CHAPTER 1

The Woman in Black: Transition from Angel of the House to Fallen Woman
The Woman in Black: Transition from Angel of the House to Fallen Woman

I

One modern writer who has been influenced or inclined by gothic trends in literature is Susan Hill. She has expressed an interest in the traditional English ghost story, which relies on suspense and atmosphere to create its effect, akin to the classic ghost stories by Montague Rhodes James and Daphne du Maurier. Gothic elements are possibly most impressively illustrated in Hill’s choice of dark, enigmatic settings, against which background struggles between good and evil are lucidly enacted. Hill presents ideas of the gothic as somehow being a safety valve for the powerful emotions felt particularly vividly during childhood. According to Susan, the dark things have their origin somewhere in herself and her own past but she feels that the Pandora’s boxes should be best left unopened.

Susan Hill, an English novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, and children’s writer was born on February 5, 1942 in Scarborough, Yorkshire, England, and a faded resort town similar to the settings of some of her novels. Her father worked in car and aircraft factories. She is the author of award-winning literary fiction, Gothic entertainments and light-hearted chronicles of country life. Pleasant and wicked emerge large in her sombre work and she has used writing as catharsis, mainly after suffering personal tragedy. She acknowledges her mother as she took young Susan to almost every production of the Scarborough Repertory which nurtured her love of the theatre. Susan communicated that she perhaps didn’t comprehend a great deal, but loved the sights and smells of the theatre experience.

As a young teenager, Susan attended many productions at the experimental theatre-in-the-round, the Stephen Joseph Theatre, until her family moved from Scarborough to Coventry in 1958 when she was sixteen years old. She has written a good deal about her early years in Scarborough in the book Family which gave an account of the birth and death of her premature daughter and the completion of her family with the
arrival of her third child. She describes Scarborough as a seaside town of “bracing air . . . elegant Regency buildings and . . . society” in her memoir, Family (qtd. in Freeman). Also in Family she writes, “I have always believed very strongly in the influences of places upon people, and how these places make them what they are” (qtd. in Freeman).

The impact of her Scarborough childhood on her writing is most evident in her early works, such as A Bit of Singing and Dancing (1973) and A Change for the Better (1969), both of which are soap opera-like slices of genteel life in restricted seaside towns, riddled with societal expectations and guesthouses. All the books she wrote before she was 30 involve middle-aged or older characters and are tinged with regret for lost youthful opportunities and sour, roasting marriages. Hadley Freeman in an article “Cotswold Chameleon” (2003) in The Guardian mentions Susan’s assertion that, “When you’re young, the world of adults is intriguing, and I was trying to work out what it was about, not having got there yet. Of course, when I got there, I decided childhood was more interesting and started writing about that”. Undercurrents of passion, loss and fear spin beneath deceivingly smooth surfaces throughout. As mentioned in the same article Susan further says, “Wherever you grow up your whole imagination becomes bound up with the landscape”.

Hill attended grammar school in Coventry, publishing her first novel, The Enclosure (1961) at 15 which was published by Hutchison. The novel was criticised by The Daily Mail for its sexual content, with the proposition that writing in this style was unsuitable for a ‘school girl’. ‘Schoolgirl writes sex novel!’ was the Daily Express’s summation- three years later. Hill’s novels lean to focus on social misfits and outsiders situated in isolated yet highly atmospheric places and characterised largely through her use of language and dialogue. “Unlike many women writers, she shows a real understanding of how men’s and boys’ minds work,” adds Eric Anderson, a family friend and provost of Eton College (qtd. in Freeman). She entered King’s College at the University of London, taking a B.A. degree with honours in 1963, the same year her second novel, Do Me a Favour, appeared. So being referred to by Hill as her novice work, her first two novels are distinguished by their focus on male-female relationships: The Enclosure traces the dissolution of a marriage, and Do Me a Favour, though
populated with a large cast of characters, essentially records the vicissitudes of a relationship between a young woman writer and her journalist lover. Upon graduation, Hill worked as a literary critic for five years for Coventry Evening Telegraph and as a reviewer for various periodicals.

Her atmospheric portrayal of landscape came fairly from her love of the English countryside, but also from Benjamin Britten, whose music she first encountered as a schoolgirl, and whom she refers to as ‘one of my greater influences’. In 1969, Hill travelled to Aldeburgh in Britten’s footsteps and it was from a rented cottage there that she wrote most of her early books. As mentioned in Freeman’s “Cotswold Chameleon” (2003) in The Guardian, Susan describes of her late friend, “His music, his imaginative world, just him, that’s all tied up with that period of writing”. She further asserts that “Apart from Hardy and Dickens, I was influenced more by him than anyone or anything. He was a difficult man, but I just felt a complete affinity with him. The music opened doors within myself that I didn’t know were there”. All Hill’s books from that period are allied by a thread of extreme loss that can also be heard in Britten’s music- which is not quite as resonant in her later works: “It’s a period of my life that is now dead. I still listen to Ben’s music, but he died a long while ago and I mined that particular time” (qtd. in Freeman).

This exceedingly productive period was brought to a sudden end when her fiancé, David, suddenly died of a heart attack in 1972. Hill asserts “That was the blow from which I never recovered . . . It was the one defining moment when I realised that life is not a picnic” (qtd. in Freeman). All of her books written after David’s death hinge on a similar point of revelation, such as in The Service of Clouds, when the usually invisible narrator unexpectedly announces that “there are moments, pure as fire, which we experience and which we do not forget, and sometimes when they come, we know them for what they are” (qtd. in Freeman).

Between 1969 and 1974, Hill wrote six novels and two collections of short stories, as well as numerous radio plays. She describes the force of her creative drive during these years as irresistible. In the book Susan Hill: The Essential Guide (2009) Noakes and Reyonolds mentions about Susan that “‘I could’t stop,’ she says, and what I
wrote came from deep inside me, it had to be written, I couldn’t have done anything else. I don’t think I ‘enjoyed’ what I was doing, I was writing compulsively” (25). Where the stories come from during the process, she does not know: “It is no good enquiring too closely into the origins of it all, and I am slightly superstitious about doing so. I have learned, over the years, simply to trust the workings and productions of my subconscious and of my imagination” (qtd. in Noakes and Reyonolds 25).

Between 1968 and 1974 Hill wrote what she has termed her ‘serious books’: the novels Gentleman and Ladies (1968); A Change for the Better (1969); I’m the King of the Castle (1970) (which won the 1971 Somerset Maugham Award). Winner of the Somerset Maugham Award the novel is a distressing story about the fears and fantasies of childhood, a gothic tale packed with locked rooms, attic, moonlight and moths. Her serious book further included Strange Meeting (1971); The Bird of Night (1972), which won the 1972 Whitbread Literary Award for fiction; and In the Springtime of the Year (1974), as well as the short story collections The Albatross (1971), which won the 1972 John Llewelyn Rhys Memorial Prize, and A Bit of Singing and Dancing (1973). In the Springtime of the Year (1973) is a cathartic novel powered by her grief and anger, and which, she writes in Family, “marked both an end and a beginning-the end of six years of my best writing of fiction, the beginning of a personal healing” (qtd. in Freeman).

She became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1972 and was a presenter of BBC Radio 4’s “Bookshelf” from 1986 to 1987. In the meantime, Hill also wrote many radio plays, which she collected in the volume The Cold Country and Other Plays for Radio (1975). After marrying Stanley W. Wells, a Shakespearean scholar, on Shakespeare’s birthday (April 23) in 1975, they moved to Stratford upon Avon and have a couple of daughters, Jessica Ruston and Clemency who were born in 1977 and 1985. A middle daughter, Imogen, was born prematurely, and died at the age of five weeks. The baby’s death almost destroyed her belief in God and Elizabeth Grice in her article “Susan Hill: ‘Ghosts have been good to me” in The Telegraph (2010) mentioned that she confessed to it: “It was like a door closing in my face”. The books she wrote after her marriage are more meditative than previously, with pages devoted to detailing characters’ emotions uninterrupted by dialogue. Hill has said that Wells ‘stabilised me’. Her friend
and neighbour, the novelist Jeanette Winterson, suggests that through Wells, “Susan’s discovered character and a greater sense of humanity, and I think a lot of that comes from Stanley. He is a great Shakespeare scholar and Shakespeare, of course, was a real humanitarian and developer of character” (qtd. in Freeman).

Works of Susan Hill could be divided into two basic periods, at least according to the topics of her novels. The early work of Hill is tightly linked with her private life in the early 60s. Novels written during this period literally brim over with motives of loneliness and cold human relationships, the darker side of Hill’s work is well-versed by the tragic circumstances surrounding her own life, including the death of her first partner, second child and her near-death experience [Hill is anaphylactic]. Writing seems to be a way how to cope with these frustrations in Hill’s life. She reflects her feelings especially to the novels The Enclosure, A Change for the Better, I’m the King of the Castle, The Bird of Night. However, soon after publishing In the Spring of the Year in 1974, a semi-autobiographical novel of loss, Hill announced her retirement from writing.

It is out of the dark times; almost a decade later that a classic ghost story, The Woman in Black came. It is a novella that Alan Ayckbourn commissioned, in 1987, as a Christian show for Scarborough. Critical responses to Hill’s novel usually focus on autobiographical influences, its formal literary qualities and feminist interpretation. Ernest Hofer, founder of Oxford Summer Seminar illustrates the novel (The Woman in Black) as an individual outbursts or explosion which unveils the sub-conscious torment that Hill suffered after a miscarriage and, as such, interprets it as bizarre and weaker than her previous fiction. Whilst there is apparent proof for Hill’s use of autobiographical material in the novel and Hill could not only been as an individual, but also as sharing and articulating the collective dreams, suspicions and nervousness of many women in Britain in the early 1980s.

A narrow focus on the biographical aspects of The Woman in Black excludes these socio-historical considerations, whereas both elements are impeccably intertwined throughout the novel. But Hill denies any connection between this experience and the subject-matter of The Woman in Black, in which the ghost is a woman destroyed by the loss of a child, “I think the two are completely separate”, she says. “I wrote ghost stories
because I’d always enjoyed reading them and they seemed to be fizzling out . . . I don’t take them terribly seriously. It’s like a cake, with ingredients” (qtd. in Rustin). But Reynolds suggests that “partly because of the grief she felt after Imogen’s death, Susan enters very fully into everyone’s highs and lows. This is apparent in the sensitivity of feeling in her novels” (qtd. in Freeman). Winterson says: “She’s an incredibly energetic person. Partly because she is interested in so much and she likes to explore, that's her nature but also because of Imogen. She once said that she has to keep busy all the time otherwise the black dog comes to get her” (qtd. in Freeman).

For Hill, stories have an occult power. Through them, the daylight world of ordinary consciousness opens on to the hidden and sometimes disturbing unknown, tapping into turbulent currents of emotion. This ghost story opened the new era in Hill’s writing as this genre has been still dominating in Hill’s fiction. She was inspired to write a ghost story by The Turn of the Screw by Henry James. Susan Hill is a Christian writer and The Woman in Black is a morality tale and is set in latter half of 19th century and first half of 20th century. Her experimentation with the Gothic mystery also became a sign of a new departure. She has written about the influence of Victorian fiction on her own writing and, particularly its role in the composition of The Woman in Black. Susan exclaims,

    It was just a challenge I set myself . . . I really wrote it as an exercise almost. I love traditional English, classic, ghost stories, particularly Victorian ghost stories which are virtually always dependent upon atmosphere . . . I wanted to see if I could take all the ingredients of those classic ghost stories and rework them. The first thing was to make a list of what the ingredients of the classic English ghost story are (qtd. in MrMorrisSWA).

Hill stopped writing fiction and instead concentrated on composing radio plays and her monthly column- “The World of Books”- for The Daily Telegraph newspaper.
The publication of the novel *The Woman in Black* in 1983, however, signalled Hill’s return to fiction writing. This ghost story opened the new era in Hill’s writing as this genre has been still dominating in Hill’s fiction. The novel was turned into a play in 1987 and continues to run in the West End of London, joining the group of plays that have run for over twenty years. It was also made into a television film in 1989, and then a film by Hammer Film Production in 2012. The stage version of her study in malevolence, *The Woman in Black*, has been spooking West End audiences for more than 20 years. Her sensibilities are so well tuned to the ominous and inscrutable, to what lurks behind the arras of our imaginations, that even when she is not writing ghost stories, she has a way of turning a tale into something distressing and alarming: “Fictional ghosts have to have a motive, she says roundly. The ones that drive coaches across deserted moorlands, drift up staircases and walk through walls... There is a kind of pointlessness about them. They just go on doing it. You think, why? I call them ‘so what?’ ghosts” (qtd. in Grice).

