

Creative Response to the Gothic

January 1987

My feet gripped the solid, cold mud with every passionate step I took further from that massive nightmare of a home. Even though I was running until my throat knew no such thing as comfort, I felt the spirit of my body being pulled back by some unseeable force. I began to wonder whether I was running in circles because I could not find any ounce of freedom for the life of me. Five years ago, I never imagined that my feet would bring me here.

August 1985

I am afraid that history might repeat itself, so I am writing in this diary in the case that something may happen to me. I never thought that I would put myself in harm's way by marrying into this family. Will I be driven to the same point of insanity as my husband's mother, or will my husband become just as much of a monster as his father was? It isn't until two years into my marriage that I am realizing that this home brings the past back to life. In this diary, I will be noting the events in this household.

November 1985

My husband has locked himself inside his library again. This has become a nightly occurrence ever since we moved into his family's home three years ago. It wasn't until a week ago that I realized my husband's obsession with his late father's work and his desire to finish it. Ever since his fixation began, it seems as if these walls have been talking.

His father's purpose in life was to discover whether or not entities could exist within the walls of a home with history. This purpose ended when his exhaustion, relentlessness, and stubbornness led to his end. When I listen to my husband's shouts of aggression, I wonder whether the probability of theory's falsehood is what is driving him to this madness.

Sometimes, I'll creep past the door to the library, and I'll hear him shouting in anger or the tossing and shuffling of papers. At this point, I am starting to see and hear things in this household as well.

Last night, I woke to a tapping on my door. Surprisingly, my husband was already fast asleep. My curiosity got the best of me and I crept to my door. In front of me was a trail of my husband's paperwork leading to the window outside. What did this mean?

January 1986

My husband bolted up the stairs in rapid movement. My pace couldn't keep up with his angered footwork. I screamed and shouted as loud as I could.

"I know the past! I know what has happened here. You do not have to be your father. His work doesn't have to be finished."

"That's what I've come here to do."

With every step on the staircase, my breath became heavier and heavier. I felt the walls begin to squeeze my throat. Or was that real? I pushed harder and harder to reach him until I got to the top and nothing.

Until I saw a trail of papers leading to the open window.

As soon as I saw what looked like the end, I felt the pressure of the ceiling on my head. I felt coldness all over my body. I heard ringing in my ears. That was when my feet began to move themselves.

I began to wonder: “Is this what it is like when history repeats itself?”

Summary

I found inspiration for my short story from not only the Gothic genre itself, but also from some of the novels we have read this semester. I pulled inspiration from *Jane Eyre* for the idea of an old mansion with history. The mansion I had in mind was an estate owned by one family for multiple generations. I was inspired by Victor Frankenstein’s tumultuous aspirations for the husband’s relentless pursuit of finishing his father’s work. In addition, I incorporated a common theme in Gothic literature, which is fixation or dwelling on the past. Instead of a simple narrative, I wanted to write from the point of view of the narrator’s journal, which I believe makes the story more personal to her. I was inspired by the extremely personal and intimate narration of *Jane Eyre*. Although most Gothic novels take place in the past or are contemporary to the author’s time period, I wanted to write mine in the more recent past. For that element, I was inspired by the writing of Shirley Jackson. I was specifically inspired by the modern, but old-world feel of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. While *The Haunting of Hill House* was not a book we read in class, I was inspired by its Netflix adaptation to make my short story take place in the more recent past. One of my main goals of my short story was to connect the past and present by highlighting the ways in which history can repeat itself if one is not careful.