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Politics of Gothic: A Study of Silence in Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black*

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By

Krishna Prasad Sharma

University Campus

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

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Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Approval Letter

This thesis entitled “Politics of Gothic: A Study of Silence in *The Woman in Black*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mr. Krishna Prasad Sharma has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head
Central Department of English

Date:

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Abstract

This research on *The Woman in Black* tries to clarify that the contemporary social concern plays a wide role while writing the text. Hill's novel, *The Woman in Black* was written in 1983. So, it centers on the social and political discourses that purported to define the family in early 1980s. Taking into its cultural context, *The Woman in Black* could be read as a social critique of these issues. This research aims to expose the fact that the society which is dominated by patriarchal traits has the potential of define and confine woman in their own way. *The Woman in Black* is in dialogue with contemporary rhetoric about families. It probes social anxieties associated with hierarchies of authority in families, legal responsibility, the isolation of unmarried mothers and the rights of parents or those in *logo parentis*. Consequently, the novel contributes to new and less idealized perception, about women and women as mother. In this respect, Hill's novel belongs to a tradition of women's radical novel.

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I. Subversive Politics of Gothic in *The Woman in Black*

This thesis, based on Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* observes the darkness, horror and gloom as a Gothic trope and its resemblance with the social environment during 1980s. This novel is regarded as a Gothic horror but, it can also read as a social critique of the issues like, exploration of motherhood and parenting. This research tries to excavate the politics behind writing the novel in Gothic mode and its relationship with the contemporary cultural condition.

The Woman in Black was written by a British writer Susan Hill in 1983. This is a Gothic novel but beyond this, it can also belong to the historical moment in its probing exploration of motherhood and parenting. There were marked contradictions in Britain during the early 1980s between social and political discourses that purported to define the family. During this period, roles frequently assigned to or expected of various family members became less rigidly defined and increasingly contentious because women have been, and in many cases still are, the primary carers for children well after the biological nexus between the mother's body and her infant has faded. Such social debate about power structures within the family has influenced construction of femininity and masculinity.

Taking into its cultural context, *The Woman in Black* can be read as a social critique of these issues. It is an open-ended text, but one of its strong and recurring preoccupations centres on the fraught parental responsibility of keeping children safe. Hill lends a sense of universality to her narrative by setting it in the Victorian past. Yet this novel can also be interpreted as a challenge to the beguiling myths that idealized motherhood in the 1980s.

The novel, *The Woman in Black*, revolves around, its protagonist cum narrator, Arthur Kipps, a young solicitor, who encounters with many unexpected and

dreadful experiences. The novel is completely stood on the narration of Mr. Kipps about his past experiences. While entering into the story, we can find out that Kipps is now getting old and he is with his second wife, with four children. He goes to the past, when he was only twenty three years old. Actually his past experiences were not joyful, but rather it was much gloomy.

He was young with zeal to do something new and special. He was assigned as a solicitor of a deceased woman Mrs. Alice Drablow and to go to Crythn Gifford to attain her funeral. As he went there, the most dreadful experiences he encountered with. In the funeral he was surprised that only three people are there; Mr. Jerome, the priest and he himself. At the same time, he saw a woman in a black dress. In his word, “a young woman with wasted face” (41). She was very distinct from others and was far from the plot. When he mentioned about her to Mr. Jerome, he showed the shocking expression. Not only had this he become pale and nervous in such a way that, “he was about to faint, or collapse with some kind of seizure”.

Mr. Kipps was send there to find out every documents of Mrs. Drablow. For that he had to go to Eel Marsh House, the residence of Mrs. Drablow. It was located in an isolated place, surrounded by marsh and estuary. He didn't get any one to go with him there. Later a man named, Keckwick took him there. He was not aware that he is going to trap in a very dreadful situation. He felt a kind of peace and pleasure there, but that peace was the peace before chaos. When he entered the house, he felt a kind of difference than other houses. It was a big house with many rooms. Among these, one was closed. When he entered the house, the weather outside changed and it became foggy and gloomy. He came outside and seen marshes everywhere, but in one side he saw the same woman near the gravestone, looking directly towards him. He ran over there but she was not there. He was scared a little and passionately waits for

Keckwick to come. At the very moment, another incident occurred. He heard the noise of a child with pony and trap along the marshes. Suddenly, he heard crying of the child and drowning of pony and trap. He went there but didn't see anyone. This incidence shocks his heart that he ran scarily towards the house. He was so scared that he became unconscious due to nervousness. When he came to consciousness, he was in the hotel, where he was staying.

This is only incidence that he experienced. He was encountered with scarier occurrences. His most uncanny experience was his second visit to Eel Marsh House. This time he had a female dog with him named "Spider". He had to collect all the documents of Mrs. Drablow, so he dared to go again to Eel Marsh House. He was inside the house with spider, collecting the letters and other documents of Mrs. Drablow. He found some letters written by 'J' and occasionally 'Jennet' to 'Alice'. At the same time he heard the unfamiliar sound coming from the locked room. He went there, and tried to open the room but he failed to do so. By being scared he goes to bedroom to sleep could not. The house was dark, had no light and his torch also broken down. So, these all caused a kind of uncanny condition. All these supernatural and weird situations made this novel a fine example of a Gothic horror. Not only has this, his encounter again with "the woman in black", given more nearly hints of the horror effect. This research tries to give spotlight to show the politics behind writing Gothic novel. These all Gothic effects have some approach behind its literal sense.

The term Gothic means uncivilized and barbaric. Gothic originally implies to anything that is wild, barbaric and destructive to the civilization. It also signifies riting of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth century rationality and modernity. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence. Gothic

atmosphere—gloomy and mysterious, have repeatedly signaled the disturbing return of past upon present and evoke emotion of terror and laughter. Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to these values, threat associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. Gothic writing remain fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic.

In Gothic fiction certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of the cultural anxieties. Torturous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life-threatening pursuits predominate in the eighteenth century. Specters, demons, monsters, corpses, skeleton, evil aristocrat monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits populate gothic landscape s as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats. Later the modern city combined the natural and architectural components of gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of gothic castle and forest.

The major of Gothic plots, the castle, was gloomy predominant in early Gothic fiction. Decaying, bleak and full of hidden passageways, the castle was linked to other medieval edifices—abbeys, churches and graveyard especially; that in their generally ruinous states, harked back to a feudal past associated with barbarity, superstition and fear. Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times, despite the heavy historical trappings. In the later fiction, the castle gradually gave way to the old houses: as both building and family line, it became the site where fears and anxieties returned to the present. These anxieties varied according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialization, urbanization, shift in sexual and domestic organization, and scientific discovery.

In the 20th century gothic, gothic always nourished in popular culture is perfectly at home. The loss of human identity and the alienation of self from both itself and the social bearings in which a sense of reality is seared are presented in threatening shape of increasingly dehumanized environments, mechanic doubles and violent, psychotic fragmentation. In the questioning of narrative of authority and the legitimacy of social forms, what can be called postmodern gothic is akin, in its playfulness and duplicity, to the artificialities ambivalences that surrounded 18th century gothic and were produced in relation to the conflicts of emerging modernity. Through gothic fiction terror and horror have depended on things not being what they seem. In encouraging superstition interpretation in, and of, novels by means of narrative devices and generic expectations. Gothic texts have always played along the boundaries between fictional forms and social values. The horror of textuality is linked to pervasive terrors of archaic disintegration or psychotic dissolution.