Hill could not so easily escape her own special fascination with the idea of the haunted- and the haunting- child and a decade later she wrote another ghost story with similar ingredients, *The Mist in the Mirror* in 1992, and a sequel to du Maurier’s *Rebecca* entitled *Mrs. De Winter* in 1993. Children, especially children who don’t quite ‘fit in’ and are vulnerable, are an intriguing subject for Hill, along with the sense of menace that cannot be fully understood. Cheerful normality that gives way suddenly to a terrifying unknown is a recurrent theme. The obsessions of Susan Hill are “ghosts with deep and unresolved feelings, who cannot rest, and who haunt the living, invading their consciousness, desiring to possess them” (Noakes and Reynolds 24).

Since then she has published other fiction—the novella *Lanterns across the Snow* (1987), the novels *Air and Angels* (1991) and *Mrs. de Winter* (1993), and the story anthology *Listening to the Orchestra* (1996)—in addition to many children’s stories and books about literature, historical literary places, and English rural life. As an author Hill is hard to categorise, which possibly helps to elucidate why, in spite of writing for several decades and collecting an armful of literary awards, she has not become a household name, unlike her contemporaries Beryl Bainbridge and Anita Brookner. The books for which she is most famous – *I’m the King of the Castle* (1970), *Strange Meeting* (1971),
The Woman in Black (1983) and Mrs de Winter (1993)-range vividly in theme and tone, from the succinctly anxious prose of a bullied child to a soldier’s elegiac musings, from gothic pastiche to mimicry of Daphne du Maurier. According to Eric Anderson there are three Susan Hills:

There’s the one who writes the serious and important works, such as I’m the King of the Castle and Strange Meeting; there’s the one who writes the novels of entertainment, such as the mysteries like The Mist in the Mirror; and then there's the one who writes the chatty columns in Country Life and has contributed to The Archers. Yet when you meet her there are not three Susans in person- she’s very downright and straightforward (qtd. in Freeman).

In 1996 she started her own publishing company, Long Barn Books, editing and publishing a quarterly literary journal, Books and Company, in 1998. She has become renowned also as a respected editor of two books of short stories, broadcaster, reviewer and literary critic. “Susan is a chameleon”, says writer and critic, Peggy Reynolds. “She has an interest in such a huge range of genres and styles and she wants to try them all. She can fit her writing to any of them” (qtd. in Freeman). Osbert, Edith, Sacheverell Sitwell, the three poets and artists of the early part of the 20th century, made a great impression on Hill. In the blog “Susan Hill” (2008) she asserts,

These three poets and artists of the early part of the 20th century, Osbert, Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell, made a great impact on me, I loved visiting their house, now in part a Sitwell museum and in part a Natural History Museum. It features in the story “in the conservatory” in the same collection. (Much later in life I met Sacheverell Sitwell, and we shared
many memories of childhoods – albeit 50 years apart – spent in Scarborough).

Hill is largely known for a body of critically acclaimed works published over six years during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when she wrote six novels, two collections of short stories, and several radio plays. Comprised of brief narratives that rely on simple plots, Hill's award-winning fiction of that period avoids exploiting the human anguish—grief, loneliness, and fear—which they intensely realize.

A study of the notes, drafts and manuscripts of Hill’s novels reveal that her writing methods follow a distinct pattern. The initial ideas come to her imagination as glimpses: images, atmospheres, smells. There follows a stage of trying to find the right elements of plot and character to allow these glimpses to emerge as a fuller picture; until, suddenly, everything surfaces—the story and characters arrive in her consciousness complete. Her novels and short stories feature vivid landscapes charged with meaning and concentrate on both the conscious and subconscious workings of the human psyche. Critics have praised Hill's formal, precise use of language and her narrative technique, finding her reticent psychological analysis and restraint from sentimentality and overt sexual reference notable by contemporary literary standards.

Mary Jane Reed summarised Hill’s achievement that her style is clear and the structure of her work is simple. Her novels are a paradox, easy to read yet profound in exploring our complex behaviour and the universal problems we encounter—death, war, seclusion, even madness. Hill shocked critics in 1975 by publicly announcing that she had written her last novel, but she upturned herself almost a decade later and has returned to writing fiction occasionally. Kenneth Muir, a literary scholar likened Hill’s narrative gift and the gloomy atmosphere of her novels to Charles Dickens’s, remarking that “she shares his appreciation of the odd and eccentric, a compassion for the aged, the lonely, and the persecuted, and his obsession with violence” (qtd. in “Susan Hill: The Woman in Black”).

Susan Hill is also the author of two volumes of memoir, The Magic Apple Tree: A Country Year (1982), about her life in rural Oxfordshire during the 1970s, and Family

*The Man in the Picture* (2007) and *The Small Hand* (2010) are classic ghost stories in the tradition of *The Woman in Black*. Her novella, *The Beacon* (2008) with its remote rural setting and family revenge narrative, skilfully evokes Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* and *Howards End is on the Landing* (2009) is her account of a year of reading. Her latest novel is *A Kind Man* (2011) and “The Boy Who Taught the Beekeeper to Read” is a collection of short stories that utilises many of her favourite themes but, in style, is return to her previous approach: more conventional in structure, less meditative in tone. The novelist William Trevor, who has known Hill for more than 25 years, agrees: “She is passionate about communicating, and she is willing to take risks within genres to do so. She won’t be pigeonholed - pigeonholes are for the birds” (qtd. in Freeman).

Hill is an author notable for her accessibility to her readers. She has taken to Twitter with relish, debating politics with all-comers, occasionally seeking expert guidance to ensure her fiction is accurate, and advertising various goods that she sells via her website, such as bone china mugs bearing an illustration of *The Woman in Black*, which in 2012 became a film starring Daniel Radcliffe. Its sequel came in 2014 under the title *The Woman in Black: Angel of Death* (also known as *The Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death*). This horror film is directed by Tom Harper, produced by Hammer Film Productions and Entertainment One and is written by Jon Croker from a story by Susan Hill. She was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the
2012 Birthday- Honours for services to literature. Mandrake, *the Telegraph* editor hears that Hill has left her husband, the Shakespearean scholar Professor Stanley Wells in 2013, after 38 years of marriage. The couple sold their farmhouse in the Cotswolds where they had raised their two daughters. She has shifted in to a house in north Norfolk with Barbara Machin, the highly successful television scriptwriter, who also used to live in Gloucestershire as one of the award-winning novelist’s friends claims “Susan split up with Stanley before she moved house” (qtd. in Eden).

Hill has a gift for storytelling, for producing what one Guardian reviewer has called ‘a rattling good yarn’. A skilled editor of the work of others (see, for example, her two volume *The Penguin Book of Modern Women’s Short Stories* (1991)), it is clear that Hill applies those editorial skills just as austerely to her own prose. Consequently, her writing reveals a desirable capacity for generating and maintaining suspense through the employment of fast moving, agile plots. About the major aspects of Hill’s fictional works, biographer Dr. James Procter writes: “Viewed as a whole, certain pattern, images and devices can be seen recurring through Hill’s varied fiction of the past forty years. Indeed, it is the repetition and recognition of familiar metaphors and tropes that constitutes one of the pleasures of her work” (qtd. in Hanson 145-146). Typically Hill’s writings spin around wealthy, well-to-do families of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Even her novels set in modern times have a ‘days gone by’ feel about them, such as *The Various Haunts of Men* (2004), which was shortlisted for the 2006 Theakston’s Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year. Somewhat like an Inspector Morse narrative, *The Various Haunts of Men* is set in a small cathedral town, closeted from the modernity of the city.

Compared, in a positive fashion, with the serial detective fiction of P. D. James, this was the first of a new and popular crime series by Hill, that to date includes *The Pure in Heart* (2005), *The Risk of Darkness* (2006) and *The Vows of Silence* (2008). Hill says her books are “always very recognisably me. Certainly there are generic differences but there are similarities- descriptions of places, interest in atmosphere. It’s not plot that interest me, but setting, people in a setting, wrestling with an abstract subject. Everything emerges from that” (qtd. in Freeman). Through the echoes and parallels that emerge
between their lives we are given one of Hill’s most insightful and sensitive explorations into the psychology of family relationships. Reynolds asserts, “Her ability to get inside people’s head is extraordinary, whether they’re old or young . . . because she uses such simple vocabulary it isn’t often noted but she is a very good technician” (qtd. in Freeman). Thus, ‘Susan Hill’-the writer, if not the person—is haunted by ghosts and characters whose stories she must tell in order to exorcise them.
Susan Hill’s novel *The Woman in Black* is one of the most well-known modern-day examples of the ghost story, a branch of Gothic fiction. Susan Hill uses various techniques to mesmerise and shock the reader, the majority of which are traditional gothic conventions. There is no primary technique, as they all work together fluidly and Susan manages to successfully balance gothic content, such as pathetic fallacy, with gothic literary devices, like repetition. Susan’s gothic novels are issues of the society but the main purpose is for human beings to push their emotions to the utmost extreme. Susan’s works are mainly related to problems of female survival and the universal problems one encounter- death, war, isolation, even insanity and concentrate on how women challenge the deep rooted patriarchal ideology and emerges out as victimiser instead of being victim. Susan ghost stories have all the gothic elements and her novel *The Woman in Black* stands out to be one of the outstanding examples of this. She asserts that: “I also think that ghost stories should have to have a point beyond frightening. It’s all very well to be frightened, but there has to be a point and I never really write anything which hasn’t got a point. I do think that there is a moral point to *The Woman in Black*, but that came later” (qtd. in Lloyd).

The classic ghost story is a genre that suits her talents outstandingly well. Character and atmosphere are significant, much more so than plot. Hill’s method was realistic: to create a list of all the typical elements of the genre, and to incorporate them all.

The reliably ‘normal’ narrator, the familiar storytelling-round-the fire opening, the railway journey, the isolated house, the sea mists, the sudden injection of the strange into the ordinary, the ghostly sounds, the spirit that haunts a particular place and cannot rest, the children who are vulnerable-all of these are stock elements of the ghost story (Noakes and Reyonolds 35).
Susan Hill in her novel *The Woman in Black* draws deeply on Gothic conventions to make an apprehensive, modern ghost story. *The Woman in Black* is set in the early twentieth century but it tells a secondary story set in the mid-Victorian period. Deirdre David is of the view, “Gothic and Victorian ghost stories often include a ghost or ghosts, real or imagined, mysterious or isolated settings (castle, houses, landscapes), preoccupation with the monstrous or supernatural, dreams, visions and hallucinations, a psychological splitting or doubling of characters, violence and imprisonment” (qtd. in Gregory and Hanson 8.)

The novel reworks earlier Gothic narratives, which often concerned the anxieties of young and (sexually) inexperienced Gothic heroines, by exploring a later period of many women’s lives. Hill has reworked the Gothic element of having a woman in distress usually being threatened by an oppressive woman. The focus on a monstrous, aberrant mother 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. Susan has employed the sense of humour to mock gothic stereotypes, “the business was beginning to sound like something from a Victorian novel, with a reclusive old woman having hidden a lot of ancient documents somewhere in the depths of her cluttered house” (*WIB* 30).

The title of the novel alludes to a Victorian novel by Wilkie Collins called *The Woman in White* (1860), the first and most influential of the Victorian “sensation” novels. It pursues questions of identity and insanity in English country houses. The novel is titled *The Woman in Black* as the story itself is profoundly based on a gothic genre which consists of all the elements one would expect to see in a gothic novel, haunted houses, isolated areas, dark themes and of course, in this particular novel, this mysterious ‘Woman in Black’.

With this gothic genre, comes a gothic title which is absolutely identified by one word, “Black”. The word ‘black’ always creates a negative mood and gives a sense of gloominess. It depicts darkness and is suitably mirrored in the story, so one knows what sort of things to expect from this book just from the title but more importantly, one wants
to know why. The English playwright, Stephen Mallatratt asserts that “Darkness is a powerful alley of terror; something glimpsed in a corner is far more frightening than if it’s fully observed” (qtd. in Anderson). This is what will encourage the reader to read and enjoy the book. A sense of mystery is created by the title ‘The Woman in Black’ and this creates questions about the book. This adds to the enjoyment of the book as there will always be anxiety and suspense in anticipation about the appearance of the Woman in Black. An example of this is when Arthur Kipps calls the woman in black at the funeral “the woman with the wasted face” (WIB 56), this would just seem normal but the fact that this woman is all in black relates back to the title which creates suspicion about this woman.

