

The Curse of Domesticity: Female Hauntings and the Characterization of Marginalized Women as Ghosts

by Elisa Castillo



The Female Gothic and Positioning Women in the Domestic Space

The haunted house looms menacingly over whatever ground it occupies. The often crumbling abode is filled with shadows and—as its name suggests—ghosts that haunt the property and whoever lives within. In many instances of ghost tales and myths, the haunted figure is a woman, typically surrounded by stories of heartbreak or murder—perhaps both (for instance, the Mexican mythical ghost La Llorona or Anne Boleyn haunting the halls of London castles). Scholar Monica Michlin describes one particular characterization of the ghost as a “cultural haunting,” in which “minority identities...[haunt] white America” (Michlin 2). Under this framework of hauntings and female ghosts being influenced by an opposition to white, American ideals, ghost stories can be understood as a criticism of traditional femininity and domesticity. Portrayals of women as ghosts have long since existed in the genre of the Gothic novel, and they have even become a subgenre of their own. The “Female Gothic,” as Emma Liggins describes in her novel, *The Haunted House in Women’s Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity*, is a “subversive genre” that allows women to express discontent toward the patriarchy and their fears of being trapped within both the domestic space and the female body

(Liggins 7). The haunted house and the figure of the ghost thus emerge as victims of the patriarchy, and their ghost stories allow their traumas under this social structure to be recognized.

Moving into the modern Gothic, one critical novel in defining the feminine Gothic is Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. Written in the 1950s, the novel presents the midcentury American ideal of female domesticity, subverted by the haunting that occurs within Hill House. While *The Haunting of Hill House* is essential in defining the modern Female Gothic in American literature, the novel neglects to portray all aspects of the haunted female figure. In order to fully analyze the canon of Female Gothic literature, the intersectionalities that produce these female ghosts must be acknowledged. Using Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* alongside two ghost stories by women of color, I will analyze the ways in which cultural and queer identities intersect with domestic traditions to culminate in the figure of the female ghost. Carmen Maria Machado's *In the Dream House* (2019) and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1975) ultimately portray the ghosts as representations of women marginalized by society for their refusal to follow feminine and domestic traditions.

Although considerable scholarship has been done on the Female Gothic in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature, contemporary texts dealing with ghost stories are often excluded from the literary canon, or they are not considered to be as serious or profound as other genres. Liggins describes this conflict, where "haunting in terms of modernity" is "a concept identified as problematic by historians" (Liggins 21). Modernizing society promotes a general air of skepticism, thus texts depicting ghostly figures are met with reservation. In bringing these twentieth and twenty-first-century texts under the framework of the Female Gothic, it is important to contextualize the texts in American society. The mid-1900s witnessed the growth of American suburbs and thus the emphasis on the home (Liggins 22). Jackson's *Hill House* encapsulates the push for women to find a home and occupy the domestic sphere, submitting all autonomy within this domestic space. Occurring nearly thirty years later, Kingston's memoir portrays a different America, one through the perspective of Chinese immigrants. Within the text, Kingston experiences both the patriarchal structures in American society that attempt to control women in the domestic sphere and also marginalization while assimilating into a new culture. Finally, published only in 2019, Machado's memoir introduces a new element to the domestic sphere, as her queer identity subverts the norm of heterosexuality that practically defined female domesticity. Yet in an America with further cultural and sexual diversity from the white, heterosexual world of *Hill House*, expectations for women's domestic identities remain similarly controlling. The three texts occur in wildly different American cultures, yet despite these changes, each memoir depicts the consequences toward women who refuse to occupy a traditional domestic identity.

The women depicted in Machado's and Kingston's memoirs possess underrepresented identities—being immigrants or queer women as opposed to white, heterosexual women—and are relegated to the status of ghosts by the dominant ideology (white America in the context of the three novels). Yet in telling their personal ghost stories through the genre of memoir,

Kingston and Machado introduce real instances of marginalized women who were silenced, whether in their family history or by society, and became haunting reminders warning women against subverting traditional domesticity. While Jackson criticizes, but ultimately submits to, the limiting domestic sphere, Kingston and Machado breathe life into the ghosts that haunt their narratives in allowing their stories to be told and their silence to be broken.