Since Freud and partly in line with his kind of psychoanalysis, the French theorist and therapist Julia Kristeva has gone on more recently in her book *Power and Horror* (1980), to see the return of the repressed familiar in “the uncanny” as based on a more fundamental human impulse that also helps us to define the cultural, as well as psychological, impulses most basic to the gothic. Kristeva argues to embody contradictions, as instance of what she calls the “abject” and product of “abjection,” which she derives from the literal meaning of ab-ject; “throwing off,” and “being thrown under,” what we “throw off,” she suggests, is all that is “in-between...ambiguous...composite” in our beings, the fundamental inconsistency that prevent us from declaring a coherent and independent identity to ourselves and others.

The greatest horror in the gothic, however, is not simply the pull of the masculine back toward an over powering femininity. The deep feminine level, as the gothic mode has developed, is but one major forms of a primordial dissolution that can obscure the boundaries between all western oppositions, not just masculine-feminine or the other pair already noted. The reason that gothic others or spaces can abject myriad cultural and psychological contradiction, disguise, is because those spectral characters, images, and setting harbor the hidden reality that oppositions of all kinds cannot maintain their separations, that each “lesser term” is contained in its counterpart and that difference really arises by standing against and relating to interdependency. While high versus low and serious versus popular tend to blur in the malleable gothic genre, so do all of the cultural distinctions it bakes on thematically, whether those are based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class, stages of growth, level of existence, or even species.

What makes the contemporary gothic particularly contemporary in its both themes and reception, however, is that these unconscious desires center on a problem of a lost object, the most overriding basis of our need for the gothic and almost everything else. That loss is usually material (parents, money, property, freedom to move around, a lover, or family member), but the materiality of that loss always has the psychological and symbolic dimension to it. In the psychoanalytic gothic, we intensely desire the object that has been lost, or another object, person, or practice that might take its place, but we are aware at some level that this object carried with it the threats of punishment: the anger of the father, the breaking of the law, castration.

The disruption of domestic history is ultimately based on a fluidity of the gothic protagonist’s personal history; contemporary gothic characters often utterly confuse their childhood experiences with their adult lives. This confusion results from

the unconscious as Freud described it, a repository of prohibited desires, aggression, and painful or terrifying experience. As these psychological experience messes with the sense of loss that accompanies them, they set up echoes to haunt our heroes with the vivid immediacy of the original moment.

The Woman in Black has recognized the capacity of Gothic literature to be politically and socially engaged, even though a broad critical re-evaluation of Gothic literature since the early 1980s (Baldick and Mighall 225). Hill's novel was respond critically for its usual concentration on autobiographical influences ,its formal literary qualities and feminists interpretation. Earnest Hofer described this novel as a personal outpouring that "discloses the sub-conscious torment" that Hill experienced after miscarriage and, as such, reads it as atypical of and weaker than her earlier fiction (Hofer 145). It is clear that her, she had use her autobiographical material in the novel (Hill 114), but this research tries to look Hill not as a individual, but also as someone sharing and expressing the same dreams , fears and anxieties of many women in Britain in early 1980s. If one look through the narrow angle, this novel seems autobiographical, but if the socio-historical aspects are included, then many social debates of 1980s, can be evacuated out of it.

The surrounding of writing *Frankenstein* is relevant to compare with the personal circumstances of *The Woman in Black*. Ellen Moers has shown how Mary Shelley's personal distresses regarding the death of her new-born child while writing *Frankenstein* contributed to the anxiety of the novel (Moers 93-9). Thus, a socio-historical reading is needed to include with the biographical one. Hill's novel is similarly influenced by her extreme state of psychological distress and by the historical condition in which it was written. In addition, Jacqueline Rose and Alan Sinfield's criticism of Sylvia Plath's writing is appropriate to a reading of hill's novel.

Rose critiques Plath's work as shaped by both historical process and her personal circumstances. She argues that some feminist readings that focus solely on the pathology of the women writer at the expense of a contextualization of her work in its time and place are problematic (Rose 24, 4). Similarly, Sinfield maintains the narrow interpretation of literature by women writers as stemming from emotional instability "is of a piece with customary stereotyping of women". He argues the reader to follow what "seems violent and hysterical" in Plath's writing "to its structural grounding in the concepts of gender that informed Plath" (Sinfield 210). This researcher follows the lead of these two critics with regard to Hill's *The Woman in Black*.

This research tries to dig out the formal and generic qualities of *The Woman in Black*. Some critics claim that, this novel is imitated. For example, Clive Bloom cauterized it as a Gothic horror revival (Bloom 7), whereas, Allan Llyod Smith argues that it utilizes a "stylized flat repetition of Gothic structures" (Llyod Smith). Beyond its negative response, some critics and reviewers has praises it as well. Among them one is Stephen Bann. He praises the novel as "gradual development of an exquisite suspense" that he argues, distinguishes the "true ghost story" from its "gross and overblown . . . bastard brother", the horror story.

This research attempt to unfold that how can be the Gothic horror tropes of *The Woman in Black* influenced by the historical conditions in which it was written. However the novel is historically conditioned, bus this researcher would claim that the novel mediates some of the cultural anxieties of that period concerning families. The controversy and debate about the nature of the family necessarily influenced construction of femininity and maternity because, woman have often been the primary carers of children. Attitude towards and politically influenced construction of the family and its social role underwent a significant and radical shift with the election of

a conservative government in 1979 and the rise of political right. While going into the socio-historical ground of 1980s, we can find that, conservative social policy in the 1980s advocated greater independence for families, and moved toward the mixed economy of welfare provision for them. The expedient principle was that, in the conflict between state and parental responsibility, the family, the family should not interfere with. Margaret Thatcher's promulgation of the Victorian virtues of self-reliance, individualism and social responsibility informed policies that aimed to discourage "a dependency culture" and a "nanny state" that, she believed, encouraged by too much state support (Thatcher 627).

However, there were gross discrepancies at this time between the law relating to the rights of the family and powerful party political discourses about the family. In practice, professional social workers were pressured to be pro-active in removing the children at risk from the struggling family and placing them in state care. Laws concerning the right of parents and the state, before the Children Act of 1989, allowed authorities to take a child into care without consultation with the parents. Once this extreme step were taken, all subsequent decisions were out of the parent or parents' hands and thereafter the burden was on them to go to court to regain the child. In 1975 local authorities assumed parental rights in 26 percent of cases, and 50,600 were placed in care voluntarily by their parents. By 1980 this number had dropped to 44,300, but 41 percent were made subject to parental rights resolution (Healey). These statistics suggest that the ideological representation of self determining family was largely false.

In addition, by 1982, the proportion of married women in the labour force in Britain was 50 percent of the total work force (Beechey and Whitelegg 82). The number of working mothers with children with five has doubled since then, with 1.5

million women in employment, a third of whom work full time (Norton). These trends in the labour market caused practical problems for women concerning how this office of care could be equitably shared within the immediate family or in wider social group. The family was an ideological battleground in early 1980s Britain. Women and mother were particularly confronted with contradictory ideas, values and models of behavior with respect to professional aspirations and family commitment. *The Woman in Black* is, in an indirectly mythic fashion, explores some of the parental anxieties resulting from widespread changes in the care of children and way of family life.