The novel is so named because it concerns the story of a woman, named Jennet, turned or transformed into the woman in black, “She was dressed in deepest black, in the style of full mourning that had rather gone out of fashion. . .” (WIB 53). *The Woman in Black* is the living incarnate of the revenge of the feminine against a “Patriarchal” society that took her child away. This is a classic example of a woman being vilified for having an extramarital affair. Not only is her child killed with her witnessing it, but she is immortalised as a murdering ghost. The silencing of the feminine voice is exaggerated in this novel as the only actors, seemingly, are two men. The main question the title brings up about this book is who actually this Woman in Black is and why is she so important in the book? And these questions will stir around in your head throughout the novel and will add to the effect that the woman in black aims to make.

Susan Hill says that this is a story about evil; about how suffering and grief can wrap a human personality. The novel basically concerns Arthur Kipps, the protagonist, “an even tempered man of predictable emotions” (WIB 18) and Jennet Humfyre (the woman in black) as the antagonist. He begins his “real” ghost story by recollecting how, as a young solicitor, he was dispatched from London to the distant market-town of Crythin Gifford to attend the funeral and organize the posthumous affairs of a Mrs. Alice Drablow of Eel Marsh House. He narrates “a true story of haunting and evil, fear and confusion, horror and tragedy” (WIB 18). In *The Woman in Black* it is the loss of child that leads to all evil events and her evil nature is suggested as Jennet couldn’t be with her
son because of her illegitimacy and was isolated from him that causes her to feel resentment then to experience anger and then to have a pure sense of hatred after her truly loss when he dies in marsh.

In the novel Arthur Kipps is confronted, not only with the appearance of the woman in black but also what emerges to her evil intention in yearning harm on others as some form of vengeance for what happened to her during her mortal existence. This sets the whole chain of revenge, leading to loss of innocent people’s own children and finally it’s the loss of Arthur –loss of his child and his wife. It shows how such emotion can turn from regretful resentment to hatred which can even be acted out from beyond the grave. Thus is interesting as Kipps purports to be a Christian yet the Church teaches that God is mercy and, providing a sinner repents, all sins are forgivable and is ironic too as we learn at the end of the novel that the Woman in Black’s appearance foreshadowed the death of his wife Stella and their baby son, “Our baby son had been thrown clear, clear against another tree. He lay crumpled on the grass below it, dead.” (WIB 200) and Arthur says, “I had seen the ghost of Jennet Humfrey and she had had her revenge” (WIB 200).

The element of evil in gothic tales usually emphasise on the binaries of good and bad and Hill has used it as if it was another character which links to the gothic and ghost story genre. The presence of the “other” in terms of an opposite or contrasting force or enemy is a precondition of all human struggles or conflict- often leading to war. Being a Christian, she believes in the idea that evil is a live and magnanimous force in the world and certain events can make it vulnerable and open to such evil and this is the case with the loss of Jennet’s son. It’s that which is the key to permitting evil into heart and destroys her and somehow enables that hatred to survive and be visible to others even after her death. It is the distortion of her feelings and her hatred that allows evil into the world through Jennet Humfrey. Kipps is quite clear on this in the penultimate chapter when he says, “I realized that there were forces for good and those for ev waiting battle together” (WIB 188).

The novel deals with various themes and many of them overlap. The main crux that let all this strange and evil things to happen is that Jennet was betrayed. It is thus betrayal which is the key reason behind the revengeful action and is quite prominent in
The Woman in Black. Her sister forcibly took away her only child and then allowed (at least from Jennet’s perspective) him to die in a horrible accident, “. . . when they began again it was at first in passionate outrage and protest, later, in quiet, resigned bitterness. Pressure was being exerted upon her to give up the child for adoption. . .” (WIB 139). She feels so deceived by her own family and community for not letting her to raise her son that she takes it out on the community even in death. She was not at peace, “it was as though she was searching for something she wanted, needed—must have, more than life itself, and which had been taken from her” (WIB 75).

Betrayal isn’t the sole reason that made the woman in black the way she it. It’s actual heartbreak. Reasonably the accident was no one’s fault-but she’s desperate to blame anyone, and so she blames her entire community, “But the feelings that must accompany the death of someone as close to my heart and bound up with my own being as it was possible to be, I knew then, in the nursery of Eel Marsh House” (WIB 158). Arthur figures out that Jennet’s family betrayed her. The feeling was more intense because her own blood relations were not there to support her, “But it seemed most likely that only a blood relation would have given, or rather, been forced to give her illegitimate child for adoption to another woman. . .” (WIB 176).

Jennet was pretty much tossed out by everyone in her life. Her parents kicked her out, her baby’s father ran away and she has to stand by and watch another woman raise her son and then let him die, “She was not welcome at her parents’ house and the man—the child’s father—had gone abroad for good” (WIB 184). Jennet acquired no sympathy while she was alive and now she has turned into a ferocious woman who shows no kindness to others and has come back to haunt the town. According to her, it is not the act of betrayal rather they’re just getting what they deserve, “When she went about the streets, people drew back. Children were terrified of her. She died eventually. She died in hatred and misery” (WIB 185). But The Woman in Black complicates the theme of betrayal as Arthur thinks he’s safe and secure after he leaves Crythin Gifford, but he experiences the death of Stella and his son. It was an act of betrayal of his sense of safety and security.

Deserted houses, graveyards, desolate landscapes, an encounter with an enigmatic stranger, beastly transformations, appearances of spirits or ghosts, madness and blood are
some of the Gothic motifs which are very well imbibed in Susan’s *The Woman in Black*. It is distressing that women are physically as well as mentally not liberated and thus experience a sense of being caged and it is their unfulfilled overflowing aspirations which lead to their madness as is seen in *The Woman in Black* and it is also the basic element in gothic tales. Madness advocates humanity’s encounter with the absurd part of existence that rebels human logic. Mad characters are in link with a profound reality beyond logical understanding and they often tell the truths that normal characters crave to deny. They face supernatural or psychic forces that rational men fear to recognise.

In *The Woman in Black*, Jennet’s annoyance and despondency actually makes her go crazy-so crazy that she wants to destroy everyone without discrimination. One can come up with a word or two for Jennet Humfrey, but “sane” isn’t one of them. And confronting the reality of her ghost makes Arthur go a little crazy, too, or at least feel like he’s going crazy. Wandering around a big haunted house can make anyone insane. As Arthur resides at Eel Marsh House, he starts to lose his hold on reality, mirroring Jennet Humfrey’s deterioration while Jennet Humfrey’s madness keeps her trapped at Eel Marsh House. The woman in black doesn’t just wreak psychological damage but she even muddled everything, “It was in a state of disarray as might have been caused by a gang of robbers, bent on mad, senseless destruction” (*WIB* 171).

It’s no wonder as she had to watch her kid drown from the window, “Her bitterness was understandable, the wickedness that led her to take away other women’s children because she had lost her own, understandable too but not forgivable” (*WIB* 194). She went insane in the membrane and makes sure everyone knows it, “From that day Jennet Humfrey began to go mad . . . Mad with grief and mad with anger and a desire for revenge” (*WIB* 185) and a pretty succinct description of Jennet Humfrey is made who is burning with the sense of hatred, “She had been a poor, crazed, troubled woman, dead of grief and distress, filled with hatred and desire for revenge” (*WIB* 194). It seems as if Jennet wants everyone to experience the same and go crazy with grief. Because that’s utterly going to make her feel better, “This time, there was no merciful loss of consciousness; I was forced to live through it all, every minute and then every day thereafter for ten long months, until Stella too, died from her terrible injuries” (*WIB* 200).
The Woman in Black is basically a revenge story and the point about The Woman in Black is that revenge can for no reason be good, can by no means succeed eventually, and will never pay, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay” (qtd. in Mulheran 49). Jennet Humfrye was the victim and accuses her sister for the separation she has to endure, which ultimately is magnified with the death of her son. She becomes revengeful and haunts her along with the community as they didn’t allow her to raise her own son, “It was one of what I can only describe . . . as a desperate, yearning malevolence . . .” (WIB 75). “A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms” points out that “the most Gothic version of revenge in Gothic Literature is the idea that it can be a guiding force in the revenance of the dead” (Thomson 23).

In novel Nathaniel’s death made her loose her sanity to such an extent that her soul could not rest even in death, “Her face, in its extreme pallor, her eyes, sunken but unnaturally bright, were burning with the concentration of passionate emotion which was within her and which streamed from her” (WIB 75). Although her son Nathaniel’s death was no one’s mistake, she’s super cheesed off at the injustices that have been piled on her. The woman in black wants someone to pay the penalty for what she’s been through and she desires it so terribly that it leaves a mark on the whole house, “Moreover, that the intensity of her grief and distress together with her pent-up hatred and desire for revenge permeated the air all around” (WIB 179). But she’s not satisfied to stew in her own hatred and in death, she takes it out on other people’s children-and in a final, heartbreaking twist, on Arthur as well, “In some violent or dreadful circumstance, a child has died” (WIB 186). Kipps identifies from the expression of the woman in black that she is rancorous with dreadful resentful instinct and is determined to inflict harm on others, “What I saw-as a desperate, yearning malevolence” (WIB 194). He later goes on to describe her as, “A poor, crazed, troubled woman, dead of grief and distress, filled with hatred and desire for revenge” (WIB 194).

The Woman in Black shows what hate and the need for revenge does to a person and helps to understand the good and bad points in life and the proverb ‘good always triumphs over evil’ doesn’t seems to be right. The Gothic trope of haunting in The Woman in Black is peculiarly nightmarish because it involves the suffering of children.
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 a mother. *The Woman in Black*, therefore, is ambivalent in its depiction of motherhood and 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 idealised 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 responsibility for children, waged work outside the home and attendant worries about child-care. Both the ghost story, and the social climate in which it was written, suggest that mothers under extreme pressure have the potential, like any other members of the family, for cruelty to children.

The element which is very closely related to vengeance is the theme of Justice as the ideas of justice are intertwined with the notions of revenge. The Christian faith recognises that injustice is endemic in all societies and, although people strive for justice, it is not attainable as human beings’ definition of justice is affected by the social norms of the time. Her need for revenge in some way acts like an acid eating away her and destroying her. The negative and vengeful sentiments in her are even noticeable beyond the graves and wishful revenge will actually still be visited to those who are still alive and will infect them and make them experience the same injustices as original person and in this case Jennet. Christians believe that God will provide justice (hopefully tempered with mercy) on judgement day. The reader is left with the larger questions to ponder—what happens to the spirit of Jennet? Is she condemned to wander the earth for eternity? Can evil ultimately triumph? All good literature makes one think about the human condition. This is essentially a Christian story and it might be argued that it can teach something about the way human beings should be treated ad how they can triumph over disaster.

Susan is of the view that the only thing worth writing about is the inner self. *The Woman in Black* is a story about fear, and about threat from beyond the edge of the normal world; it is about death in seclusion and about retribution; it is about the lonely individual made susceptible before something that she doesn’t comprehend; it is- in the
image of Jennet Humfrye—about the significance of coming to terms with loss and with ache. In the initial Arthur commences as a rational being completely fearless but he becomes afraid as he begins to comprehend what’s going on. The protagonist almost spends some time of his or her account aiming to rationalise their ghostly encounters in Gothic literature and it is this trope that brings Gothic literature to “enter the haunt of the psychological” (Bayer-Berenbaum 38).

The feeling of fear is often the result of reality and fantasy coming in too close contact with one another. Proper fear is a type of maturity. “My whole body was trembling, my mouth dry, the palms of my hands sore where I had dug my nails into them as I had stood . . .” (WIB 142). No matter what Arthur’s logical brain contemplates, his body recognises better that there is a very good reason to be afraid. The source of ultimate fear and repulsion in the novel is the ghost of Jennet Humfrye, not only for her spectral presence but for her intentional act leading to the death of Kipps’ wife and child—prefigured by the warning from Mr Daily that a child died whenever she appeared. The woman in black seizes a kind of power that she did not possess when she was alive.

Individual Fear of the unknown revealed by Kipps and the collective fear of what is recognised by the inhabitants of Crythin Gifford and the surrounding area is a central theme in Hill’s ghost story and there are several episodes which illustrate this. For Arthur Kipps’, the fear is individual and overwhelming and presents itself to him many times despite his adamant nature to forget and move on from it all, denying its value to frighten him to his core. All the fear is the fear of unspoken and is almost a rule for the way the villagers in Crythin Gifford live their lives. Stephen Mallatratt asserts, “The fear is not on a visual or a visceral level, but an imaginative one. Imagination is everything” (qtd. in Anderson). The two poignant and frightening incidents are the death of Kipps’ baby son and the night after Kipps is permitted into the nursery at Eel Marsh House. The episodes are different because in reality nothing takes place in the latter other than Kipps is woken by the storm and hears “the familiar cry of desperation and anguish, a cry for help from a child somewhere out in the marsh”; which he knows has no base in the reality (WIB 152). In the first episode Kipps is awoken by the storm, Hill uses a simile to describe his immediate feelings of danger and uncertainty: “The house felt like a ship at sea, battered
by the gale that came roaring across the open marsh” (WIB 151). Here, the word “battered” “roaring” and “open” emphasise Kipps’ vulnerability and exposure to the elements.