The Haunting of Hill House and White Domesticity

Shirley Jackson demonstrates the dark consequences of patriarchal structures on women by subverting the traditional female domestic space through Hill House, which presents the picturesque American manor with a dark twist. Jackson establishes the haunted house as a space that is parallel to, but separate from, reality. Within this bizarre realm, the novel's protagonist, Eleanor Vance, finds comfort in the domestic setting of Hill House; despite its unsettling aura, she craved this sense of domesticity while living alone. Within the novel's first few pages, Eleanor's unhappiness with her present life is evident: "She could not remember ever being truly happy in her adult life... Without ever wanting to become reserved and shy, she had spent so long alone" (Jackson 5). It is immediately evident that Eleanor's character is desperately searching for a sense of belonging and connection, which she believes to have found through Hill House. Jackson's choice of setting the novel in a house is significant for its commentary on domesticity. Eleanor, a single woman in her early thirties, is nontraditional in the sense that she is unmarried and has no children. This status is especially notable as the text is set in the 1950s, when domesticity and motherhood were traits unequivocally expected of women. Eleanor lacks the personal space and autonomy in owning a home, further separating her from the identity of a married, domesticated woman. As she drives to Hill House, Eleanor, for the first time, feels a sense of individuality and personal possession, noting that "the car belonged entirely to her, a little world all her own; I am really going, she thought" (Jackson 15). Eleanor's independence defies traditional expectations of domesticity, which is defined by marriage and becoming a mother. Christine Junker proposes that Jackson "imagine[s] that if domesticity can just be disentangled from marriage and motherhood, it can provide a refuge from patriarchy" (Junker 107). While living at Hill House, Eleanor is at first seemingly successful at carving out a version of domesticity that is exclusive from these two controlling concepts. For a brief while, Hill House becomes a space that is subversive of traditional domesticity, offering refuge to a woman marginalized for her desire for independence.

However, while Jackson attempts to distinguish domesticity from the patriarchy, the two concepts are inevitably linked. In the relief that Eleanor finds in Hill House—believing she has finally found a home of her own—she submits to the patriarchal idea that a woman's worth is tied to a house or property. Junker argues that Eleanor's struggle represents a "hope that a different kind of domesticity can engender a different kind of female subjectivity" (Junker 1). Following this "different kind of female subjectivity" women might be able to separate the patriarchy's insistence that they occupy a domestic space with their own desire to do so. Eleanor navigates a unique sense of embodiment by occupying the traditional space of the house while

refusing to fully encompass a traditional female identity. Again, the haunted house allows for this in-between state, as it is grounded in reality, yet what exists inside does not follow convention. Eleanor creates a unique identity for herself in this liminal space; however, she is never able to fully escape the patriarchal demands of domesticity. As Angela Hague describes in an assessment of Jackson's anthology of texts that heavily deal with the subject of home, houses "often function as places of entrapment and incarceration for the women who visit or live in them" (Hague 82). Even within the liminal state of the haunted house, Eleanor cannot separate herself from the patriarchal demand that women find their place in a home.

The novel's ending depicts Eleanor's suicide after being forced to leave Hill House, cementing Jackson's criticisms of traditional domesticity and the consequences of the patriarchy's control over women's identities. By the end of the novel, Eleanor's mind is fragmented by the house as an effect of its haunting. Believing Hill House to be the only place she truly belongs, Eleanor drives her car into a tree and dies. The autonomy behind Eleanor's suicide is ambiguous, and whether she was truly making the decision or was influenced by the forces within Hill House is unclear to readers. Regardless, Jackson emphasizes the danger of forcing domestic values on women and the tyranny of the patriarchy within the domestic space. Within these structures, women feel they must seek domesticity or otherwise face marginalization from society. For Eleanor, the house is a reprieve from her life of loneliness and neglect from her family, causing her to release complete independence in exchange for a sense of belonging. According to Junker, "Jackson's representation of this kind of domesticity takes on the quality of a nightmare, because ultimately, Eleanor hopes that ceding her own agency will provide her with protection from an unruly and uninhabitable world" (Junker 11). Eleanor's death reveals the patriarchy's incessant demand that women occupy the domestic space, a demand detrimental not only to the autonomy of women but also to their lives. Although Hill House seemingly allows Eleanor to exist without forcing her into marriage or motherhood, her suicide reflects that the patriarchy's control over women's agency and the limitations it places on their identities remains a controlling power over the domestic space.