The novel also reworks on earlier Gothic narratives, which often concerned the anxieties of young and (sexually) inexperienced Gothic heroine (Medleski 59-61), by exploring a later period of many women's lives. This novel could be read as a radical Gothic text that resists feminine stereotypes by presenting the caring, maternal disposition of the women as intermixed with traits that might be described as "demonic, freakish, witchlike or haggish". Thus, being a ghost story, *The Woman in Black*, challenges assumptions about women's natural acquiescence and their unconditionally generous responses to husband, partners and children.

This research also focuses on the depiction of the Gothic trope in the traditional manner as, Hill seems to apply the same early Gothic structures. Furthermore, she appears to misinterpret woman, by 'silencing' them and presenting in a negative and conventional mode. The story of the novel is assumed to revolve around the female characters, but it rather pointed towards the male narrator, Arthur Kipps and his past experiences, and in his own narration. So, the researcher attempts to dig out the strategy behind 'silencing' women, in this novel.

Both Stephen Bann and the critic Gina Wisker read *The Woman in Black* as conventional in its use of gothic trope. For Bann, the conventionality lies in Hill's

skillful and elegant pastiche of the ghost story, while, for Wisker, it is in the novel's adherence to the "traditional format of the ghost story" and its focus on a male protagonist. This researcher's reading of this novel is indebted to Bann and Wisker, but it seeks to establish that its use of familiar gothic tropes incorporates a radical cultural significance as well as having literary values.

The Gothic heroine of *The Woman in Black*, Jennet Humphrye's presence is uncanny because the rubbish that attaches to her female body pollutes the so-called civilized society that she inhabits. As a ghost she is horrific because she fulfills abject desires by causing the death of children. These readings, while drawing on Gilbert and Gubar, are also underpinned by Kristeva's theories of the abject not-I or other (Kristeva 53-5, 70-9). Kristeva argues that civilized society often fails to recognize the uncivilized other as part of itself. Her abjection, as manifest in the maternal body (5), would indicate a sober reading of *The Woman in Black*. Kristeva's theories imply that, in the light of Holocaust history, barbaric desires on a huge scale can no longer be defined. These insights suggest that the ghost of the woman in black in Hill's novel terrifies readers because we recognize the potential for similarly barbaric behavior in ourselves.

The gothic horror tropes of *The Woman in Black* can be influenced by the historical conditions in which it was written. A simple, direct relationship between this novel and historical change in the 1980s would reduce the complexities of the history. However, the novel is historically conditioned and, the researcher would claim, mediates some of the cultural anxieties of that period concerning families. If we accept the premise that gothic and ghost stories have the capacity to be politically and socially engaged, then what were the political and social developments and preoccupations of 1980s that influenced the cultural debate with regard to the family?

What were the dominant discourses in early 1980s Britain that define legal, financial and pastoral responsibilities for children, and were these responsibilities gendered? More specifically, how does Hill's use of gothic tropes in *The Woman in Black* call into question language used at that time that produced myths about the 'ideal' mother?

The researcher makes an effort to expose, how does *The Woman in Black* reworks conventional Gothic trope such as haunted room, old manuscripts and an inexperienced narrator. Several commentators on Hill's early fiction draw attention to her continued preoccupation with enclosed and liminal spaces as a device for exploring the anxieties of outsiders, misfits the weaker member of society. This novel, through the use of gothic tropes, reveals Hill's persistent concern with characters that are literally shut out, marginalized, eccentric or other. The gothic motif of the enclosed room may be read as a variation of bluebeard story and, as such conventional. The locked room is a child's nursery that has lain untouched since the death of the child. Shades of Dickens's Miss Havesham pervade the text here. The room has an uncanny power over the narrator Arthur Kipps, a visiting solicitor tasked with winding up the family estate of the deceased owner, Mrs. Alice Drablow. Kipps also finds a box of paper, documents and letters in Drablow's house, Eel Marsh House. Unearthing manuscripts and entering locked rooms are common gothic tropes that invariably cause chilling, uncanny responses in both protagonist and reader.

Thus, this researcher aims to explore the popular Gothic trope that is used by Susan Hill in the novel *The Woman in Black*, and its hidden socio-historical ground, on which this is written. Especially, this research tries to excavate the social anxieties associated with the hierarchies of authority in families; specially domination of male, legal responsibility, the isolation of unmarried mothers and the rights of parents or

those in *logo parentis*. As this novel belongs to a tradition of women's radical gothic so, the present researcher takes these facts into consideration, and deals with the 'gothic' as the theoretical tool to carry out the research. Similarly, taking into account the cultural context, this novel can be read as a socio-historical criticism for the debate about power structure within the family that has influenced the construction of femininity and masculinity in the society.

II. Politics of Silence in *The Woman in Black*

Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* unfolds gloom and darkness with regard to a haunted Eel Marsh House in Shire. The novel deals with the uncanny experience of the protagonist and narrator of this novel, Author Kipps, while visiting to Eel Marsh house as a solicitor of Mrs. Alice Drablow's funeral. Then the novel takes its course through various unexpected happenings, full of horror, suspense, thrill, gloom and romance taking the novel towards the course of gothic setting. As such, the present researcher takes these facts into consideration, and deals with the 'gothic' as the theoretical tool to carry out the research. Similarly, taking into account the cultural context, this novel can be read as a social critique of the debate about power structure within the family that has influenced the construction of femininity and masculinity.

The gothic, which is based around an incident that spreads terror and anxiety amid its characters, is the most vital element in *The Woman in Black*. The novel presents the dreadful situations, which easily can fright any reader. Most of all, the description given by narrator, Kipps, about that woman in black is so scaring as:

She was dressed in deepest black, [. . .] its blackness was a little rusty looking. A bonnet type had covered her head and shaded her face, [. . .] suffering from some terrible wasting disease, for not only was she not only pale, even more than a contrast with the blackness of her garments could for, but the skin and, it seemed, only the thinnest layer of flesh was tautly stretched and strained across her bones, so that it gleamed with a curious, blue-white sheen, and her eyes seemed sunken back into her head. (40)

Thus, gothic takes its toll on the residents of the Gifford Arms and Eel Marsh House. To make the novel more dramatic Susan Hill puts the setting in such a way that

strongly helps this novel to show it as a gothic horror. To prove this, the description of Eel Marsh, by the narrator can be more helpful:

I saw a scarcely a tree, but the hedgerows were dark and twiggy and low, and the earth that had been ploughed was at first a rich-mole-brown, in straight furrows, [. . .] I looked up ahead and saw, as if rising out of the water itself, a tall, gaunt house of grey stone with a slate roof, that now gleamed steellily in the light. It stood like some lighthouse or beacon or Martello tower, facing the whole, wide expanse of marsh and estuary the most astonishingly situated house I had ever seen or could ever see or could ever conceivably have imagined, isolated, uncompromising. (49)

Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times, fiction, the castle, gradually gave a way to the old houses: as both building and family line, it became the site where fear and anxieties returned in the present. As in the site of old and ancient Eel Marsh house can justify that. Similarly, the gothic heroine, Jennet Hymphyre died a long ago, but she continuously hunts in the present. All things that is related to her past, if anyone come in touch with these, s/he would grasped by her ghostly spells. The protagonist, Arthur also goes close to her past, so he incased in a great trouble caused by her, by losing his wife and child. As he says at last, “I had seen the ghost of Jennet Hymfrye and she had had her revenge” (128).