Element of fear is also evident in the novel when Kipps first refers to his sighting of the “young woman with the wasted face” (WIB 56) to Mr Jerome at the funeral of Mrs Drablow, there is a ‘silence so deep’ that he can hear his own pulse. Further, he observes Mr Jerome’s inability to speak which later described as having a ‘sickly greyish pallor’ when discussing the sighting of the woman. Mr. Jerome is anxious and truly frightened, “Mr. Jerome looked frozen, pale, his throat moving as if he were unable to utter” (WIB 57). The fear that clearly grips and silences Mr Jerome is also mirrored in Mr Keckwick’s silent attitude as he is mindful about his role in the affairs that led to the death of the child on the causeway. During the incident involving the rocking chair in the nursery Kipps too is exposed to the terror caused by the unknown. He is haunted by terror at the thought of what he will spot inside the room whose door has inexplicably opened and later is chilled by the ghostly cry of the child on the wind. He goes out onto the landing, “a tremendous blast of wind” rocks the house and the lights went out (WIB 153). This becomes reminiscent of a gothic horror movie as in those days they wouldn’t have had electricity but paraffin lamps and for them all to go out together has got to be more than a coincidence.

Susan maintains the tension and builds up the fear. She uses imagery to develop tension into the atmosphere mainly with reference to the weather. She illustrates the bursts of rain “like sprays of light artillery fire, upon the windows” as if the country were at war (WIB 36). She even describes the woman in black as a “victim of starvation” (WIB 53). Throughout the novel, sea frets or mists shroud events, great gales and mourning winds add to Kipps’ fear when he is marooned at Eel Marsh House. Kipps panics as he has left his torch on the bedside table. He senses the presence of another person passing by him and begins to “doubt his own reality” (WIB 154). He is so terrified when he reaches the torch and falls over the dog and the torch smashes onto the floor that he is on the verge of “weeping tears of despair and fear” (WIB 88).
Kipps feels utterly powerless, helpless and frozen with fear when he hears the pony and trap, which he presumes to be real. But it becomes even agonisingly scarier when he becomes conscious that the sounds aren’t real, “I stood absolutely helpless in the mist that clouded me and everything from my sight, almost weeping in an agony of fear and frustration, and I knew that I was hearing . . . appalling last noises of a pony and trap, carrying a child in it . . .” (WIB 88). Hill fabricates and liberates tension through the use of pathetic fallacy, for example ‘In the Nursery’ the bright crisp autumn day symbolises Kipps’ hopefulness but the reader knows that when the wind drops and darkness falls dramatic events will follow. Even Spider, the dog picks up on the tension before Kipps, “Spider began to whine, a thin, pitiful frightened moan . . . My throat felt constricted and dry and begun to shiver” (WIB 133).

Susan has shaped a novel that almost reeks of fear and is introduced by the narrator himself as a means for the ghost to be “driven” from his memory; to lay to rest the past through a frank exposure of what had remained hidden for tears- an endeavour to live the rest of his life without the burden of fear. In contrast to building tension by degrees, Hill uses shock tactics. Stella and Joseph take a ride in a pony and trap. This is a good example of foreshadowing; “And then, quite suddenly, I saw her” (WIB 198). Hill’s clever use of commas in this sentence chills the spine. Kipps describes his own feelings of “incredulity . . . astonishment . . . cold fear” (WIB 198). The shock is at its extreme when the baby is ‘waving his little arms in delight’ and the woman in black reveals herself slowly from behind a tree and hits a huge tree trunk and the baby is thrown clear against another tree. The woman in black frightens everyone in order to earn power for herself which she didn’t have when she was alive. It’s by creating a sense of fear that Hill leaves the readers at her mercy that one can do almost anything with someone living in fear.

This feeling of fear is augmented due to the supernatural activities. Supernaturalism is the most imperative gothic element and it is very much vibrant in the novel as it literally means beyond natural, so supernatural actions cannot be explained by reason or scientific theory. David Punter in Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic (2013) argues that “the supernatural becomes a symbol of our past rising
against us” (15). In the novel, the sense of the supernatural tentatively begins with the first appearance of the woman in black and it is she who denotes “supernaturalism”, “I had fallen under some sort of spell” (WIB 111). There is plenty of revelation in the first chapter which gives evident clues that the novel will attribute supernatural events, “I was then thirty-five and I had been a widower for the past twelve years. I had no taste at all for social life and, although in good general health, was prone to occasional nervous illnesses and conditions, as a result of the experiences I will come to relate” (WIB 4).

A ghost story can only be comprehended in terms of the supernatural and relies on atmosphere that is time and again expressed through natural phenomena such as the weather, gothic buildings, vivid settings and on clues half suggestions such as those made by the landlord in The Woman in Black, “hearing the wind rage round like a lion, howling at the doors and beating upon the windows” (WIB 152). Another image connects the weather with the supernatural “the tumult of the wind, like a banshee” (WIB 152) and “banshee” is an Irish term for a female ghost who heralds the death of a significant person.

In an unused preface to The Woman in Black Kipps’ stepson Oliver comments on the story that follows- the novel itself. He says, “I heartily believe and trust that the setting down of the story may at last have exorcised these unhappy ghosts, and the terrors they aroused, from my stepfather’s mind” (qtd. in Noakes and Reynolds 6). Thus, The Woman in Black is jam-packed with scary, strange and perplexing elements that point to one thing: the existence of ghosts. Arthur comes to Crythin Gifford not believing in anything illogical and unreasonable such as “supernaturalism” and has his intellect set on realism and actuality with no such idea of ghosts, considering the villagers as ignorant and backward but he is blissfully unconscious of the secrets the old proud house has to conceal as Kipps constantly attempts to soothe and reassure himself that he “Did not believe in ghosts. What other rational explanation was there?” (WIB 79).

The novel primarily freezes the audience to the core and makes Kipps comprehend that not everything can be justified or rationalised by science. Hamlet says: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio/ Than are dreamt of in your philosophy” (qtd. in Mulheran 57). Kipps’ initial two encounters with the woman in
black are visual but she doesn’t imprison her presence to apparitions. Her haunting are exhibited or revealed in the ghastly sounds of a child drowning, the baffling sound of the creaking rocking chair, the nursery door that is bolted and unbolted regardless of having no locks and her presence in Arthur’s dreams. So his first sighting of her, the ghost, he manages the situation with a childlike simplicity and only has concern for that lonely soul of a woman. By the time Spider is allured by an ethereal whistle into the quicksand, neither the reader nor Kipps suspects the ghost’s malevolent intentions.

Even the use of language proposes that there is a world beyond reality, for example “eerily”, “unimagined”, “dreamed”, ‘not . . . real’, ‘not substantial’. Undoubtedly, Kipps alters throughout the novel from someone who is dubious of the paranormal or uncanny to someone who openly believes in ghosts, “That the woman by the graves had been ghostly I now-not believed, no-knew, for certainty lay deep within me” (WIB 97). This is evident when he looks at the woman in black for the second time and listens to the dreadful sounds of the Pony and the trap, “That the woman by the graves had been ghostly I now- not believed, no-knew, for certainty lay deep within me” (WIB 97). On the second sighting this same sense of firmness overtakes Kipps to such an extent that his life-long cynicism or disbelief regarding ghosts is swapped by conviction.

Mystery forms the core building block in the gothic fictions and Gothic tales enclose the exploration of the hidden unsolved mysteries and forms the core building block in the gothic fictions. In this novel it persists from the very beginning of the story as there has been foreshadowing of latter events of Kipps’ traumatic earlier life and his need to find some happiness. Arthur is on a quest to both literally and metaphorically explore Eel Marsh House and its former inhabitants to find out who, what, where, and why of Crythin Gifford’s haunted past. Eel Marsh House, the large, forbidding house where Alice Drablow lived out the last of her days, is obviously haunted. It’s huge, deserted, filled with mysterious papers, and separated from the mainland. It is its gigantism that provides the kind of a recipe for heart-pounding unfortunate encounters. Arthur describes it thus when he first happens upon it: “Then, as it was so bright that it hurt my eyes to go on staring at it, I looked up ahead and saw, as if rising out of the water
itself, a tall, gaunt house of gray stone with a slate roof, that now gleamed steadily in the light” (WIB 68).

It thus starts with Mr. Bently’s reluctance of people to explain about Mrs. Drablow, then Mr. Jerome’s fear where Kipps explains what he saw in graveyard and finally Kipps having to force Samuel Daily to tell him about his own child’s death. Mystery even persists in the end when Kipps on the verge of exhaustion or on the verge of falling into fever finally finds out the truth of what happens when woman in black appears. So from beginning to end everything is shrouded in mystery and is only revealed at the end of the book.

*The Woman in black* even imbibes the theme of isolation and the conspiracy of silence which is one of the basic characteristics of gothic literature. The creation of atmosphere, character and most particularly a sense of place are the most important elements which focus on the sense of loneliness in the novel. Monk’s piece is Arthur’s home which is depicted as a forlorn house on a hill. It is a handsome, modest building on a grassy hillock at the end of a lane, next to a garden overseeing a meadow. It has an air of remoteness and isolation although it is only two miles from the village and seven miles from the nearest market town. Its very name implies that Kipps has been living a quiet, hermit-like existence since coming here in his middle age and that he craves safety. The very name ‘Monk’s Piece’ could be significant as Arthur retired here to live a life of reflection and the word “piece” could be seen as a pun on the homophone “peace”. Kipps’ loneliness and helplessness at Eel Marsh House is later accentuated by the accounts of the surrounding nature, “when the tide came in, it would quickly be quite submerged and untraceable” (WIB 68).

As the story matures, loneliness becomes perceptible as he journeys to Eel Marsh House, experiences the haunting and is brought to the brink of madness. The empty and forlorn surroundings at Eel Marsh House are starting to get to Arthur, “But for today I had had enough. Enough of solitude and no sound save the water and the moaning wind and the melancholy calls of the birds, enough of monotonous grayness, enough of this gloomy old house” (WIB 82-83). The swampy, scary goodness of Eel Marsh House intensifies to the tension and a sense of isolation, “Behind me, out on the marshes, all
was still and silent; save for that movement of the water, the pony and trap might never have existed” (*WIB* 89).

Theme of isolation is looked at in great depth for the first time when Kipps is travelling on the train and “the cloud of cold, damp air . . . added to the chill of the compartment” (*WIB* 35). Here Hill makes use of the technique called pathetic fallacy to connect or associate the mood to the weather; it is very depressing and Kipps is petrified and lonesome. Both nature and Arthur are suffering from the pangs of loneliness and he doesn’t know what to do and couldn’t find anyone who can help him and answer his questions that are troubling him. The fact that this is a “cloud” is almost allegorical owing to the amount of coldness felt and is highlighted and inflated by the means of hyperbole; it is cornering him and could be wrapping up things that he wants to know, adding to the obscurity and isolation surrounding him as a character. The use of word “compartment” also insinuates that he is alone and trapped away from anything or anyone else which could make him feel more relaxed.

Hill is consciously keeping him alone to bestow him the most distasteful experiences possible to make the reader feel sympathetic, and his sense of loneliness continues to increase as he is travelling and arriving to Eel Marsh. For example, the title name of the chapter “Across the Causeway” reveals and exposes how unpleasant and horrible this place is because the word “causeway” informs the reader that people can only get there at certain times when the tide is out by Keckwick’s pony and trap. This signifies that there is restricted access and if something evil were to occur to Kipps at Eel Marsh House he wouldn’t be able to get away. This adds to the terror that Kipps is likely to experience through the foreshadowing of sinister events that will happen later on in the novel, and the fact that as well as being physically isolated he is also mentally isolated due to no one being around to help him at the times when he might need it. Moreover, it is portrayed as being “a little island” and the word “island” is usually referred to when describing isolated, and maybe mystifying places (*WIB* 69). This is a very different and strange place for Arthur to be because he has never been to weird place like this before, but still he is left deserted and abandoned on the island without any apparent hope for him.
Keckwick due to his extreme isolation proffers help to Arthur by offering a dog, Spider, who is a “sturdy little terrier with a rough bridle coat” (*WIB* 122). In this lonely house Spider is pretty much Arthur’s only companion and so its safety becomes the top priority for him, “I ran as I have never run before, heedless of my own safety, desperate to go to the aid of the brave, bright little creature who had given me such consolation and cheer in that desolate spot” (*WIB* 160). Keckwick somewhere feels considerate and wishes to help Arthur because he is very well aware how bad Eel Marsh House is, and also how badly Arthur needs to stay there to complete the tasks assigned to him. This could show the concern and fear that Arthur experiences because of his isolation, but also how there could be a glint of hope for him despite what has happened so far. Spider is “sturdy” to reveal that it can assist Arthur and bring stability by supporting him by exposing and detecting danger via natural instincts. Furthermore, a “terrier” is a hunting dog that would fight off vermin and things that provide danger to others, and this could link into how Spider can protect Arthur from bad things such as the woman in black herself. Spider though could not provide the perfect solace, but the “rough” coat confirms that he can still do a lot to help Arthur to protect him.