Eleanor's suicide presents a further element contributing to the figure of the ghost: the fragmentation of one's mind. Eleanor's loss of autonomy and personhood is evident in the dissolution of her narrative voice, where at the novel's end it is unclear whether her thoughts are truly her own or influenced by some other detrimental force. Right before Eleanor's suicide, she thinks, "I am really doing it, I am doing this all by myself," a statement that first appears to be her final exhibition of autonomy (Jackson 271). However, the following line introduces confusion to Eleanor's final action, where "In the unending, crashing second before the car hurled into the tree she thought clearly, *Why* am I doing this?" (271). The emphasis created by "clearly" suggests that Eleanor's previous thoughts did not come from a sound mind or autonomous decision. Tony Vinci proposes that the fragmented state of Eleanor's mind can be read as a transgression of the traditional human subject, in which "instead of a unitary mind bound by an ostensibly human body... Nell slips in and out of her body" (Vinci 53). The setting of the haunted house again signals a liminal space that allows Eleanor to occupy an existence

beyond the boundaries of humanity. Vinci further argues that this state of being is a result of Eleanor's trauma and her isolation from society. The extended periods of loneliness in Eleanor's life cause her to seek belonging in the Hill House, and ultimately the pressure to fit into this domestic space drives Eleanor insane. While the ghosts of the house arguably influence her mental state and infringe on her autonomy, the most prevalent ghost of the novel is Eleanor's fragmented self; her inability to reconcile these parts of herself and establish an identity that is accepted by society demonstrates the oppressive reachings of the patriarchy. The novel's concluding line—"Silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone"—demonstrates that Eleanor's silence was not broken in death, only adopted into the amalgam of forgotten identities that the Hill House absorbed (Jackson 272).

***In the Dream House* : Queer Domesticity and Trauma as Haunting**

Despite Jackson's criticisms of domesticity as controlling over women's identities, the novel fails to consider queer domesticity as a subversion of tradition. Carmen Maria Machado's memoir, *In the Dream House*, portrays a queer relationship in the domestic space of the haunted house. In the memoir, the haunted house is presented as a physical site of domestic abuse and as a metaphorical manifestation of the abusive relationship haunting Machado. While her relationship occupies a majority of the book's narrative, Machado's life is depicted from adolescence to her eventual marriage to her first wife, from whom she is now divorced. While the Dream House is a physical location in Indiana—the house her abusive lover lived in, where a majority of the abuse occurred—it also exists as a schema for Machado to sort out her memories, sexuality, and experiences. Each room signifies a formative element of Machado's memories: "the back patio: college...the kitchen: OkCupid, Craigslist...The bedroom: don't go in there" (Machado 17). The house's haunting evidently occurs in the bedroom of Machado's mind, which contains the memories and trauma of her abusive relationship. Through a queer relationship, Machado's Dream House subverts the traditional representation of the domestic home. Rather than the nuclear family, two women inhabit the space and are not even married, as Machado points out. As a further subversion of expectations, Machado frames her memoir—a genre defined as being based on reality—as a ghost story. Not only does the symbol of the haunted house allow Machado to organize her memories, but it also allows her to give voice to a part of herself that was silenced while in an abusive relationship. As Machado says, "The memoir is, at its core, an act of resurrection. Memoirists re-create the past" (Machado 5). In reconstructing her past, Machado is able to reclaim autonomy over her identity and allow the part of her that was silenced to speak her story.

However, the subversion of traditional domesticity and the creation of a new domestic space is not a place of relief for Machado as it is in Jackson's *Hill House*. The memoir presents two primary ghosts: one as Machado's ex-lover (who she deems the Dream House woman) and in Machado herself. The Dream House woman becomes a haunting figure in Machado's life—not for who she was, but for who she wasn't. Machado describes the sensation of realizing she did not truly know her former partner, where "Afterward, I would mourn her as if she'd died,

because something had: someone we created together” (Machado 77). In her memoir, a new type of ghost is created that differentiates the text from the tropes of the Female Gothic in Jackson’s novel. The ghost of someone who never died—who never even existed—represents an alternative form of ghost whose haunting occurs as a reminder of the abuse Machado faced. The second ghostly figure is Machado herself, specifically the person she realizes she became after enduring abuse. As this realization occurs to Machado, she thinks,

And then it occurs to you one day, standing in the living room, that you are this house’s ghost: you are the one wandering from room to room with no purpose, gaping at the moving boxes that are never unpacked, never certain what you’re supposed to do. After all, you don’t need to die to leave a mark of psychic pain. If anyone is living in the Dream House now, he or she might be seeing the echo of you. (Machado 127)