Socio-historical criticism of *The Woman in Black* is uncommon, even though a broad critical re-evaluation of gothic literature since the early 1980s has recognized the capacity of gothic literature to be politically and socially engaged (Baldick and Mighall 225). Critical response to Hill’s novel usually concentrates on autobiographical influences, its formal literary qualities and feminist interpretations,

Earnest Hofer, for instance, describes this novel as a personal outpouring that “discloses the sub conscious torment” that Hill experienced after a miscarriage and, as such, reads it atypical of and weaker than her earlier fictions (Hofer 145). While there is clear evidence for Hill’s use of autobiographical material in the novel (Hill 114), this researcher nonetheless wants to look at Hill not only as a individual, but also as someone as someone as sharing the collective dreams, fears and anxieties of many women in Britain in the early 1980s. a narrow focus on the biographical aspects *The Woman in Black* excludes these socio-historical considerations, whereas both elements are seamlessly interwoven throughout this novel.

A comparison here with the personal circumstances surrounding the writing the writing of *Frankenstein* and *The Woman in Black* is pertinent. Ellen Moers has shown how Mary Shelley’s personal traumas concerning the death of her new-born child while writing *Frankenstein* contributed to the preoccupations of the novel (Moers 93-9). However, the biographical reading does not need to exclude a socio-historical one; each complements the other. Hill’s novel is similarly influenced by her extreme state of psychological distress and by the historical condition in which it was written. In addition, Jacqueline Rose and Alan Sinfield’s criticism of Sylvia Plath’s writing is appropriate to a reading of hill’s novel. Rose critiques Plath’s work as shaped by both historical process and her personal circumstances. She argues that some feminist readings that focus solely on the pathology of the women writer at the expense of a contextualization of her work in its time and place are problematic (Rose 24, 4). Similarly, Sinfield maintains the narrow interpretation of literature by women writers as stemming from emotional instability “is of a piece with customary stereotyping of women”. He argues the reader to follow what “seems violent and hysterical” in Plath’s writing “to its structural grounding in the concepts of gender

that informed Plath” (Sinfield 210). This researcher follows the lead of these two critics with regard to Hill’s *The Woman in Black*.

A second common critical approach to *The Woman in Black* concerns its formal and generic qualities. Some critics claim that *The Woman in Black* is derivative. Clive Bloom, for example, characterizes it as a gothic horror revival (7), while Allan Lloyd Smith argues that it employs a “stylised flat repetition of gothic structures” (13). On the other hand the critique and reviewer Stephen Bann praise the novel as “gradual development of an exquisite suspense” that he argues, distinguishes the ‘true ghost story’ from its “gross and overblown...bastard brother”, the horror story. He traces its literary antecedents back through M. R. James, R. L. Stevenson, Sheridan Le Fanu, Edgar Allen Poe and their predecessors (Bann 12). The novel is certainly rich in intertextual references, Wilkie Collin’s *The Woman in White*, perhaps being the most obvious.

Both Stephen Bann and the critic Gina Wisker read *The Woman in Black* as conventional in its use of gothic trope. For Bann, the conventionality lies in Hill’s skillful and elegant pastiche of the ghost story, while, for Wisker, it is in the novel’s adherence to the “traditional format of the ghost story” and its focus on a male protagonist. This researcher’s reading of this novel is indebted to Bann and Wisker, but I seek to establish that its use of familiar gothic tropes incorporates a radical cultural significance as well as having literary values.

A fruitful critical response to Susan Hill’s fiction combines feminist, generic and formal literary interpretation. Most useful in this respect is Wisker’s work on the genre of women’s horror writing although, as shown above, she regards Hill’s ghost stories as relatively weak example of gothic horror. Wisker’s general argument is that the generic conventions of horror fiction are far more subversive in the novels of

women writers than in those written by men, and she tends to blur any fine distinction (such as Bann make) between gothic and horror conventions (Wisker 8). She claims that women's horror "frequently refuses the disempowerment, which consistently configures women as victims, femmes fatales, hags and whores" (1). She describes the lack of restoration of order or closure, resulting in the subversion of patriarchal stereotypes of women, as a distinctive aspect of women writers' radical horror. In addition, the use of oxymoron, carnivalesque elements and burlesque frequently undermines or ridicules the stereotype of the dominant male, and she maintains the conventional horror "habitually reinforce[s] the status quo" by "return[ing] to us to a patriarchal order that devalues women", while women's horror tends to be the less conservative (117). Arguably, *The Woman in Black* uses more of these devices than Wisker allows. There is sufficiently strong evidence in the increasingly unbridled attacks made by the ghostly woman in black, which cause the death of many children, to characterize *The Woman in Black* as a ghost story and as horror or gothic horror.

The Woman in Black reworks conventional gothic tropes such as the haunted room, old manuscripts and the naïve narrator. This novel, through the use of gothic tropes, reveals Hill's persistent concern with characters that are literally shut out, marginalized, eccentric or other. The gothic motif of the enclosed room may be read as a variation of bluebeard story and, as such conventional. The locked room is a child's nursery that has lain untouched since the death of the child. Shades of Dicken's Miss Havesham pervade the text here. The room has an uncanny power over the narrator Arthur Kipps, a visiting solicitor tasked with winding up the family estate of the deceased owner, Mrs. Alice Drablow. Kipps also finds a box of paper, documents and letters in Drablow's house, Eel Marsh House. Unearthing manuscripts and entering locked rooms are common gothic tropes that invariably cause chilling,

uncanny responses in both protagonist and reader. Such a response evoked partly, as Freud has described, “through the eruption of the familiar . . . into the unfamiliar . . .” (Freud 226). On entering the room, Kipps hears the beat of an empty rocking slowing to a halt, but, undaunted, proceeds to familiarize him with the room’s contents:

I picked things up, stroked them, even smelled them. They must have been here for half a century, yet they might have been played with this afternoon and tidied away tonight. [. . .] But for the moment at least there was nothing here to frighten or harm me, there was only emptiness, an open door, a neatly made bed and a curious air of sadness, of something lost, missing, so that I myself felt a desolation.

(97)

Through such uncanny experiences, Kipps learns the family secret, that the dead child was illegitimate son of the woman in black, Jannet Humphrye. To avoid social arising from the moral values of late Victorian England, the son, Nathaniel, was adopted by her married sister, Alice Drablow. Family tragedy followed when the child, Nathaniel was drowned in a pony-and-trap accident on the marshes surrounding Eel Marsh House.

It can be argued that Hill is not innovative in employing gothic tropes to explore the constraints on woman on a domestic scale, rather than locating women in ruined gothic castle. Hill’s use of domestic gothic does extend this domain. Her fiction empower the denigrated mother (in both her physical and spectral forms) to resist confinement and to move to and fro between what were once dramatized in gothic literature as separate masculine and feminine spheres.