Therefore this shows that the isolation is so dreadful that unsurprisingly something has had to assist him, in this case, a dog but still Arthur feels alone, “I felt loneliness, for in spite of the speechless Keckwick and the shaggy brown pony I felt quite alone, outside that gaunt, empty house” (*WIB* 69). Even in the chapter “In the Nursery”, Arthur also senses a regular yet intermittent bump. It is very much obvious that Arthur is so fearful and forlorn that even very small noises terrify him and the use of onomatopoeia shows the extent at which he perceives everything in a very pessimistic way and how he cannot escape from them. His loneliness could make him feel paranoid about many things and possibly ghostly presences, so the isolation at this point makes the situations worse by highlighting the most minor things which he might not have realised if people were there alongside him but because he is alone everything stands out in an exaggerated way.

Moreover, the final chapter further reveals more about the isolation that Kipps feels. The title of the chapter is simply “The Woman in Black.” which is also the title of the book and it concludes and explains everything about what the woman in black has
actually done and how she has left Arthur in such a state of isolation. This means that it is a denouement structure. Every time the Woman in Black is around, a child dies and when he describes that his son “lay crumped on the grass below, dead” (WIB 200) he proves the point that she has taken her revenge by separating him from the very intimate thing and thus making him feel even more lonely than before. The word “crumped” might be symbolic because it might symbolise the anger Kipps feels at this point because of the loneliness.

Finally, the last line of the book, which could be seen as the most powerful one, shows the isolation that Arthur is left with right at the end, and the isolation that he might not be able to escape from. He states that “they asked for my story. I have told it. Enough.” (WIB 200) This shows the bitterness that he feels because this story has been terrifying and constantly things have been taken away from him, such as his son and his wife and thus making him feel even more alone and helpless. “They” is referring to Esmé’s family who were the ones who initially asked for the story to be told, which he has now done through all of the pain and isolation. It could be concluded that right from the beginning until the very end he is isolated and left alone without any help. Although at one point he receives Spider to try and prevent how he feels, overall it is still very much a story of isolation.

The novel does not only deal with the isolation which Arthur experienced but even Jennet feels a sense of isolation as the society separated her from her son. She can’t find peace as a ghost and continues with the cycle of alienation and isolation even in death. Her mother and sister Alice also participated in this act. Moreover, many of the characters in The Woman in Black are part of a conspiracy of silence which further isolates Kipps as it is clear that they deliberately withhold information about the Woman in Black, “At my feet stood a sturdy little terrier with a rough brindle coat and bright eyes” (WIB 122). Being alone offers Arthur zero consolation. It actually makes the whole thing worse, “I sat up paralyzed, frozen, in the bed, conscious only of the dog and of the prickling of my own skin and of what suddenly seemed a different kind of silence, ominous and dreadful” (WIB 131). The gothicness is augmented with tangible silence, “silence, a seething, blanketing, almost tangible silence, and a musty darkness, thick as
felt” (*WIB* 132). Even Arthur’s visitors are ghostly, and a ghost just can’t offer the same warm hand of friendship that a real, live human can.

Mr Bentley, Keckwick, Jerome, The Landlord and Samuel Daily are all part of this conspiracy of silence. The house also feels abandoned and represents both physical and emotional isolation from the real world, “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 desolation, a grief in my own heart” (*WIB* 150). Kipps’ isolation becomes more and more apparent as the novel proceeds and links to the isolation and loneliness of Jennet Humfyre when he lost her son. So in the end the two isolated figures (Jennet and The woman in black) share the same horrific experience yet they don’t share the same feeling. So even though Kipps is isolated in many ways he doesn’t fall into the despair Jennet does and the evil that comes with it.

There’s a certain kind of ecstasy in exploring a new landscape, even if it turns out to be one infested with terrifying ghost people. This sensory imagery highlights the gothicness in the novel, “But I did not go inside. I did not want to, yet awhile. I wanted to drink in all the silence and the mysterious, shimmering beauty, to smell the strange, salt smell that was borne faintly on the wind, to listen for the slightest murmur” (*WIB* 71). Even though Arthur is initially frightened of the woman in black, he quickly switches to ‘wanting answers’ mode. Unfortunately, the villagers don’t seem too eager to provide them, “I was angry . . . for the emotion she had aroused in me . . . and the anger led at once to determination, to follow her and stop her, and then to ask some questions and receive proper replies, to get to the bottom of it all” (*WIB* 76). Even when he’s scared, Arthur wants to explore every bit of the house and find out what’s going on. His bravery is worth admiration, “For some obscure reason, I became angry with that door, I kicked at it and rattled the handle hard, before giving up . . .” (*WIB* 91) and after all that’s happened, Arthur is still stubbornly determined to conclude the job, “If you mean you think I should give up on the job I’ve been sent here to do and turn tail and run . . .” (*WIB* 119). Arthur is as much the victim of a horror movie as he is a protagonist of a mystery; he spends as much time running through the house in terror as he does sorting through papers to uncover the truth.
The Woman in Black isn’t one of those horror stories where things aren’t always what they seem, and Jennet is no disembodied ghost going bang in the night. She’s fully embodied, with eyes, clothes, and skin—even if that skin does look like bone. In The Woman in Black, appearances matter. From Sam Daily’s beefy hands to the gaunt, empty house, what’s outside gives a pretty good clue to what’s inside though it’s not always good. In true gothic fashion, the woman in black’s ghastly appearance is a perfect reflection of her inside. The fact that she’s dressed in old-timey clothes is the first indication that she might be from another era, a.k.a. a ghostly being, “She was dressed in deepest black, in the style of full mourning that had rather gone out of fashion . . .” (WIB 53). The woman in black certainly isn’t winning any admirers, but she’s certainly becoming more and more unsettling to Arthur as even her hands look ghastly, “Her hands that rested on the pew before her were in a similar state, as though she had been a victim of starvation” (WIB 53). She might not be exactly an earthy being: her flesh looks more like bone than actual skin, “In the grayness of the fading light, it had the sheen and pallor not of flesh so much as of bone itself . . .” (WIB 74).

When Arthur gets a closer look, he finds that the lady in black doesn’t look like a poor suffering victim of disease but in fact looks or feels downright mean and possibly crazy, “I had not noticed any particular expression on her ravaged face . . .” (WIB 74). Jennet Humfrye looks like the living dead even when she was alive and she takes that look with her into the afterlife, where it probably goes over a lot better at least until she comes back and starts her haunting, “The flesh shrank from her bones, the color was drained from her, she looked like a walking skeleton-a living specter” (WIB 185). The Woman in Black is one long trip down memory lane, but it’s not the memory lane that happens to be lined with rose bushes and chirping birds and lazy afternoons at the beach. The narrator quotes “some lines of poetry, lines I had once known but long forgotten” (WIB 20) to show how memories can lie dormant and revive.

The quotation comes from Hamlet, act I, scene I, II, (163-9) which gives an idea about the tension between the normal and the extraordinary. Horatio, a balanced and rational man, has to see the ghost to believe it, but see it he does: “Before my God, I might not this believe/ Without the sensible and true avouch/ Of mine own eyes” (II. 59-
It highlights that the ghost cannot rest because he was murdered, and he is tormented by a desire for revenge on his murderer. As one precedes further one sees how this allusion to Hamlet links to the themes of *The Woman in Black*. It’s more a memory lane that’s lined with boggy marshes and skeletons which is not so pleasant. The whole tale of the woman in black is one that will live forever in Arthur’s memory, for better or for worse as memories fade with time but they never go away completely, “Like an old wound, it gave off a faint twinge now and again, but less and less often, less and less painfully . . . Of late, it had been like the outermost ripple of a pool, merely the faint memory of a memory” (*WIB* 19).

Arthur never wishes to memorise or recall anything from the past but it keeps resurfacing and tormenting him. Like an especially stubborn rubber ducky in the bathtub of life, “Could I not be free of it at least for that blessed time, was there no way of keeping the memory, and the effects it had upon me, at bay . . .” (*WIB* 19). Even after all these years, “Arthur still feels the need to exorcise his demons. He can’t quite get over what happened to him, I was the one who, to judge by my agitation of this evening, was still affected by it deeply, it was from me alone that the ghost must be driven” (*WIB* 20). It’s not easy to overlook the call of a child who appears to be dying in anguish, and it becomes even harder when it comes to ignoring a ghost child. That’s something the woman in black and Arthur have in common, “. . . and because the cry of that child would never, I was sure, leave me for the rest of my life” (*WIB* 120).

Arthur reminisces the sound of a rocking chair from his childhood and could feel the same sound coming from this supposedly empty room. Both past and present is flowing together, “The sound that I had been hearing was the sound that I remembered from far back, from a time before I could clearly remember anything else” (*WIB* 146). Arthur craves desperately to wipe out everything relating to Eel Marsh House, but it's not so easy to leave the past behind, “All that was behind me, it might have happened, I thought, to another person. The doctor had told me to put the whole thing from my mind, and I resolved to try and do so” (*WIB* 192).

With the Gothic “the pain of suspense, inaugurated by an object of ‘natural’ terror, produce[ing] ‘the irresistible desire of satisfying curiosity’” (Cameron 76). Gothic
tales are not effective without suspense being a fundamental component. Mysterious and suspenseful atmospheres are usually formed using pathetic fallacy and in this novel the use of wind is greater than any other element of weather: “during the night the wind rose . . . A tremendous blast of wind hit the house” (WIB 153). The use of wind symbolises the woman in black, because whenever her presence is near or she’s about to expose herself the wind increases, but when she disappears it seems to stop, “the wind had died down” (WIB 159).

Hill has also redrafted this Gothic element in the novel as there are some circumstances that would seem conventional to include pathetic fallacy but do not, such as the first sighting of the woman in black at the funeral of Mrs Drablow, “I saw A blackbird on the holly bush a few feet away and heard him open his mouth to pour out a sparkling fountain of song in the November sunlight” (WIB 55). This is even shown when he discovers the mysterious gravestone “the fine clear weather still held, there was sunshine and blue sky again” (WIB 123).

Susan makes the use of Symbolism to focus on the theme of Death. The very title, ‘The Woman in Black’ makes one think of death as traditionally in western culture, black is worn to funerals. Raven are black birds also associated with death and yew trees are the most common type of tree found in graveyards. Kipps uses the metaphor “our appearance . . . was that of a pair of gloomy ravens” to describe himself and Jerome at Alice Drablow’s funeral (WIB 50). The bells ringing, “A church bell began to toll” also symbolises death (WIB 28). Much of the action takes place in graveyards as the woman in black is first seen in graveyard at Alice Drablow’s funeral, she is next seen as a malevolent presence in the graveyard of the ruined monastery in the grounds of Eel Marsh House. Her arrival is heralded by the harsh croaking of an ugly satanic sea vulture. Even the birds in the novel are used to symbolise death. The pony is seen as “solid” and dependable yet the recurring sound of the pony and trap links the present with the past. It is fitting that Kipps’ son dies while being a passenger in a pony and trap just as the child of Jennet Humfrye did over half a century earlier. Even the names are used to symbolise death like the Nine Lives Causeway makes one think about escaping or cheating death-a
cat is said to have nine lives. So Susan made use of many symbols in the novel to exploit one of the most important element of gothic i.e. fear of death.

Susan has dealt with many minor themes in *The Woman in Black* like that of Sleep, Childhood and Religious Faith. It is worth noting that on his first night in Crythin Gifford, Arthur Kipps has the best night’s sleep in memory but after the woman in black appears, his whole being, physical and mental, is disturbed forever. Sleep is considered completely natural and is a theme that is mentioned in almost every chapter. Dreams stir up strong emotions within the dreamer, such as thrill, delight and terror. Dreams dredge up these deep emotions and presentiments that reflect tellingly upon the dreamer, what one might veil during waking hours but what emerges in sleep to haunt and arouse the dreamer. It is probably because of this intensified emotional state that dreams are used so frequently within Gothic literature. Arthur Kipps is disturbed by dreams as the woman in black enters his dreams and haunts him. This blurs Kipps’ sense of reality and it is widely believed that sleep deprivation can drive human beings mad.