Once again, Machado presents the ghost as a figure separate from death, indicating that one does not have to die to create the effect of haunting. Suffering abuse can make one a ghost in the sense that they are a shell of their previous self, losing the individuality that once defined them. In discussing queer abuse in Machado’s memoir, Prudence Bussey-Chamberlain describes that the abuse operates as “the abusive partners take on the roles of consumers, who assume a form of ownership that renders both writers passive” (Bussey-Chamberlain 262). Within the understanding of abuse as consumption, Machado’s identity and sense of self is absorbed and destroyed by her partner. Machado uses memoir to represent how the deterioration of one’s sense of self can result in their characterization as a ghost, and within this status, they are denied voice.

Machado’s haunted house differs strikingly from Jackson’s; whereas Eleanor finds individuality and home in the haunted house, the domestic sphere is a place of entrapment for Machado. Machado’s identity as a queer woman in a same-sex relationship serves to, as Junker describes, “disentangle” her domesticity from the traditional practice of heterosexual marriage and motherhood (Junker 107). However, even in this subversive relationship, Machado experiences abuse and violence stemming from the patriarchal state. Given that patriarchal forces operate by silencing women and limiting their autonomy—as witnessed by Eleanor’s isolation from society—Machado’s abusive ex-partner employs this same strategy for control. Machado presents this concept as “unlanguage,” although it is first introduced in the context of pleasure. Machado first describes feeling the “lingering tingle of unlanguage,” where she consents to having her voice restrained for the sake of pleasure (Machado 42). However, Machado soon experiences unlanguage as a form of abuse, when her partner warns, “You’re not allowed to write about this” (Machado 44). Machado finds agency through writing; it is her form of self-expression and is therapeutic in the process of recalling her past and traumas. In stripping away Machado’s ability to write, the Dream House woman exerts a patriarchal method of control and prevents Machado from exhibiting agency. This control is one such way Machado herself becomes a ghost, when her forms of identity are limited, and she is left as an “echo” of herself.

One of the most unique traits of Machado’s memoir is its structure, in which its nonfiction genre and the arrangement of the chapters themselves give the book life, reflecting Machado’s presentation of the Dream House as being alive. *In the Dream House* notably presents

a ghost story in a nonfiction text, uncommon in the genre of the Gothic novel that is closely tied to fiction. Machado's use of memoir, however, allows for a reimagined understanding of the ghost as a fragmented version of oneself. The subdued version of herself that Machado adopted in her abusive relationship depicts how a ghost-like state can manifest in one's identity when faced with controlling forces. Bussey-Chamberlain describes the "shifting subject" of *In the Dream House*, which shifts between the first person "I" and the second person "you," both, however, representing Machado. Bussey-Chamberlain argues that the dual subjects "enacts the immediate and aftereffects of trauma rupturing a self to the point of double existence" (260). In order to process her trauma, Machado's self is split into the present "I" and the past "you," being the recipient of abuse and trauma. Not only does the shifting of subjects create a stark contrast between Machado's fractured, ghost-like self and her healed self, but it also reinforces the haunted house as a metaphorical state of existence. The fragmentation of self occurs in the memoir most strikingly during the chapter "*Dream House as Choose Your Own Adventure*," in which Machado presents a moment of abuse from her partner, and provides the readers with a series of responses: "If you apologize profusely, go to page 163...If you tell her to calm down, go to page 166" (162). This practice of speaking directly to the audience continues until page 176, when Machado concludes, "That's not how it happened, but okay. We can pretend. I'll give it to you, just this once" (176). Although Machado breaks conventions of writer-reader relationships by allowing audiences to choose the narrative, she additionally speaks to her past self in this section. Machado acknowledges her lack of agency at the time with, "That's not how it happened," yet the action of "Choose your own adventure" is one such method of reclaiming autonomy over her actions. A traditional memoir would not allow for this portrayal of agency, thus Machado's text demonstrates a subversion of genre conventions and allows her to reclaim the fragmented pieces of herself that were taken when she was made into a ghost during her abusive relationship.

