, not an accident that people have had trouble wrapping their heads around Jennifer and Sarah Hart, a white lesbian couple who starved their six black adopted children before deliberately driving themselves and their kids off a cliff in California in 2018. It is also not an accident that people struggle to conceive of queer women as capable of sexual assault or domestic abuse. (47)

When the entire truth is deliberately hidden in the name of pushing progressive politics, the emergence of something that goes against these half-truths ends in bafflement. This would not be

the case if these stories were told in the first place. Lesbian relationships especially are often viewed as utopias; totally separate from patriarchal influences, and the potential of a total and complete understanding through the connection of shared gender. Domestic abuse is traditionally seen as something that only occurs in heterosexual relationships. In turn, the perpetrators are traditionally believed to be men. In a relationship that is totally separate from heterosexuality and manhood, one would believe that there is no fear of domestic abuse of any kind. The danger of suppressing stories of queer abuse leads to lesbians believing that that sort of thing cannot happen to them. Machado explains that this very thing happened to her.

In “Dream House as Ambiguity” Machado discusses three documented cases of lesbian domestic abuse. The first is the story of Freda Ward who was killed by her lover, Alice Mitchell, after ending their relationship. When questioned about her motives for killing Freda, Alice replied that she loved Freda so much that she “wanted [Freda] to die loving [her]” (136). There is also the story of Annette Green, a woman who killed her abusive girlfriend in 1989. Despite using the “battered woman syndrome” defense at her trial, Green was convicted of second-degree murder. Machado finishes her deep dive into history with the story of Debra Reid, the only lesbian who was a part of the Framingham Eight – a group of women who went to prison for killing their abusive partners. Machado tells us that most of the Framingham Eight had their sentences reduced, yet Debra served her entire sentence until she was paroled in 1994. The Oscar-winning documentary about the Farmington Eight did not include Debra’s story. Machado acknowledges that these stories of lesbian abuse are steps above what she experienced during her relationship with her abusive ex-girlfriend. However, she has no other history to look back on. As she says, “[t]he nature of archival silence is that certain people’s narratives and their nuances are swallowed by history; we see only what pokes through because it is sufficiently salacious for

the majority to pay attention” (138). The message is clear; stories like Machado’s are hardly ever told. There is no true history for her to step back into. Thus, *In the Dream House* is written.

I mentioned earlier that Machado is an archivist. Her relationship with her own memory and historical memory proves this. The scholars at the University of Michigan’s Sawyer Seminar claim that an archive is a place where certain kinds of social knowledge is recreated – Machado does this by telling her story of queer domestic violence. Her experience challenges the way the general population views queerness. Most importantly though, Machado’s *Dream House* takes on the role of an uncanny house. By framing her memoir around a space – even if it is an ever changing, imaginary one – she is projecting a suppressed history and social memory onto the space of the *Dream House*.

Machado’s task of the recovery of an archival space and the construction of a history is not dissimilar to the task of Black self-fashioning. By using autobiography and memoir, former slaves were able to gain political attention and win over white abolitionists through careful display of their memory. Yet, this came at the cost of having to deliberately suppress the parts that might have turned away white acceptance. Their full, unsuppressed interior – their unsuppressed history – is lost. Morrison beautifully reconstructs an interior life of one such lost history through fiction as it is the only way to “access” it. Machado, however, has the opportunity to also tell her story through memoir, and she chooses to do so by sharing an explicit trauma that defies the propriety that surrounds stories of queer life. The *Dream House* itself is not haunted by ghosts or uncanny projections because Machado does not have to turn to fiction – She is still alive. Her voice has not been silenced yet. She refuses to allow her history to be suppressed for the sake of not being accepted by those in power.

Conclusion

In *Seeing Yourself in History: Community Archives and the Fight Against Symbolic Annihilation*, archivist Michelle Caswell talks about her experiences as the co-founder of the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), and how the concept of community archives is one of the only ways in which marginalized communities can de-sanitize their own histories. The SAADA came about after Caswell's colleague, now SAADA Director Samip Mallick, noticed the lack of representation of South East Asian Americans within historical studies, and how this lack led him to feel unsettled in his identity. While working at the University of Chicago, Caswell and Mallick discovered widely unknown stories about South East Asian activists and political figures. Despite some of these stories being recorded, Mallick still did not see himself or his community fully reflected within the archived documents. This then led to the discovery that there was no archive solely dedicated to the preservation of South East Asian American history. Upon this revelation, Caswell and Mallick decided to establish the SAADA. The organization is run by groups of volunteers from all corners of the United States. Since the SAADA is entirely digital, volunteers are able to track down documents and archive them without having to take the document to a secondary location. This leads to South East Asian American families and organizations being more willing to allow their documents to enter the archive. They can share the bits of history they possess without having to part with documents that hold sentimental value or objects that are important to their local community. As you may imagine, this method of historical preservation goes against traditional methods of archiving. Caswell explains that rebellion against traditionalism is the point of the organization. The SAADA does not follow traditional archival practices, instead running as a "community archive." These are archives for the people, by the people, and are "responses not only to the

omissions of history as the official story written by a guild of professional historians, but the omissions of memory institutions writ large” (Caswell 32). Community archives seek to end the sanitization of history by using the community that the archive represents to fill its spaces – physical or not.