In *The Woman in Black*, Hill significantly revises the gothic trope of feminine

confinement within the domestic space. As Kate Ferguson Ellis argues, conventional gothic novels feature gendered spaces:

Focusing on crumbling castles as site of terror, and on homeless protagonist who wander the face of the earth, the gothic, too, [that is, in addition to Milton's presentation of expulsion from Eden] is preoccupied with the home. But it is a failed home that appears on its pages, the place from which some (usually 'fallen' men) are locked out, and others (usually 'innocent' women) are locked in (ix).

Hill's novel offers a variation of this familiar gothic trope. For example, Jennet Humphrye, during her lifetime, refuses to be ostracized from 'respectable' society, often returning to her sister's house in an attempt to reclaim her son. Later, in the form of a ghost, she has completed of space and time in which to wreck vengeance against other parents by causing the death of their children. In this novel, Jennet Humphrye plays the role more attributed to the wandering male protagonist. She is neither locked in, but has the haunting power to 'lock' and open her son's nursery at will in order to torment Kipps. She might, therefore, be considered an excessively transgressive gothic 'heroine'.

Kipps' initial dominance in *The Woman in Black* is undermined by characteristically gothic textual devices, as well as by the events of the plot. Although he maintains first person narration throughout, he does not sustain his authority. In this regard, the novel resembles Wisker's description of radical women's horror, which undermines patriarchal tendencies to define and confine women. He is finally shown to be conventional and foolish, though not tyrannical or pernicious in the mode of earlier gothic villains. Kipps's response to Jennet Humphrye's letters, in which she protests the adoption of her illegitimate baby son, is to dismiss the incident as "a

touching one and not particularly unfamiliar” (113). Yet other ‘voices’ and other untold stories are inscribed in Kipps’s first person narration. The silent stares of parents who have lost their children after the visitation of her ghost, described by Kipps without his understanding, are the especially moving example of this. After the ghost has haunted him and caused the instant death of his baby son and lingering death of his second wife, he too is reduced to inarticulacy: “I have sat here at my desk, day after day, night after night, a blank sheet of paper before me, unable to lift my pen, trembling and weeping too” (125). This may be read as a fitting revenge for Jennet Humphrye against Kipps the solicitor who, however benevolent his intentions, has final control over anguished letters of protest against her son’s adoption and the legal documents detailing its ratification. Mary Jacobus’s interpretation of the lost and hidden letters in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* can be appropriated here to the reading of Hill’s novel. Jacobus argues that *Villette* is “a text formally fissured by its own repressions, concealing a buried letter” (Jacobus 41). A similar Freudian reading can be made of *The Woman in Black*, but in this case the return of the repressed, or the eruption of the *heimlich* into the *unheimlich*, concerns the stigmatized unmarried mother rather than the young heroine as in Brontë’s *Villette*.

In addition to the final ‘silencing’ of the terrorized Kipps by the ghost of the woman in black, his authority as a male narrator is also undermined throughout the novel by its dialogical structure. After an opening framing device, Kipps’s narration moves back to the first decade of the nineteenth century. Thereafter, the story of Jennet Humphrye-- during the 1860s, her exile, her later return as a sick woman and the death by drowning of her son Nathaniel-- is embedded in fragments in his

narration. Hill does not return to the outer framing narrative at the end of the novel, thus denying the reader a sense of closure or resolution. This accord with Wisker's description of devices commonly used in subversive writing.

A comparison with the narrative structures of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* is also instructive here. In the second half of the Collins's novel, its multiple narration gives way to the first-person narration of the protagonist Walter Hartright. Jenny Bourne Taylor argues that this is consonant with Hartright becoming husband, father head of the Fairlie estates by marrying Laura Fairlie/Glyde (Bourne Taylor 63-70). The novel ends in closure with a benevolent patriarchal regime in place and all suggestions of the supernatural rationalized. In this respect, it might be read as conservative of Radcliffean gothic because the deviant woman in white, Anne Catherick, dies, while the compliant woman in white, her half-sister Laura Fairlie, becomes the infantilized wife of Hartright.

The Woman in Black, by contrast, has no such comfortable conclusion. Jennet Humphrye and her ghost may be interpreted as different versions of the same woman (a conventional gothic trope of the Doppelgänger) or as a pairing that challenges that binary images of pure and 'fallen' women far more thoroughly than Collins's presentation of Laura and Anne. At the end of this novel, the woman in black dominates as a ghostly, raging virago. Her reiterated and obsessive abduction of children, described by Kipps as full of "malevolence and hatred and passionate bitterness", replicates to a terrifying degree what was forced on her in her earthly existence (127). The particular horror of *The Woman in Black* is that the ghost is not laid to rest. In the last pages she is still at large, having ranged freely across two centuries, unbound by geographical constraints and driven to bring misery to families again and again.

The gothic horror tropes of *The Woman in Black* can be influenced by the historical conditions in which it was written. A simple, direct relationship between this novel and historical change in the 1980s would reduce the complexities of the history. However, the novel is historically conditioned and, the researcher would claim, mediates some of the cultural anxieties of that period concerning families. If we accept the premise that gothic and ghost stories have the capacity to be politically and socially engaged, then what were the political and social developments and preoccupations of 1980s that influenced the cultural debate with regard to the family? What were the dominant discourses in early 1980s Britain that define legal, financial and pastoral responsibilities for children, and were these responsibilities gendered? More specifically, how does Hill's use of gothic tropes in *The Woman in Black* call into question language used at that time that produced myths about the 'ideal' mother?

Political ideologies and discourses are greater or lesser authority that proposed to define the family during the early 1980s was markedly contradictory. Cultural perceptions about what combination of relationship might constitute a family and which roles its member should play became increasingly contentious. This controversy and debate about the nature of the family necessarily influenced constructions of femininity and maternity because woman have been, and often still are, the primary carers of children.

Bearing in mind the influence of this socio-historical context, *The Woman in Black* could be described as a ghost story that embodies contemporary concerns about the familial responsibilities of the parents, especially mothers. Furthermore, it lays bare myths that surround the notion of motherhood. There was vigorous debate in early 1980s Britain about the legal rights of parents when their children were taken

into care by social services (Healey 1982). This perceived erosion of family and democratic rights may have found indirect expression in the story of Jennet Hymphrye endeavors to prevent the adoption of her son, and her subsequent fight to reclaim him. The novel also reworks earlier gothic narratives, which often concerned the anxiety of young and (sexually) inexperienced gothic heroines (Modleski 59-61), by exploring a later period of many women's lives. The focus on a monstrous, aberrant in *The Woman in Black* may be interpreted as an expression of the deep seated worries of mothers, who, broadly speaking, by the 1980s, were no longer confined to the house and whose familial responsibilities often included entrusting the care of their children to others while working away from home.

The gothic trope of haunting in *The Woman in Black* is distinctively nightmarish because it involves the suffering of the children. The three sites of the most violent haunting are Nathaniel Drablow's bedroom, smashed to pieces by the ghost and its contents spread "like entrails from the wounded body" (96), the pony-and-trap accident on the marshes in which he is drowned (119), and the London park where Kipps's wife and baby son suffer injury and death (128). The ghost story, then, enacts the maternal nightmare or anxiety dream in which children cannot always be kept safe, no matter how much they are cared for.