Cultural, Familial, and Historical Ghosts in *The Woman Warrior*

Maxine Hong Kingston's part memoir, part novel *The Woman Warrior* further presents a unique depiction of ghosts as a combination of myths and female figures from her family history, each meant to instill control over Kingston and her womanhood. The ghosts that haunt Kingston throughout her life are all victims of patriarchal oppression who were in some way silenced or marginalized for failing to follow traditions of female domesticity. The memoir's opening page introduces the first ghost from Kingston's childhood—her aunt in China who committed suicide and killed her newborn baby after having the child while her husband was in America. Kingston's mother tells her the story at a young age, where "In China your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well. We say that your father has all brothers because it is as if she had never been born" (Kingston 3). Deemed the "No Name Woman" by Kingston, the woman took her life after giving birth, when the people of her village raided her family's house and essentially blacklisted them. The ability to exist and be remembered is nearly stripped away from Kingston's aunt, whose family attempts to erase her from their history.

Kingston's mother maintains the memory of her aunt as a warning to pass on to her daughters. The No Name Woman's erasure signifies that women do not possess bodily autonomy, existing primarily to serve their husbands and provide them children. Even if a woman does become a mother—as expected under the patriarchy—the punishment for having a child out of wedlock is greater than not having a child at all.

Kingston's memoir further promotes the idea that patriarchal structures cause women to be marginalized and thus characterized as ghosts in society, where they are controlled by being refused voice. Yen Li Loh analyzes the prominence of ghosts throughout the memoir, arguing that there is “a commonality of ghosts in dealing with invisible social structures in minority American literatures” (Loh 211). Following this analysis, the act of haunting is a refusal to be suppressed by the patriarchal systems that created the ghosts in the first place. The existence of the No Name Woman and the other ghosts of Kingston's memoir, such a different aunt who never married and was considered mentally insane, are reflections of the social structures that reject women who do not follow traditional paths in domesticity. The act of not marrying or having a child relegates the women to the status of nonhuman, and their “rejection of marriage as a path to happiness and citizenship results in their expulsion from communal life” (Loh 212). Kingston, however, does not let the female ghost stories of her childhood remain silenced by the patriarchy. In telling their ghost stories, Kingston gives voice to her aunt's life and refuses the erasure of her existence. Kingston describes the impact that the No Name Woman's lack of existence had on her throughout her life:

“But there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment. And I have. In twenty years since I heard this story I have not asked for details nor said my aunt's name; I do not know it... My aunt haunts me—her ghost drawn to me because now, after fifty years of neglect, I alone devote pages of paper to her. (Kingston 16)

In memorializing the No Name Woman, Kingston also accepts the burden of her aunt's existence, being the sole member of her family to practice remembering her. Yet she accepts this burden in order to end her aunt's punishment and break the practice of writing women out of history. Ruth Jenkins proposes that Kingston's depiction of her aunt's story essentially redefines silence, where she does not “simply reproduce culturally ordained silence; instead, [Kingston] reinscribes female silence as subversive alternatives” (Jenkins 3). Kingston's practice of transcribing these ghost stories refuses patriarchal efforts of erasing the woman from history. Kingston provides the No Name Woman identity again, and she further asserts her own authority and bodily autonomy by refusing to let them be muted.

When compared to Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the ghosts of *The Woman Warrior* similarly represent the failure to practice traditional domesticity, but the novel also presents an added element of immigration that contrasts the white, Western domesticity of *Hill House*. Kingston describes that the ghost stories were created as her mother's lessons, where “whenever she liked to warn us about life, my mother told stories that ran like this one... She tested our strength to establish realities. Those in emigrant generations who could not reassert brute survival died” (Kingston 5). After witnessing the death of fellow immigrants and the No

Name Women herself, Kingston's mother tells her children the haunting ghost stories in order to scare them into strength. However, Kingston finds trouble navigating the realities of America and the lasting effects of the stories told by her mother. The No Name Woman haunts Kingston for her story's lack of resolution—in bringing her story to life, Kingston must also continuously grapple with her existence and her family's practice of erasure.