Additionally, the community archive allows for uncommon documentation. Along with collecting historical documents, the SAADA uses a method of collection that they refer to as “digital participatory microhistory projects.” These projects create new records that allow community members to tell their own personal stories through video or audio recordings. Caswell explains that this method “[fills] in key gaps in the historical record for which pre-existing documentation does not exist” (30). By preserving personal experiences, the SAADA seeks to preserve an entire history, one where a visitor does not need to fill in the blanks themselves. Perhaps the most important function of the community archive though, is the emphasis on recording multiple experiences and personal histories. Caswell explains that not every member of a group shares the same experience or the same opinions – identity and community are “constantly shifting,” but community archives give members of those communities a chance to document “commonalities and differences outside the boundaries of formal mainstream institutions” (31). Through a community archive, one does not need to document or alter a specific experience for political progress. The community archive’s goal is simply to exist as a space where members of that community can tell their stories, and where they can find themselves within the stories of others.

We see the community’s power and its ownership of the archive at the end of *Beloved*. At the end of the novel, it is not Sethe herself who exorcises *Beloved*, but it is the community of Black women, some of whom have gone through similar trauma as she has, who do so. One character,

Ella, thinks of her own dead baby coming back to haunt her as she prays in front of 124 Bluestone Road. At the thought of that happening, she “hollers,” setting off the rest of the women to follow her. The narrative states, “They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like” (Morrison 324). As Sethe listens to them, the sound “[breaks] over Sethe and she [trembles] like the baptized in its wash” (328).

Machado writes about her wife, Val, and their relationship which developed after they both cut ties with *The Woman in The Dream House* in the chapter titled “Dream House as Plot Twist.” The two of them reunite and drive from Los Angeles to Iowa together. “Every day, you drive and talk about the woman in the Dream House,” she recounts. “At night, you curl into each other” (Machado 218). The two begin a romantic relationship during this trip. Machado looks back on what their beginning together looked like, acknowledging that it grew out of the context of shared pain. She says, “Eventually, you and Val will come to love each other outside this context. You will move in together, get engaged, get married. But in the beginning, this is what holds you together: the knowledge that the two of you are not alone” (218).

Haunted House stories often end with the destruction of the uncanny structure. *The Shining*, (the novel, not the film) ends with the Overlook Hotel’s explosion due to it being tampered with by the possessed Jack Torrance. At the end of Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Madeline Usher claws her way out from her tomb and attacks her brother, Rodrick. The narrator of the story escapes from the house and watches as it splits in half, sinking into the lake that it was built next to. These places of haunting are destroyed once their resurfaced manifestation comes to light, and the uncanniness leads to the structure and their inhabitant’s violent end. Morrison and Machado look at this resurfacing of the repressed in a different way. The structures

at the end of their books remain intact. 124 Bluestone Road remains the way it is, and we are told Beloved is forgotten about “like a bad dream” (Morrison 343). In one of the last scenes in the novel, Sethe is reminded by Paul D that Beloved was not her “best thing” – Sethe is her own “best thing” (342). The both of them, who have “more yesterday than anybody” are finally able to move on together. Having faced the resurfaced past, Sethe can focus on the future. Machado’s *Dream House* and the forms it takes will remain as long as her memoir does. The repressed has been confronted, her own history recorded into her archive, but still the *Dream House* stays. These uncanny memories and histories resurfacing are not destructive – they are essential to someone’s healing. History is more accessible today than it ever has been and the resurrected / articulated / supplemented archive remains as a testament to the possible. By using community archives and alternative means of documentation through methods such as the SAAD’s digital participatory microhistory projects, the idea of a history becoming totally annihilated seems less possible. The digital nature of archived material allows it to be accessible to anyone with an internet connection – histories can be easily found and connected with. People can find themselves and their experiences within them. As we see though *In the Dream House*, memoir is a form of this sort of archive, albeit without the community involvement. Machado’s dedication is more than enough proof of that: “If you need this book, it is for you,” she declares. The archivist has decided on the purpose the archive holds, and that purpose is for people to find themselves within the pages. There is healing in relating to someone’s experience – she strongly implies this though “*Dream House as Plot Twist*” when she recalls the early days of her and Val’s relationship. In the case of Sethe, this is Beloved’s exorcism that comes about due to the pain experienced and shared by the Black women in the community.

We could say that Machado's memoir being published to critical acclaim means that the haunted house that explores historical sanitization is dead; No longer does an author have to fill in the blanks of history through fiction. No longer does a protagonist need to confront their repressed memory in the form of a ghost. The marginalized can decide to archive their stories with the purpose of sharing instead of political progress – there is no more need for self-sanitization. But the tragedy of history is the vastness of it. There are a million stories like those of Margaret Garner that will never get told or have their consciousnesses reimagined. There are women like Machado, victims of queer domestic abuse who took their stories to the grave. And in the ongoing fight for civil rights and social justice, there will always be pushes to be “decent” and “proper” in order to appeal to society's standards of what a marginalized person should act like. We can tell our stories through memoir and archive, but as long as there is a lost past, we must rely on the tool of fiction to fill in the blanks for us. We are going to have to let the fictional ghost haunt us.

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