However, the narrative cannot be read as simply illustrating guilt and maternal anxiety of the kind often attributed to 'good' mothers, because the ghostly perpetrator of the suffering was also of mother. *The Woman in Black*, therefore, is ambivalent in its depiction of motherhood. Heartless mothers are a recurring preoccupation of Hills's novels; *The Albatross*, *The Service of Clouds*—but this novel probes the extreme and darkest side of maternal passion and power. It explores, through gothic tropes, the roots of cruelty in mothers. It resists awkward, unresolved but commonly

idealized stories about the family at a time in early 1980s Britain when many women were (and frequently still are) concerned with multiple roles, such as responsibilities for children, waged work outside the home and attendant worries about childcare. Both the ghost story, and the social climate in which it was written, suggest the mothers under extreme pressure have the potential like any other members of the family, for cruelty to children.

Both Jennet Humphrye and her ghost challenge the moral double standard of Victorian England and the quasi-Victorian family values promulgated during the early 1980s. How is this achieved? Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's analysis of binary presentations of the angelic monstrous female (Gilbert and Gubar 26-7) and their interpretation of the primal Oedipal family (227) are helpful here. Jennet Humphrye, though fallen from social grace, is also virtuous and caring, or 'angelic'. Her ghostly counterpart is monstrous but, at the same time, cannot be kept outside 'civilized' boundaries. As a 'fallen' woman, Jennet is ejected from the 'paradise' of close contact with her baby son and is forced to leave her village. By returning, she resembles the mythic figure of Adam's first wife Lilith, rather than Eve. Faced with either self-effacement and 'feminine' silence or demonization, Lilith took revenge against Adam by killing babies. She chose to be monstrosity rather than Adam's cipher (35-6). Hills presentation, therefore, splits binary and polarized images of women. Using Gilbert and Gubar's interpretation of the fall from Eden, *The Woman in Black* could be read as a radical gothic text that resists feminine stereotypes by presenting the caring, maternal disposition of women as intermixed with traits that might be described as 'demonic', freakish, witchlike or haggish. Thus, as well as being a ghost story, this novel challenges assumption about women's 'natural'

acquiescence and their unconditionally generous responses to husbands, partners and children.

In addition, Jennet Humphrye and her ghost are abject figures, their bodies exhibiting ‘terrible wasting’ and ‘ravages of the flesh’ (40). The living and spectral mother of Nathaniel is deceased and disgusting. She therefore needs to be excluded or pushed to the margins. Her presence is uncanny because the filth that attaches to her female body pollutes the so-called civilized society that she inhabits. As a ghost she is horrific because she fulfills abject desires by causing the death of children. These readings, while drawing on Gilbert and Gubar, are also underpinned by Kristeva’s theories of the abject not-I or other (Kristeva 53-5, 70-9). Kristeva argues that civilized society often fails to recognize the uncivilized other as part of itself. Her abjection, as manifest in the maternal body (5), would indicate a sober reading of *The Woman in Black*. Kristeva’s theories imply that, in the light of Holocaust history, barbaric desires on a huge scale can no longer be defined. These insights suggest that the ghost of the woman in black in Hill’s novel terrifies readers because we recognize the potential for similarly barbaric behavior in ourselves.

The Woman in Black was not only written and published at a time of social and political debate about the family, but also during a period when a plethora of texts called into question conventional images of women and motherhood. For example, Angela Carter’s polemical work, *The Sadeian Woman*, in which Carter draws attention to the consolatory myth of the ‘redeeming purity of the virgin’ and ‘the healing, reconciling mother’, belongs to the same historical moment as *The Woman in Black* (Carter: 5). Later, when describing her feminist fairytales in an interview in 1987, Carter claimed that the stock fairytale figure of the wicked stepmother has persistently embodied the darker side of ‘the real mother’ and she express her belief

that “the women moment has actually concentrated on mothering a lot and it’s tended to romanticize it”. Hill’s woman in black, who abducts children from their parents because she has lost her own, is comparable to Carter’s subversive fairytales, even though Carter’s carnivalesque strategies in *The Bloody Chamber* collection tend to deromanticize young heroine rather than mothers. Hill’s ghost, by undermining constructs of femininity, also belongs to a gallery of androgynous or grotesque female figure in 1980s fiction, such as Carter’s *The Passion of New Eve* and *Nights at the Circus*, Fay Weldon’s *Life and Loves of a She Devil*, Ellen Galford’s *Moll Cutpurse*, *Her True History: A Novel* and Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry*.

Furthermore, in *The Woman in Black* almost all the female characters are ‘silent’. They even not talked a single word and their presence is also underestimated. Hill is following the same conventional patriarchal trope to represent the woman characters. In the novel *Kipps*, the narrator describes Mrs. Daily as, “a quiet, shy-seeming, powdery looking little woman, even more ill at ease in her surroundings than he. She said little, smiled nervously, crocheted something elaborates with very fine cotton” (78). So, we can see the same Victorian tendency to represent women as submissive.

‘Silencing’ the women can be seen in many parts in this novel. The words which are used for the identity of the female characters are interiorized. The words as “Mrs. Drablow was, a rum’un”, “The young woman with the wasted face”, “a quiet, shy-seeming, powdery-looking, little woman”, and such. But for the male characters, no such interiorizing words are used in this whole novel. The protagonist and the narrator, *Kipps* is himself some gothic psyche that leads him towards his tragic experiences. He is guided by his evil psychological force that leads him to do

whatever he was restricted. We can find out that, while Mr. Daily stops him not to go to the Eel Marsh House, but he says, “To tell the truth, I’m enjoying myself. I’m finding the whole things rather a challenge. [. . .] I’m afraid I’m going” (80). Due to his impulse, he faced the dreadful experiences, even near to his death.

In *The Woman in Black*, Hill not only shows the female characters in the traditional way their characteristics are shown through a dog. ‘Spider’, the dog in this novel is also a female dog. Kipps described about ‘Spider’s’ characteristics in this way: “she wagged her tail briefly, acknowledging me, but otherwise was still, close to Daily’s heels” (81). If we go a bit further then we can find that, the words like, “wagged her tail”, “still”, “close to Daily’s heels”, shows the submissive nature of women.

Furthermore, the time by the beginning of this novel, we can observe the elements of gothic horror. The politics of gothic lies here, to make the readers aware about the further situation and undertakings. Kipps was sitting with all his family members, around the blaze of fire. They are talking about, ‘ghost’. As we search out this from the following:

They told of dripping stone walls in uninhabited castle and of ivy- clad monastery ruins by moonlight, of the locked rooms and secret dungeons, dank charnel houses and overgrown graveyards, of footsteps creaking upon staircases and fingers tapping at casement, [. . .] vampires and bloodhounds, bats and rats and spiders, of man found at down and women turned white-haired and raving lunatic, and of vanished corpses and curses upon heirs. (17)

In addition, *The Woman in Black* also apprehended about conscious and unconscious state of human mind. The emotion, sentiments and deep instincts can be

observed in these lines, when Kipps recites the line of a poem unconsciously, in front his wife Esme:

‘Some says that ever ‘gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior’s birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long.
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No Fairy takes, or witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is that time.’(20)

Moreover, after reciting these lines he says in over-romantic way: “as I recited them aloud, a great peace come upon me, I was wholly myself again yet stiffened by my resolution”(20). Through this, the anxieties, psychological alienation and inner turmoil, which are the close elements of a gothic fiction, could be dig out. *The Woman in Black* is a narrative gothic fiction, and the narrator, Arthur Kipps, narrates the whole story, centering on his memory. Memory is the major element of a gothic fiction. He faced many turmoil in the past , which were very heart shocking. Based on this he began his story in this way:

Yes, I had a story, a true story, a story of haunting and evil, fear and confusion, horror and tragedy. [. . .] I should tell my tale, not aloud, by the fireside, not as a diversion for idle listeners it was too solemn, and too real, for that. But I should set it down on paper, with every care and in every detail. I would write my own ghost story. Then I should finally be free of it whatever life remained for me to enjoy. (19)

Arthur Kipps's traumatic experiences and anxieties can be seen, bursting out in many of his narrating lines. It can be seen very clearly in the last part of the novel, as he vulnerably says: "But now at last, I have summoned up sufficient courage, I will use the very last of my strength that has been so depleted by the reliving of those past horrors, to write the end of the story" (126). He tries to regain his strength that had been gone during his suffocative occurrences. *The Woman in Black* is a gothic horror novel. In gothic horror stories, the family became a place rendered threatening and uncanny by the haunting return, of past transgression and attendant guilt on an everyday world shrouded in strangeness. In the novel, the happenings at the Eel Marsh House, whatever, Kipps encountered are the best examples to meet this argument. One of the incidents, among these examples is: "At one of the upper windows, the only window with bars across it, the window of the nursery, I caught a glimpse of someone standing. A woman. That woman. She was looking directly towards me" (105).

There is the struggle between conscious and unconscious psyche of Kipps. He tries to come out of the trauma but his effort goes vain. He runs between pain and pleasure. His state of dilemma can be seen by his following expressions: "I longed to enter into what is nothing more or less than good fun. I fought the bitter battle within myself, my head turn away from the fire light so that none of them should change to see any expression which I knew began to show signs of my discomfiture" (17).

A gothic fiction seemed to go underground: its depth where less romantic chasm or labyrinthine dungeons, then the murky recesses of human subjectivity. *The Woman in Black* also depicts the same trend of gothic fiction. The revelation of torturous, fragmented, mysterious, horrible and gloomy incidents and actions, occurring in this novel, stimulate dump feeling on the readers.

Through Gothic fiction, terror and horror have depended on things not being what they seem. In *The Woman in Black*, the basis of horror and terror crop up from the setting and plot. The description of the things made the novel scarier. To meet my argument the portrayal given by narrator, Kipps about the church and graveyard of Mrs. Drablow, is much appropriate:

I saw that we reached the church, which was approached through a wrought-iron gate, between two overhanging yew trees, and situated at the end of a particularly long, very straight path. On either side, and away to the right, stood the gravestone, [. . .] there, on the headstone against which- I was fairly certain I remembered aright- she had been leaning, I thought I could make out the name of Drablow; the letters were encrusted with the salt deposited blown, I suppose, off the estuary over years of bad winter weather. (84)

When Kipps talked about the woman in black to Mr. Jerome, then Mr. Jerome scared so much that, he nearly fainted. As Kipps pointed him towards the woman, by saying: “look, there she is again...ought we not to...” I stopped as Mr. Jerome grabbed my wrist and held it in an agonizingly tight grip, and, looking at his face, was certain that he was about to faint, or collapse with some kind of seizure” (42). This show, Hill had used horror and terror as the main element of gothic fiction. It indicates that, she tries to provoke, a sense of terror on the readers.

In this novel, the setting is in winter season, i.e. November. Generally, winter season is regarded as the season of barrenness, infertility, harshness etc. So, Hill set the whole story in winter season to show the gothic affect. Signs as, “sudden fogs”, “moaning winds”, “rolling mist and rising tide”, are the fine examples to give beam to my argument.

Not only, the setting and plot have gothically designed, but the characters have also mysterious characteristics. A character, whose name is Keckwick, was a very distinct personality as Kipps described: “keckwick pushed his cap back a little in order to scratch at his forehead and I noticed that his nose and much of the lower part of his face were covered in bumps and lumps and warts and that the skin was porridgy in texture and a dark; livid red” (64).

Moreover, some of the incidents are very terrible, which can shake the heart of any reader. The most important element of a gothic horror is, to produce uncanny effect on the reader. In the novel, a incident, when Kipps was caught in the adjacent of Eel Marsh House, is the most horrible. As he says: “the pony and trap with the child who had cried out so terribly and which had been sucked into the quicksand, while marsh and estuary, land and sea, had been shrouded in that sudden fog, and I lost in the midst of it- they too, had not been real, not there, present, not substantial, but ghostly also” (65).

In *The Woman in Black*, Kipps’s conflicting psychology can be seen, time and again. He tries to show himself as a determinate and strong personality, but reality is different. He has a vain and disintegrated character. Due to his own characteristics, he often caught into the trap of terrible incidences. His frail nature is responsible for his tragic experiences. Finally he admitted his limitations and expresses them, like this way:

I looked and looked and recognized what was happening to me. My emotions had now become so volatile and so extreme, my nervous responses so near the surface, so rapid and keen, that I was living in another dimension, my heart seem to beat faster, my step to be quicker, everything I saw was brighter, its outline more sharply, precisely

defined. [. . .] when I eventually returned home, my friends and family would notice the change. I felt older and like a man who was being put to trial, half fearful, half wondering, excited, completely in thrall. (74)

As Feminist study, both the silence imposed and silence exposed or employed. So, they speak while being silent, it is silent language which is pregnant rather than vacuous. They say that, “a silent woman can be rebellious but not submissive”. In this novel, the woman in black never speaks, but her silence is dangerous. She killed children of others, to take revenge to the society, where she only got suppression and hatred. She had not regarded as human being but forced her to leave the village and seized her son away from her. So, her ‘silence’ is the sign of her anger.

Thus, *The Woman in Black* can be read as a radical Gothic text, that tried to resist the female stereotype, in one sense, by presenting the caring, maternal disposition of women as intermixed with traits that might be described as ‘demonic’, freakish, witchlike or haggish. As an open ended text, *The Woman in Black* does not unfold the proper ending or resolution. Kipps believed that, while he left out the Eel Marsh House and Gifford Arms, then all the trouble he faced would be vanish, but his belief remained untouched. His encounter with the woman in black never ended, and she became the cause of his wife and child. The ending of this novel left clear hint that the haunt and terror of the woman in black never die out, but rather remain as it is. There is no ending of her existence. So, Hill has politicized the Gothic, in this way.

Jennet Humphrye is a rebellious figure. As, her son was seized away from her and forced her to leave the village, her bitterness, sense to revenge and passionate outrage increased, but she could not do anything in her life. So, she committed suicide to challenge the society, as we see in Sylvia Plath’s poems. Jennet could not do anything when she was alive. That’s why; she took revenge after her death. Her hatred

was too extreme that, she not only took revenge to her sister, Mrs. Drablow, but to each and everyone with whom she was related. Her passion of revenge was narrated by Kipps, in this way:

Mad with grief and mad with anger and the desire for revenge. She blamed her sister who had let them go out them that day, though it was no one's fault, the mist comes with warning.[. . .] She died in hatred and misery. And as soon as ever she died the haunting began. [. . .] and whenever she has been seen, in the graveyard, on the marsh , in the street of the town, however briefly, and whoever by, there has been one sure and certain result. In some violent and dreadful circumstance, a child has died. (120)

Kipps and Mr. Jerome also lost their children, due to her passionate desire, she couldn't get her son, so, she started killing others child. This is the gothic action.