In terms of the cultural practice of erasing a scorned community member from existence, Loh argues that the village's reaction to the No Name Woman was born from a period of secrecy and personal preservation stemming from the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Loh explains that “during the Exclusion, Chinese immigrants changed their names and lied about their personal information,” and in consequence “second-generation American-born Chinese were alienated from parents” (Loh 214). Kingston details these exclusionary immigration policies in the United States and their detrimental effects even in China, represented most poignantly in the No Name Woman. Further, Kingston grows up feeling conflicted over her mother's harsh form of mothering. Beyond the ghost stories meant to warn her children, Kingston's mother additionally describes herself surrounded by ghosts once entering America: “But America has been full of machines and ghosts—Taxi ghosts, Bus Ghosts, Police Ghosts, Fire Ghosts...I could hardly walk, limping my way around the White Ghosts” (Kingston 97). Kingston's mother, Brave Orchid, finds herself disillusioned and surrounded by white ghosts, made up of white people and their unfamiliar traditions. Brave Orchid teaches Kingston to be wary of the ghosts, yet when growing up, Kingston realizes she is more familiar with American traditions than her Chinese culture. Thus, to Kingston, the ghosts became Chinese family members and villagers she had never met.

Kingston proposes a unique explanation of ghosts, where they manifest as a response to disillusionment and are a mechanism in the process of immigrating to unfamiliar places. Brave Orchid and Kingston thus present the notion of ghosts as a means of preservation. Unfamiliar customs and peoples are categorized as ghosts so that they might be observed, but the danger of having to assimilate into their traditions is eliminated. Qiong He describes the confusing process of encountering new cultures, as Brave Orchid realizes upon immigrating that “America, rather than an ideal state abounding with gold, is actually a country swarming with ‘white ghosts,’ which leaves her with a sense of loss caused by cultural dislocation” (He 133). Within He's understanding, the ghosts in immigration contain a sense of grief or loss, as associated with traditional ghosts, yet this mourning is the realization that one has lost the comfort and safety of their own culture. The numerous and nuanced depictions of ghosts in Kingston's memoir serve a variety of purposes, and while she similarly criticizes the patriarchal structures that demand female domesticity, *The Woman Warrior* differs from Jackson's depiction of hauntings. For Kingston, ghosts represent an intersection of forces influencing herself and her mother: familial expectations for pious domesticity, cultural dislocation in the process of immigration, and resisting the treatment of being silenced. The action of telling these ghost stories in her memoir allows Kingston to break the silence that women and Asian American immigrants are often forced to embody, immortalizing their stories in the text so that they might never be erased again.

Conclusion

The Haunting of Hill House clearly details the dangers of failing to follow the domestic process expected in society of marriage, occupying a familial home, and having children. Eleanor's lack of marriage and children isolates her from society, in turn taking away her voice and autonomy. Yet the American female experience expressed in Jackson's novel lacks representation of alternative forms of marginalization that relegate women to the status of ghosts. In the form of the memoir, *In the Dream House* and *The Woman Warrior* each convey unique depictions and explanations for the ghosts that haunt the novels. *The Woman Warrior* presents Kingston's experience of assimilation into American culture, navigating the myths and family histories that her mother told her in childhood with the new, unfriendly society her family found themselves adopting to. While Jackson's protagonist, Eleanor, essentially becomes a ghost due to the fragmentation of her selfhood from patriarchal pressures, Kingston discovers that the ghosts that haunt her are made up of women and relatives that were silenced and erased from family history. Kingston thus navigates the pressures of giving her forgotten female relatives voice by immortalizing their stories in the text and also being the primary recipient of their hauntings. In *The Woman Warrior*, the setting of the haunted house represents American society at large and the pressure it places on female minorities to occupy strict traditions and regulations.

Machado's *In the Dream House* is the most modern of the three novels, hence positioning a setting and American society that has advanced from the world of Jackson and Kingston's texts. Machado centers an abusive queer relationship at the center of her memoir and establishes the haunted house as the center of her trauma from the relationship. Within the memoir, and in moving through each room of this metaphorical house, Machado processes her relationship and pieces together the fragmented pieces of herself that the abusive relationship created. The primary figure of the ghost in the memoir emerges as Machado's past self, being a stripped-away version of herself who lost agency and was silenced in the process of abuse. In writing the memoir, Machado pieces together her broken selves and emerges as a fully agent human, not the ghost that she was made into. Each of the three novels uses the figure of the ghost and the setting of the haunted house to convey the detrimental effects of forced domesticity on women. The novels present women who refuse to follow the expected domestic identities placed upon them, and it turns they are relegated to the status of ghost. Within this status, the women lack agency and the voice to identify themselves. However, in Kingston and Machado's practice of writing the ghost stories and immortalizing their suppression in the text, the women's silence is broken, and they are able to emerge from this ghost state.

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