Also, sleep is linked metaphorically with death. Then there comes the role of children as we are acquainted with Nathaniel Pierston, Joseph Arthur Samuel Kipps and the children who line up at the school railings watching Alice Drablow’s funeral. The juxtaposition (placing opposites next to each other) of the children and the appearance of the ghost is interesting as, usually, children symbolise innocence. It is particularly disconcerting that when Kipps smiles at one of the children the child does a not smile back. At the time of first reading, one is not aware that the children of the village probably know the background to the woman in black so the dramatic irony is lost unless the book is studied carefully. It is only after the deeper analysis of the novel that one becomes clear that these children are the ghosts of the many children who have died due to the woman in black seeking her vengeance.

The chapter on the nursery is a very well portraying the theme of childhood when Kipps discovers the source of the bumping noise; it is soon after he experiences the distressing sounds of the child drowning in the marshes. This has a profound effect on him and seeing Spider’s distress, he comforts her as a mother would a child. Ironically, he himself is comforted by what he now recognises as the bumping sound of the moving
rocking chair to such an extent he is almost transported back to his own childhood. The nursery represents the safety of childhood, the comfort of mother or a nurse. Clearly, either supernatural influences or Kipps’ vivid imagination are at work as the nursery does not have the abandoned atmosphere of the rest of the house. It is like a living museum commemorating a childhood 60 years before. By placing the episode where the angry Kipps (who is outside searching for tools to break down the nursery door) experiences most vividly the sounds of the drowning child next to the episode in the nursery, Susan Hill is exploiting the contrasts between evil and goodness, evil and innocence and danger and safety.

Kipps’ story can be seen as a journey from innocence to experience, similar to the descriptions Christians often give of their lives as a journey through faith. His own religious background only begins to be meaningful to him once he is tested, “I asked myself unanswerable questions about life and death and the borderlands between and I prayed, direct and simple, passionate prayers” before he encountered the woman in black his attitude towards religion was “formal and dutiful” (WIB 187). Afterwards he realises that he believes there is a constant battle between the forces of good and evil and that every person must actively choose the side of goodness.

Susan Hill’s novel The Woman in Black (1983) is a fundamental example of women’s Gothic Horror. It successfully employs well-known Gothic conventions and tropes that have already been embraced by fans of the genre such as loneliness, gloominess, vengeance, death, the afterlife, the smudging of reality and fantasy, the descent into madness. The novel being a popular ghost story proffers a social critique of motherhood and contemporary rhetoric surrounding the family. Hill highlights the uneven status given to women who are not even allowed to live their lives the way they wish to and even sets out to outline the one-sidedness of the relationship between the sexes.

The woman is not allowed to live freely as an active member and it is the masculine decisions which are forced upon her. The female character in the novel is revealed as an unfortunate woman within gender hierarchy in which a pre-defined female role is enforced on her and which she later proposes to demolish. The Woman in
Black could be interpreted from numerous critical perspectives: psychological, feminist, intertextual, generic, historical and biographical. The Hill’s novel mediates women’s apprehensions about motherhood and self-independence during the early 1980s. In Britain, it was the time when there were apparent negations between social and political discourses and the institution of the family was an ideological battlefield.

In her short stories and novels Hill comes up against the questions of female sovereignty and individuality and makes them part of her preoccupation with a much wider and inclusive circle of sympathy. The Woman in Black is somewhere a personal outburst which unveils the sub-conscious anguish that Susan went through after her miscarriage. It concerns the mental trauma which a woman experiences when she is metaphorically caged in free world. As Juliet Mitchell (1984) argues, “We have to know where women are, why women have to write the novel, the story of their own domesticity, the story of their own seclusion within the home and the possibilities and impossibilities provided by that” (qtd. in Pykett 4).

Susan Hill unlike traditional Gothic appreciably reworks on the Gothic trope of feminine captivity within the household space. As Kate Ferguson Ellis argues in the introduction of the book Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology (1989) that the traditional Gothic novels attribute gendered spaces:

Focusing on crumbling castles as sites of terror, and on homeless protagonists 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)

The story is set in a remote and secluded location, and is packed with lush portrayals of creepy settings such as a shabby graveyard, a sinister house, a fog-choked causeway; and it uses the narrative framing device of having Kipps disclose his story
years after it has happened in aspirations that he might expel his gruesome and ghastly memories. A narrative form is used generally in Gothic stories or fables as it sanctions for the story to be filtered through an individual’s psyche, thus unlocking the door for the assimilation of objective and subjective realism. Susan’s technique adds an expressionistic element that further puts in the stress between natural rationalisations and supernatural. Gothic tales often employs a number of luminal frames for instance, when the string between sanity and madness is distorted or when a character is sceptical if he is alert or asleep and further vague the boundary between realism and desire.

Susan’s novel The Woman in Black is even effectual on a thematic level as it concerns with “loss” with which everyone can connect to. The intensity of the story can be enlightened by staring it through Julia Kristeva’s concept of the abjection. Using Kristeva’s Powers of Horror, Jerrold Hogle asserts that “. . . the most multifarious, inconsistent and conflicted aspects of our beings are ‘thrown off’ onto seemingly repulsive monsters or ghosts that both conceal and reveal this “otherness” from our preferred selves as existing very much within ourselves” (qtd. in Tolan 138).

Thus she delves deep into how horror is produced by an encounter with the abject, a theory which signifies something that must be “thrust aside”, “expelled” or “thrown off” so that human being can sustain an unified subjectivity. Kristeva asserts that the first encounter with the abject happens at birth which is a ideal state of primordial non-identity, to be in the condition of being half inside and half outside the mother or being half dead and half alive from the start and thus undecidably in motion between rationally contradictory state, including life and death. A child is a part of mother prior to his birth and must abject his mother once he is born in order to form a cohesive, objective identity as a human.

In other words, the child must “abject” the mother-discard or chuck out the primal connection to her, treat her as dangerous and suffocating-if she/he is to gain any sovereign subjectivity whatsoever. Even though we must seek to push the maternal figure away, we are also still drawn close to her. Thus, we get jammed in a vague situation that is a fundamental part of the human state. As Steven Bruhm remarks in his article on the “Contemporary Gothic” that the threshold of child-parent bond should be taken care of.
and an attempt must be made to rid oneself of the dependent, in-between state of mother-
connection in order to assert own autonomy. Jerrold Hogle in *The Companion to Gothic
Fiction* (2002) comments:

> That thrown-off mother, at least in the child’s fantasy, continually lures
> and seduces the child back to the primary bond where she/he is completely
> taken care of; in response, the child must demonize and reject her in order
> ‘to constitute [it]self and [its] culture’ . . . We come then not to be mere
> victims of the last object- the mother-but active agents in the expulsion of
> that mother. We are creatures of conflicted desires, locked in an uncanny
> push-me-pull-you that propels us toward the very objects we fear and to
> fear the very objects toward which we are propelled. We must bond with
> our parents, but not too much; we must distance ourselves from our
> parents, but not too much. (266)

The abject threatens with vagueness and terrorises the concepts upon which the
identity of human being is built; but our affiliation with the maternal figure is not the lone
condition that results in this haziness in our lives. Confronting or coming face to face
with anything that drives us to doubt the borders, that help us to coordinate and sort out
our world bring about fright and terror. The abject offers both the feeling of repulsion and
fascination as it epitomises a violation of borders: me versus you, inside the body versus
outside the body, life versus death.

The inevitable fascination with the abject is the spirit of *The Woman in Black’s*
popularity. The binaries of attraction-repulsion are powerfully at work in Hill’s novel as
fascination would be aggravated because the Woman in black is seen as oddity or
monstrous being, summoning the feeling that the grotesque is stimulating. Repulsion on
the other hand is provoked because the woman in black, in one way or another, goes
beyond her female role and enters in realm which is not suitable or apposite for her. So
the woman in black is somewhere in amid situation as she intensely admits that she is a liminal figure whose facade generates psychological agony when she forces an encounter with something that lies at the border of understanding. Even though Kipps attempts to overlook or dessert the threat, he is still bond to believe and accept that something ominous gets stimulated by her appearance: “I was trying to make light of something that we both knew was gravely serious, trying to dismiss as insignificant, and perhaps even nonexistent, something that affected us both as deeply as any other experience we had undergone in our lives, for it took us to the very edge of the horizon where life and death meet together” (WIB 109).

As a ghost she rebels and disobeys this society; her very existence as a ghost breaks down the boundaries between life and death, individuality and community and subjectivity and objectivity. As a ghost, society considers Jennet to be an abject on the edge of nonexistence. Thus, Jennet and her ghost thrust under the category of being abject figures and their bodies show signs of “terrible wasting” and “ravages of the flesh” (WIB 49). The breathing and ghostly Nathaniel’s mother is contaminated and repulsive and for that reason needs to be barred, or pressed to the margins. The dirt or the filth that clips to her feminine body makes her presence uncanny by defiling the so-called cultured and civilised society she inhibits.

Being a spectre figure she is ghastly and dreadful and complies with the abject desires by causing the harm and bereavement to children. Kristeva’s theories of the abject not-I or Other contends that civilised society often fails to recognise and identify the uncivilised “Other” as part of itself. Her elucidation of abjection, as manifest in the maternal body, would imply a sombre reading of The Woman in Black. In the light of holocaust history, Kristeva’s theories entail that barbaric longings on a massive scale can no more be denied. The potentiality of similar barbaric behaviour creates a sense of terror at the appearances of the ghost of the woman in black.

*The Woman in Black* is set mainly during the 1860s when patriarchal society treated women as a commodity and exposes hypocrisy of Victorians concerning the unmarried mother, and tactfully explores the quasi-Victorian morals propagated in the
1980s, during the first term of a Conservative right-wing government. There was a disparity between two main sets of society: men and women. The male sex was seen as one who governed and ruled society and in order to maintain their high position, they established a social code for women, who were clearly seen as the weaker gender and only had limited rights. Men provided for their families, protected them against the evils of daily life and had rights.

During early 1980s all political ideas of larger or smaller authorities which alleged to define the family were paradoxical. It became increasingly litigious to see the society’s cultural assessment about what might comprise a family and which roles its members should perform. This argument further unavoidably affected the base of femininity and maternity as women since ages and even now is the primary caretakers for children. This debate and controversy about the nature of the family necessarily influenced foundations of femininity and maternity because women have been, and often still are, the principal carers for children. Women with illegitimate or illicit children were often sweated workers, servants or factory hands, with few resources to support a family on their own.

These women in short were paralysed without any source to live a life of independence. These unmarried women thus had no prospect to nourish their children, so they had to choose between two evils; either execute the infant and carry on with their lives (possibly with a sense of remorse) or turn to prostitution in order to be able to sustain their family. Similarly in the novel *The Woman in Black*, Jennet Humfrey (the eponymous woman in black) is one such victim of patriarchal society. The legend of the woman in black states that in her youth she had a child out of wedlock and in an effort to cover it up she left the child with her sister and denied her maternity. Realising she could no longer bear to be apart from her offspring, the woman demanded her maternal rights be reinstated.

Barbara Creed brings into play Kristeva’s concept of the mother of the semiotic chora and takes it a step further in her essay “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection” (1986). According to her, mother’s relationship to the child is never normal and is always awkward as she doesn’t consent him/her to get separated
from her. She desires her offspring to validate her own subsistence and to maintain some kind of relation to the Symbolic, from which she has efficiently been excluded. It is her helplessness and negation to let the child go that makes her treacherous and the “bad” mother as is deeply evident in the woman in black. She became rebellious without much botheration about society as it’s unlawful to have an illegitimate child. Her sister is a married woman and it will be good for both (the baby and the jennet) to live separately from one another. As illegitimacy can be traced to the holy bible as “one of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the lord, even to the tenth generation; none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the lord” (Deuteronomy, 23:2).

Illegitimate children had no inheritance rights and were second-class citizens. So no matter what they preferred, they ended up as a fallen woman. The attraction or charm that these women embrace for the Victorians poured in part from her deviation from the nineteenth-century view of ideal womanhood. The ‘angel of the house’ or the ideal Victorian woman was named or identified by her role within the house as the family performed as a haven or shelter for the conservation of conventional, ethical and sacred ideals. When Virginia Woolf speaks about the “Angel in the House” (“Professions for Women” 86), she accentuates that such images of women initiated by men kill a female creativity and consequently, if women desires to progress intellectually they must kill this “angel” because it signifies a limitation of women’s progress. She deconstructs the image of the ‘angel in the house’ that Coventry Patmore in his *The Angel in the House* (1854) talks of and satirises Patmore’s “angel” in the following manner:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. In
those days—the last of Queen Victoria—every house had its Angel.  