In addition, before going to Eel marsh house, Kipps had visit Mr. Jerome. He shows his determination to go there, but when he (Kipps) tried to take information about the woman in black, with Mr. Jerome, he looked so nervous and frightening, "Mr. Jerome was looking at me pityingly". Then Kipps thought that: "but his fear was only serving to strengthen my resolve. He had been weakened and broken, by what? A woman" (73). Here, 'a woman' indicates the tone of interiorizing the woman. Kipps might try to say that, Mr. Jerome is afraid with a woman, with such a weak being. Hill, herself is a woman, but she has misrepresentative women in such a way.

The hero is hero, despite all unhealthy behaviors and instincts, he possesses; this is what, Gothic fictions are all about. Even with, the freakish and over exciting, Kipps is supposed as a protagonist and narrator of the novel, *The Woman in Black*. A narrator should be honest about, whatever he narrates, but Kipps, in this novel,

narrated everything from his own standpoint and keeping himself above. Everything that he narrated, was centered on his own interest, opinion etc. He made the situation very cleverly that, all the readers' emotion drive on him. But from other side, if we see, then we can observe that, Jannet Humphrye's experiences were more miserable than him. Hill reinforces the status quo, by returning us to a patriarchal order that devalues woman. She used 'silence', to show women in the traditional way as 'weak and submissive'.

Likewise, in *The Woman in Black*, most of the thrilling incidents were occurred in the night, because it is the sign of death and destruction. All the ill activities take place at night or more importantly, it is the period of destruction. So, Hill has rationally set the events, especially at night to provoke her idea effectively. Eel Marsh House is a house where the ghost of Jannet Humphrye hunts. To show the horror effect, caused by haunting ghost, the appropriate periods is dark and dump i.e. 'night'.

Darkness produces fear and terror, but the place where ghost hunts, the effect is more awful, as Kipps narrated a dreadful incident, when he was alone in the Eel Marsh House at night, and there was everywhere only darkness: "and the darkness did not brighten and would not for some hours but there is no more in the simple states of darkness itself to make a man afraid than in the sound of a storm wind" (102).

In this novel, as a Gothic heroine, Jannet Humphrye has positioned within the tradition, a revelation that shows her isolation and disjointment from the society. She was powerful, in one way, in a sense that, she was not bound in the trap of time and space; she could do whatever she desired. But she could not transform her 'women' position and she was still in margin. The words, which were used to indicate her like, "the woman with the wasted face", "the ghostly woman", "peculiar woman", splits

her true identity, despite using 'Jennet Humphrye', to call her, Kipps always used "woman in black". It illustrates that Hill, herself underestimates the real identity of a woman. So, she has 'silenced' and failed in 'actual representation' of a woman.

Most important features of a Gothic fiction are to return in the past, deal in transgression and decay, commitment to exploring the aesthetics of fear and its cross-contamination of reality and fantasy. These all features can be traced out in *The Woman in Black*. The whole story is based on, exploration of the narrator, Kipps's past experiences. Furthermore, the actions are transgressive and end in decay (death of Kipps's wife and child). In addition, the actions are beyond human, rather they are paranormal. But, this novel could be described as a ghost story that embodies contemporary social concerns about familial responsibilities of parents, especially mothers.

Thus, *The Woman in Black* can be analyzed as a Gothic horror, which contains the socio-historical debates about the position and responsibilities of women in the 1980s. It, not only arouse the uncanny effect to the reader, but also suggests that mothers under extreme pressure have the potential, like any other members of the family, for cruelty to children.

III. Cultural Disagreement in *The Woman in Black*

The novel, *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill, attempts to dig out that the socio-historical condition could be concerned to the background of writing any text. The same situation can be seen in the writing of the novel *The Woman in Black*. The researcher could find out that, this novel is influenced by Hill's both her extreme state of psychological distress and by the historical conditions in which it was written. Furthermore, this thesis shows the concern of the novel's formal and generic qualities.

This project tried to observe the darkness, horror and gloom as a Gothic trope and its relationship with the social and cultural conditions during 1980s in Britain. Gothic can be defined as 'barbaric and uncivilized'. It is related to the terror, anxiety, gloom and Gothic texts have always played along the boundaries between fictional forms and social values. The research focuses on the same thing, that Hill has written this novel concerning her own and the contemporary situation. The novelist seems to share and express the collective dreams, fears and anxieties of many women in Britain in the early 1980s.

While going through the formal and generic explanation of *The Woman in Black*, the researcher investigated that, there are different responses. Regarding this novel, many critics gave their views. Reviewer and critic, Stephen Bann praises this novel by assuming it as the "true ghost story", and adds that "the novel is certainly rich in intertextual references" (Bann 12). But on the other side, for the critic like Gina Wisker, this novel adheres "traditional format of the ghost story" and its focus on male protagonist (Wisker 8). This research attempts to establish that its use of familiar Gothic tropes incorporates a radical cultural significance as well as having literary value.

The researcher also strives to find out that, the protagonist and narrator, Arthur Kipps's dominance in *The Woman in Black*. His initial dominance in the novel is undermined by characteristically Gothic textual devices, as well as by the events of the plot. Although he maintains first person narration throughout, he does not sustain his authority. In this regard, the novel is radical women's horror, which undermines patriarchal tendencies to define and confine women, Wisker described.

This research went all-out to find Hill's significant revision of the familiar Gothic trope of feminine confinement within the domestic space. Jennet Humphrye plays the role more often attributed to the wandering male Gothic protagonist. She is neither locked out nor locked in, but has the haunting power to 'lock' and open her son's nursery at will in order to torture Kipps. She might, therefore, be considered an excessively transgressive Gothic heroine.

Beyond that, the research tried to excavate that, Hill has given transgressive power to the Gothic heroine, Jennet Humphrye. Transgression itself means, "to go beyond the limit of what morally or legally acceptable". Humphrye's activities were out of morality. This creates a sense of misrepresentation of the women, among the readers. Likewise, Jennet Humphrye's true identity, as a deprived mother, is also lost. The researcher finds that, Hill has mislaid the real recognition of her female characters, especially Jennet Humphrye.

The researcher could find that, Hill has used the same early Gothic elements in *The Woman in Black*. The elements, such as gloomy and mysterious atmosphere, torturous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images of life threatening pursuits, unconscious desires center on a problem, especially for the lost objects etc. are excessively used, in this novel.

In addition, the research has attempted to dig out the conflicting psychology of the protagonist, Kipps. Along with the other things, Hill's tactic of silencing female characters also could be uncovered. And one of the most important element of a Gothic novel, i.e. "memory from the past experiences", on which this whole novel is based, is applied, which made *The Woman in Black*, a full flagged Gothic horror.

Finally, while exploiting popular Gothic tropes that in part explain its popularity, *The Woman in Black* is in dialogue with contemporary rhetoric about families. It probes social anxieties associated with hierarchies of authority in families, legal responsibility, the isolation of unmarried mothers and the rights of parents or those in single parent. Consequently, the research attempt dig out that, this novel contributes to new and less idealized perception about the women and woman as mothers. In this respect, Hill's novel belongs to a tradition of women's radical Gothic.

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