(“Professions” 86)

Further, Woolf’s “angel” selects the chicken’s leg for the reason that it was believed its most awful part in Victorian times. She is noble or self-sacrificing to such a level that she, even in the past, never had any view or wish of her own. She possibly had not comprehended that she could have her own desire. By her depiction of the “Angel in the House” as a “phantom” (86), which must by any means be slaughtered, Woolf states not only her discontent with figures or images of women in literature but also with the ideal of a ‘domestic angel’ advocated by Victorian culture and so steadily established in a woman’s consciousness.

John Ruskin’s essay “Of Queens’ Gardens” (1865) has been taken as a persuasive declaration of the conventional ideal of Victorian womanhood. However, the essay also recommends women to discard trivial feminine pursuits so as to act as a moral force in opposing the ills of society. He states, “The man’s duty, as a member of commonwealth, is to assist in the maintenance, in the advance, in the defense of the state. The woman’s duty, as a member of the commonwealth, is to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state”. All the feminists have stressed on the need to break this man-made image of woman as an “angel” to create a truly egalitarian society.

Female delinquency and transgression were defined mostly by how far a woman moved away or digressed from the Victorian impression of idealised womanhood and less by the misdeed perpetrated. Unfortunately, society pictured these women as fallen and as ethically and socially crooked, they were, in reality, sufferers of male dominion and seduction. The qualities allocated by Victorian culture to the ideal female were humbleness, virtuousness, purity, timidity, gentleness, self-sacrifice, submissive, tenderness, patience, modesty, passivity, endurance and altruism and men were correlated with public realm, with the wielding of power. The attributes associated with women were private and internal, their realm being the house and the family and conversely, men’s sphere included eccentricity, ego, hierarchy, ability, power, hegemony, production, responsibility, ambition and purpose.
The middle-class Victorian woman was to have no aspiration other than to gratify others and care for her family. According to the Victorian ideal, Auerbach remarks: “. . . the only woman worthy of worship was to be a monument of selflessness, with no existence beyond the loving influence she exuded as daughter, wife, and mother” (qtd. in Noddings 80). The nineteenth century women inhabited a position of duality as she was either Magdalene or Madonna, ruined or pure, foreign or familiar. The fallen woman was described chiefly by her deviation from the ideal Victorian woman image who was passionless, virtuous, naïve, innocent, docile and self-sacrificing within this cultural paradigm. On the contrary note, the woman who disregarded the idealised notion of womanhood, whether by sexual wrongdoing or illicit act, was perceived as abnormal and strange. She represented a disturbing anomaly that both repelled and fascinated the Victorians and it is this sense of repulsion and attraction which makes it an abject figure.

The term fallen woman in Victorian culture pertains to those feminine identities who were prostitutes, unmarried women interested in sexual relations with men, preys to seduction, adulteresses, as well as antisocial or criminal lower-class women. Acton’s portrayal of women incorporates women as “Proper” Feminine and “Improper” Feminine. Acton structures “proper”, normal femininity as passionless and passive. A “modest” woman, “as a general rule . . . seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself . . . [and] submits to her husband’s embraces . . . principally to gratify him . . . [and] for the desire of maternity” (qtd. in Pykett 15-16). On the other hand, active and vigorous sexual feeling represents masculinity, or an abnormal “improper” femininity. Women are either non-sexual, or they are pansexual, wicked, madwomen, or prostitutes.

Thus Acton’s representation attributes the “proper” feminine to be domestic ideal or angel in the house; the madona; the keeper of the domestic temple; innocence; asexuality; self abnegation; devotion to duty; lack of legal identity; victim and improper feminine as demon or wild animal; a whore; a subversive threat to the family; threateningly sexual; pervaded by feeling; knowing; self-assertive; desiring and actively pleasure seeking; pursuing self- fulfilment and self-identity; independent; enslaver; and victimiser or predator. Moreover, the fallen woman was frequently portrayed in the iconography of the time as essentially “falling”.
In 1858 Augustus Egg, the renowned Victorian artist expounded his trilogy of the fallen woman in his paintings entitled: *Misfortune, Prayer, and Despair* at the Royal Academy in London. The three paintings symbolises the fallen woman, opening with a display of the deceitful wife stretching out in a prone position at her husband’s feet in *Misfortune*. Next the offspring of the fallen woman are beseeching for their lost mother in the painting *Prayer*. Finally, Egg depicts the fallen woman as looking at the river in the painting *Despair*. The exhibition included the following descriptive narrative: “August the 4th. Have just heard that B-has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!” (Auerbach, “The Rise of Fallen Woman” 29).

Being considered as a moral threat she was isolated from society by stigmatisation and was time and again physically secluded from the gaze of reputable society, most commonly through her death. The dishonour she suffered was centred essentially on how far her sexual behaviour departed from the ideal woman who was the model of morality, decency, innocence, timidity and altruism. Consequently, a female ideal was developed called ‘the angel of the house’. This ‘angel of the house’ was the ideal mother and wife and by and large hold the following qualities: passive, compliant, affectionate, generous, ignorant (both sexually and intellectually) and lacking of any opinion. She was the counterpart of ‘fallen woman’ as classically; fallen women were those who essentially by having premarital intercourse (mostly prostitutes) or by adultery literally fell into sin. Even if a fallen woman may have paralleled the same persona of the ideal woman of decent inner virtues of self-sacrifice, altruism and virtuousness she was still admonished on the basis of her lack of sexual purity. Female wrongdoings were perceived through the distorted lens of social tolerability.

Woman under certain gender-based customs is expected to follow apposite behaviour, and when a woman diverged from that Victorian construction of the ideal woman, she was disgraced and detached from society. As female misconduct corresponded to a contagion, the antisocial or aberrant woman is eliminated from reputable society as a menace of unevenness to an otherwise balanced society. The
society viewed these women as “fallen” and as ethically and socially repellent while the Victorian analysis was that the fallen woman lacked shame and humility but in reality, they were, not sufferers only of male supremacy and seduction, but of a social system that dishonoured and snubbed them for their fall. Stereo-typical figures of women as ‘maternal, emotive, and peace-loving’ are complicated by the “monstrous” woman competent of violence.

Jennet Humfrye and her ghost may be interpreted as altered versions of the same woman (a conventional Gothic trope of the doppelganger) or as a pairing which questions the binary image of pure and “fallen” women. Jennet, the eponymous woman in black, opposes the lot of the so-called fallen woman. In her corporeal or bodily form, she snubbed to yield to Victorian patriarchal values by making efforts to repossess her illegitimate child as Arthur asserts, “... girls in the Victorian England had, I knew, often been driven to murder or abandon their misconceived children” (WIB 176). During her lifetime, Jennet snubs to be banished from “respectable” society, often revisiting her sister’s home in an endeavour to retrieve her son.

In spectral form, she has absolute autonomy of space and time to seize revenge and thus she repetitively inflicts suffering on families by causing the death of their children. She performs the role that is more often accredited to the wandering male Gothic central character. The woman in black is neither locked in nor locked out, but has the haunting power to “lock” and unlock her son’s nursery in order to torture Kipps. Therefore, she might be deemed as a markedly transgressive Gothic “heroine” as her excessive reprisal knows no compassion, and recognises no boundaries of place and time. Her ghost is never at peace and the order doesn’t get reinstated even by the concluding pages.

Thus, the novel being a popular ghost story questions postulations about women’s “natural” submission and their unconditionally liberal replies to husbands, partners and children. The novel, The Woman in Black being shaped by the social ambience in which it was written promotes that mothers under acute stress or nervous tension have the ability and potential, like any other members of the family, for brutality to children and the novelistic portrayal of the fallen woman confirms her being
condemned by society on the basis of her sexual behaviour, regardless of her character and values. The disgrace or dishonour she suffered was based chiefly on how far her sexual behaviour strayed from the ideal woman who was the archetype of uprightness, purity, innocence, simplicity, submissiveness, self-sacrifice and humbleness.

The woman in black being a Jennet possessed all the inner qualities of the ideal woman, but her deviation from those set morals made her a fallen women or an abject figure as the novel portrays her as being judged on the basis of her sexual lapses, and she is eventually isolated from the society. Through its forceful rejection of either idealised or derogatory stereotypes of women, this novel belongs to the genre or a tradition of women’s radical Gothic horror. “Horror always includes a monstrous other whose existence precipitates a redrawing of the boundaries between human and monster, ego and abject” (qtd. in Pulliam 10).

The novel reveals Jennet and the woman in black as different version of the same woman or the binary image of pure and “fallen” woman. The woman in black at the end of the novel becomes the ruling figure, as a ghostly, furious virago. As illustrated by Kipps, her repeated and neurotic abduction of children is full of “malevolence and hatred and passionate bitterness” and it replicates to a petrifying degree what was enforced on her in her earthly existence (WIB 198). The ghost in The Woman in Black is never at ease and is constantly in a revengeful state of mind. Even in the concluding pages she is still at large, having ranged without restraint across two centuries, uncontrolled by geographical restrictions and obsessed to bring misery to families persistently.

As both Jennet Humfrye and her ghost challenge the double moral standards of Victorian England and the quasi-Victorian family values that promulgated during the early 1980s, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s analysis of binary presentations of the angelic and monstrous female and their interpretation of the primal Oedipal family is significant here. Karen Horney, a German psychoanalyst is of the view that how, instead of responding to each woman as a unique, complex, and for that reason potentially formidable being, men have divided the concept of Woman into pairs of stereotyped antitheses: saint/sinner, virgin/whore, nurturing mother/devouring stepmother, and
angel/witch. In patriarchal culture only the helpless; passive rather than active, selfless rather than self-assertive, submissive rather than bold are the women who have been acceptable. Jennet, despite being descended from social grace, is also righteous and considerate, or “angelic”. The woman in black, being Jennet’s ghostly counterpart is monstrous, but, simultaneously, cannot be kept outside “civilised” boundaries.

As a “fallen” woman, Jennet is expelled from the “paradise” of close connection or bond with her baby son and is forced to go away from her native village. Coming back or re-emerging as woman in black, she bears a resemblance with the mythic figure of Adam’s first wife, Lilith, rather than Eve. Lilith, being faced with either self-effacement and “feminine” stillness or demonization took vengeance against Adam by slaughtering babies. She preferred to be an evil or monster rather than being an Adam’s cipher and Hill’s presentation, for that reason, splits binary and polarised images of women. By the means of Gilbert and Gubar’s interpretation of the fall from Eden, The Woman in Black could be examined as a fundamental Gothic text which refuses to accept the feminine stereotypes by portraying the considerate, maternal temperament of women as blended with the traits which might be depicted as “demonic”, freakish, nasty, haggish or witchlike. The novel questions the suppositions about women’s “natural” compliance and their unconditionally liberal reactions to husbands, partners and children.

The larger component of abjection is often accustomed to describe marginalised sets and can thus be constricted down to women. Mainly, it is so-called grotesque woman who do not turns out well in meeting the hopes and anticipations of society. Kristeva connects the repression or restraint of the feminine to brutality and in her essay Powers of Horror, Kristeva’s view on “defilement” refers to that which is outside of the symbolic order and as women are not part of the male symbolic order, they are associated with defilement.

Further, the concept of the uncanny can also operate on these women; they are known or recognizable as they hold traces of women, but they are all together foreign or alien because their behaviour and manner of doing things is un-womanly. Me/not me, inside/outside become existential dichotomies for abjection to proliferate. Cultural
exploitation of philosophies of the abject may question the limits of language through the fascination /repulsion of others. The danger or risk of the hyper-feminine becomes real. Leisha Jones observations on this: “To spit back the feminine in its adulterated state suggests that soft, wet, empathetic, small, gentle, loving, tentative, pliable, frivolous, flaky, and sweet smelling could kill you” (62).

Every human society has a concept of the monstrous-feminine and grotesque women have been an imperative element of literature, as Creed claims, “all human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject” (44) and it is rooted in maternal as abject, mother as the vital agent of castration and for that reason horrifying. These monsters are fabricated and it is primarily the patriarchal traditions and customs that created woman as monsters, as abject figures and still we refuse to acknowledge their genesis, that the strain of the birth of the monstrous woman is the patriarchy. Woman is sent back to that point of ghastly birth, away from the safe and secure space of women, and to the heterosexual marital bed and to the domain of the patriarchy where she is made and remade into a monster but rebuked for being so.

Freud wrote in his paper, “Fetishism” in 1927 that “Probably no male human being is spared the terrifying shock of threatened castration at the sight of the female genitals” (qtd. in Creed 67). Joseph Campbell, in his book, The Mask of God: Primitive Mythology (1959), noted that: “. . . there is a motif occurring in certain primitive mythologies, as well as in modern surrealist painting and neurotic dream, which is known to folklore as ‘the toothed vagina’ – the vagina that castrates. And a counterpart, the other way, is the so-called ‘phallic mother’, a motif perfectly illustrated in the long fingers and nose of the witch” (73).

As Creed asserts: “Classical mythology also was populated with gendered monsters, many of which were female” (67). In Homer’s Odyssey, he explains an encounter with some sirens that can be perceived as grotesque females; they were both hazardous and dazzling creatures who engaged themselves with the tempting of sailors departing by with their bewitching music. Their primary purpose was to bring about a shipwreck and eventually the death of the sailing crew. Further it includes the furies; the
goddesses of pain and Circe; the malevolent sorceress who changed men into animals. Creed further proffers the case of Medusa: “The Medusa, with her ‘evil eye’, head of writhing serpents and lolling tongue, was queen of the pantheon of female monsters; men unfortunate enough to look at her were turned immediately to stone” (67).

These grotesque females have influenced beyond the classical period; even Keats in his poem Lamia presents a mythical monster of classical origin with the face and breast of a woman and a serpent’s body. Keats’ poem works metaphorically, to oppose the eroticism and beauty of the Lamia against the masculine world of sterile thought and philosophy and has clear connection with the figurative representations of fatal women. Even Dante made use of them in his Inferno as he portrayed harpies as one with the body of a bird and the head of a woman; living in the infernal wood. The term metaphorically refers to nasty or annoying women who were cruel, vicious and violent. They were personification of the destructive nature of wind who being the agents of punishment abducted and tortured people. In his Inferno (2007), Dante envisages the tortured wood infested with harpies to punish the sinners:

Here the repellent Harpies make their nests, [...]

They have broad wings, a human neck and face,

Clawed feet and swollen, feathered bellies; they caw

Their lamentations in the eerie trees. (Canto XIII)

In the novel, Jennet Humfrye is shown as being so attached to her son that she couldn’t bear his separation. She felt so lonely and being an abject figure feels that she is an outsider to the mainstream, or what Kristeva calls a “deject” or “stray” (POH 8). By definition, she dwells in a zone of loss, absence and desire, since she has not resolved his primeval separation trauma. Experiencing abjection of the self she becomes feeble and incapable to identify with anything in the outside world and locates the site of meaningfulness and impossibility within itself.

In Kristeva’s words, “There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of want on which any being, meaning language, or desire
is founded” (POH 5). When allowed to visit the house with the condition that she must never tell the boy about herself Jennet’s love grew stronger for her son and she planned on escaping with him. And then, one day the boy and his nanny were out riding with a pony and trap and there was an accident, and they both drowned. Jennet witnesses the whole thing (hatch, this is a horror story), wracked by grief and anger, died a slow death from wasting disease only to return in haunted, demented ghost form. The hate, remorse and need for revenge grew as she blamed her sister for her son’s death and even after her death her soul is agitated and people began to catch a glimpse of her ghostly appearances. Each time she is seen, something evil happens and a child dies, either by illness or in a terrible accident as the veiled spirit is claiming the town’s children one by one.

As mentioned above, Kristeva makes a distinction between two types of mothers; the first category is seen as the positive mother and the other being the abject mother. Accordingly, Jennet at first in the novel is an ideal woman, an ideal mother who instead of so many adversities and hardships was not willing to quit. She gave birth to her baby knowing that he was illegitimate. The narrative differentiates between mothers and other women in a manner that legitimate mothers are valorised and put in a place not only as different from, but also as superior to other women.

The position of legitimate mothers can also serve for abhorring other women, as in the case of adulteresses (illegitimate mothers), murderous midwives, barren or childless women and bad mothers. These are “other” women who exemplify the dark and gloomy side of the feminine and the fears of women related to motherhood. According to Kristeva, it is the fear of women, which is said to have its basis in women’s reproductive capacities, which is turned into phobia and leads to the abjection of women and to the association of women with the abject. Jennet stood as tall as an oak against all the odds of the society and thus emerges as an ideal woman. She is a modern woman who rejects to submit to patriarchal ideology and questions the authority when is not allowed to keep the child with her.

During the 1880s and 1890s in England, newspaper and magazine articles, novels and plays and public speeches focused around the concept of New Woman which was popularised by writer Henry James. The term New Woman, according to historian Ruth
Bordin, is referred to women who “exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic” (Bordin 2). Marilyn Yalom portrays the ‘New Woman’ as:

She was, in the eyes of her admirers, the long-awaited feminine savior who would set things right between the sexes and bestow untold benefits upon family and society. But in the eyes of her detractors, she was no less than a reprehensible virago, a freak of nature bound to destroy the hallowed separation of gendered spheres and wreak havoc on such sacred institutions as marriage and motherhood. (Yalom 268)

But after her son’s death she ultimately turns into “other” being; a woman who is selfish, cruel and egocentric and who hates and blames everyone for his son’s death. Her soul even after her death is not at peace and when she ultimately becomes a ghost she starts taking her revenge from the society by killing other women’s children. Although Jennet does not gain anything from killing innocent children but still she does it, because her thirst for revenge is towering and took over her whole being both after his death and into eternity. She yearns to retaliate and avenge her dead child and even kills Arthur’s child and wife: “I had seen the ghost of Jennet Humfrye and she had her revenge” (WIB 200).

Her brutal acts very much justifies that she is no more an ideal woman and has ultimately turned into a fallen woman, who is merciless, ruthless, selfish, brutal, monstrous, heartless and a killing machine. As one of the locals tells Kipps, “Whenever she is seen . . . a child dies” (WIB 186) and this was what everyone has to say about her. It becomes unbelievable that the woman who once struggled against every accusation of the society for her son is now taking away the lives of innocent children. Being a mother herself she has lost all the sense of motherhood and all her inhuman actions have made her an abject mother.
According to Susan Hill, the tenaciousness of Humfrye’s hatred is part of what makes the novel so gripping. An article titled “Susan Hill: The Woman in Black” edited by Mark Palmer mentions Susan’s assertion:

A fictional ghost has to have a raison d’etre otherwise it is pointless and a pointless ghost is the stuff of all the boring stories about veiled ladies endlessly drifting through walls and headless horsemen . . . for no good reason, to no purpose. My ghost cannot let go of her grief or her desire for revenge, she has to go on extracting it . . .

Even when Kipps returns home, the woman takes her revenge upon him by causing the death of his young wife and infant son. Since then Kipps has remarried and has become stepfather to his new wife’s children, yet he has not been able to forget or disregard the past haunting events and tragedy caused by the woman in black. Jennet even after her death is not at peace and is not at the end of her war with the orthodox society; her being animate may not affect the lives of people around her as much as it does after her death. The people around her feel the omnipresent ghostly presence which terrifies them. They experience fright because they constantly suppress the idea of death, but in certain moments they suddenly collide with it. As Julia Kristeva’s asserts in her essay, the thing that portrays as the “utmost of abjection,” is the corpse, because it compels us to face the borders of our own subsistence:

The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect
borders, positions, rules? The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.

*(POH 4)*

It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. She is not alien to this place and its people and everybody is afraid of her presence as she is still present at every corner of the town. Once discarded from her motherly rights over her son she considers everyone as her enemy. She is taking revenge from everybody who directly or indirectly is responsible for her miseries. The novel *The Woman in Black* is jam-packed with such incidents which undoubtedly depicts the transformation of an ideal mother into the fallen or abject mother, “Her face, in its extreme pallor, her eyes, sunken but unnaturally bright, were burning with the concentration of passionate emotion which was within her and which streamed from her” (*WIB* 75). Her eyes are filled with fire of hatred and vengeance.

When Arthur encounters a malevolent being that manifests in the form of an enigmatic spectral figure-the woman in black at the funeral of Mrs. Drablow, he presumes that she is just a woman who is in very ailing physical condition and felt a strange fear when he looked into her eyes which even haunted him in his dreams:

> [A]lthough I did not stare, even the swift glance I took of the woman showed me enough to recognize that she was suffering from some terrible wasting disease, for not only was she extremely pale, even more than a contrast with the blackness of her garments could account 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. (*WIB* 53)

Even the so proudly rational Arthur has trouble keeping track of what’s what when he's wandering around Eel Marsh House as the strange sounds emanate from a securely locked room; a door that Kipps has been unable to move is found standing open;
an empty rocking chair strangely begins rocking. What bothers and agitates Kipps most, though, is that he is confident that some of the screams are those of a young child and as the strange events multiply, Kipps becomes obsessed with trying to unravel the story of Eel Marsh House and of the woman in black. Here he comprehends that there is a ghost chasing him and that he is always surrounded by a strange presence. At Eel Marsh House he is not alone, a dead one (Abject) is also living there: “But what was ‘real’? At that moment I began to doubt my own reality” (WIB 154).

The woman in black doesn’t just inflict psychological injury; she also muddled up all stuff. She is the victim of patriarchal society-a society which forced her to shun all the womanly attributes which were very much present in her. She frees herself from the burdensome “truth” of rationality by irrationally recasting herself as the powerful inhabitant of a supernatural world. In doing so, she liberates and empowers herself. Through this self-liberation, she forces her audience to question whether the confining truth of reason is any more desirable that the liberating truth of madness. It highlights that for a woman living in a world structured by the supposed rational dominance of men, escape into madness is the only chance for change.

She is now a fallen woman, a ghost, who is there to haunt, to scare and to kill innocent people: “It was in a state of disarray as might have been caused by a gang of robbers, bent on mad, senseless destruction” (WIB 171). The vision or image of her dying son got to be violent stuff on her old psyche that she never forgave the Drablows for the death of her son, and she declared vengeance on them and on everyone who somewhere directly or indirectly responsible for her misfortune as it has disturbed her to such an extent that she crossed the womanly attribute and became un-womanly, “... From that day Jennet Humfrye began to go mad” (WIB 111).

But we just have to point out-Arthur too watched his child dying in a horrible accident and managed not to go crazy. So what’s the difference? Even after his son’s and wife’s death Arthur never loses his senses. All he wanted was not to talk about the dead, because he had a horrible experience in past when he encountered an abject. It is basically because women were among the underprivileged oppressed section of society and thus according to Kristeva were more prone to be an abject. Jennet was also the
victim of that very society which made her insane, “... mad with grief and mad with anger and a desire for revenge” (WIB 185). She wants everyone to suffer and endure the same and she did it by killing the innocent and blameless kids of the poor people.

Being “Abject” mother now, she wants that people should realise and become conscious of the pain which she felt at her son’s death. Her ruthless and unforgiving instinct was making things really horrible and miserable around her. She is not only furious or mad but flaming with the fire of revenge and nobody wants to discuss her or talk about her as they believe that she might be listening to their talks. She wants them to experience the same pain by watching their own children dying as once she herself saw the sad accident of her son. It’s not just betrayal that has made the woman in black the way she it, it’s in reality heartbreak.

Jennet gets no sympathy while she was alive, and thus reciprocates by showing no kindness to others when she comes back to haunt the town. To her that was not betrayal or something unreasonable in fact they’re just getting what they deserve. The woman in black wants to make someone, anyone pay for what she’s been through and she wants it so badly that it leaves a mark on the whole house. Besides that the intensity of her grief and anguish together with her pent-up hatred and desire for retribution permeated the air all around. The reason behind her wickedness that led her to take away other women’s children is that she had lost her own. Her individual loss and bitterness can be understandable but not forgivable.

The Woman in Black thus display in its own way how a intricate concept like abjection can be used to describe behaviour and relationships between individuals. The theme is especially appropriate to apply on the Victorian age. As already stated in the introduction, Victorian women were considered to be lower to men, thus one could argue that, in the 19th century, the entire female sex was already abject. Improperness of men was often overlooked, particularly when it came to sexual behaviour, because society tended to turn a blind eye to the debauchery of the male population. Women were less privileged or lucky; even the slightest error could seal their fate and turn them into fallen women, making them perfect subjects for abjection. The encounter with the abject is a familiar theme in all Gothic texts as they concern with those gruesome and ghastly
moments in life when a character is psychologically tattered asunder. Through her proficient use of the concept of abjection, Hill stimulates the very best of the Gothic genre and provides readers a pleasing experience, one that has made *The Woman in Black* a long-lasting favourite.

In conclusion, whilst exploiting popular Gothic tropes which in part explain its popularity, *The Woman in Black* is in dialogue with contemporary rhetoric about families. It explores social anxieties and apprehensions associated with hierarchies of authority in families, legal responsibility, the isolation of unmarried mothers and the rights of parents or those in loco parentis. Subsequently, the novel contributes to new and less idealised perceptions about women and women as mothers. As Susanna Clap, the journalist of *The Guardian* newspaper examines, “Like all really good ghost stories *The Woman in Black* is grounded not in horror but in human pain and loss”. In this respect, Hill’s novel belongs to a tradition of women’s radical Gothic running from Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, through the Brontës and Charlotte Gilman Perkins, to Christina Stead, Sylvia Plath and Angela Carter.