Robert W. Lambert. Familial Dysfunction in Young Adult Horror Fiction. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. November, 2005. 54 pages. Advisor: Brian Sturm

This paper examines how young adult horror novels use dysfunctional family states to represent the anxieties of the protagonists. Sixteen young adult horror novels written between 1982 and 2002 were studied and subjected to latent content analysis. The study found that every novel depicted dysfunctional families and that dispelling the dysfunction constituted the true resolution of the story.

Headings:

Horror Fiction

Horror Fiction – Evaluation

Content analysis – Young adults' literature

Young adults' literature – Evaluation

FAMILIAL DYSFUNCTION IN YOUNG ADULT HORROR FICTION

by
Robert W. Lambert

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

November 2005

Approved by

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Brian Sturm

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I. Introduction

Young adult horror is a literary sore point. The phenomenal popularity of R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street* series in the mid-nineties drew outraged responses from critics, librarians, and parents who pronounced the genre unsuitable for consumption on the grounds that it was harmful and possessed no literary merit. When Stine's popularity lagged in the late nineties, the outcry ceased, and young adult horror has since received little attention. Now that the specter of controversy has largely dispersed, a reevaluation of the genre freed from tone-setting cultural politics is due.

Like adult gothic horror, young adult horror addresses the breakdown of order. In the young adult horror novel, the family is microcosmic, and anxieties of universal disorder are expressed by the disruption of the family unit. However, young adult horror almost always resolves the anxieties of its protagonists by repairing the family. Although each genre shares the same tensions, young adult horror is reassuring compared to adult gothic. Consequently, young adult horror reaffirms order instead of subverting it as adult horror frequently does.

Despite this difference, young adult horror may be understood as an extension of the gothic tradition to a younger audience. Both genres share a common set of concerns, but the symbols they use to represent those concerns differ. In adult gothic, cosmic disorder is represented by wild landscapes, ruined castles, and social upheaval –

an entire world out of joint. Young adult horror dramatizes the same anxieties on a smaller scale within the microcosm of the family. Because juvenile horror criticism is so preoccupied with the value of horror, the significance of the family drama taking place within the novels has never been examined. This study attempts to do so by answering the question: "How does young adult horror address the concerns and tensions of its protagonists through depictions of dysfunctional family states?"

II. Literature Review

Gothic

A brief and necessarily simplified account of the development of gothic fiction is useful in order to understand the anxieties addressed by young adult horror. Gothic is an expression of what is disturbing and unseemly lying beneath the accepted order of the universe. To include young adult fiction in this tradition is to recognize that children are also affected by these metaphysical anxieties.

Gothic fiction first appeared in Britain during the late eighteenth century as part of what has sometimes been called the Counter-Enlightenment – a cultural reaction against the notion that rationality had the power to harmonize spirituality, society, the cosmos, and God. Before this optimistic cultural tendency towards rationalism reached its peak and gave way to Romanticism, it provoked a pessimistic response, which forced society to face the implications of rationality's limitations and the failure of the idea of universal order.

Even during the height of the Enlightenment, writers like Jonathan Swift and David Hume, though they were not spiritually aligned, assaulted the principles of the age. Each attacked the futility of reconciling the rational and spiritual world. Swift, a canon, decried what he believed was the corruption of religious character with natural science and cold reason while Hume described the futility of rationally verifying God's existence. Although the two writers came from different camps and met with resistance, they were

both influential in casting doubt over the idea that a rational universal harmony could be achieved.

Soon, the Romantics would offer ways to cope with and even exult irrationality. But before then, gothic would emerge as an outlet for the fears of a society for whom nature seemed uncontrollable, and to which God may have appeared very distant. Vengeful spirits, evil aristocrats, impious monks, and roving bandits are a few of Gothic's stock characters, representing the debased spirit of humanity. Likewise, wild and blasted landscapes, dark dungeons filled with decaying corpses, and ruined castles or mansions all point to a natural chaos which advances towards degeneration and death.

This outlook of ruin and chaos called into question the nature of good and God's role in the world. The suggestions that evil can trump virtue and that humanity's relationship to God is ambivalent are threatening conceits, particularly to a Christian society. Fred Botting suggests gothic narratives in their infancy, "…ceded to the ambivalence that shaped them and became increasingly uncertain of the location of evil and vice … the locus of evil vacillates between outcast individuals and the social conventions that produced or constricted them" (90). This uncertainty about the origin of evil never leaves gothic. Even the most frightening monsters can often be seen as victims of the evil around them, and are worthy of as much pity as scorn – a circumstance coloring the response readers will have to several of the ghosts and vampires depicted by the novels examined in this study .

Fear as Harm

At the heart of juvenile horror criticism is a debate over the value of horror. Opponents frequently come across as crusaders against fear itself. Critics like Joanne Cantor appear to believe that the need to protect children from fear is self-evident. An article highlighting her work summarizes video material she has identified as likely to provoke fear in children and teens. While Cantor adequately supports her finding that her subjects experience fear, it is unclear how she reaches the conclusion that fear-producing material is dangerous. The article points to an uncited study of Cantor's where 96 college students were asked if they were ever frightened by something they had seen on TV or at the movies as children. Thirty percent remembered screaming or crying, 19 percent remembered stomach problems, and 46 percent remembered sleep problems. One-third of the subjects claimed the effects of their viewing lasted for more than a year, and one-fourth claimed that the effects still had not dissipated. The article also claims that these effects can cause "serious psychological problems," but does not identify what those problems may be (Viadero, 35). While these physical symptoms concern Cantor, they are also natural accompaniments to fear and may be part of the thrilling experience that fans of the genre find attractive. The nature of the symptoms is also unclear. Stomach problems might indicate an exciting tension in the abdomen, or "butterflies-in-the stomach," instead of something debilitating and undesirable. Sleep problems as a result of fear do not necessarily imply that the subject was terrified beyond endurance. A child gripped by night terrors is much different than the horror fan who sometimes sleeps with the light turned on.

Despite its flaws, Cantor's work provides the insight necessary for people to make informed decisions. Producers wishing, for example, to create a superhero series for young children will have the capacity to judge why the Hulk may be too threatening. Likewise, parents will be in a better position to predict the effects of material already available. In both cases, Cantor's work makes it possible to avoid fear when fear is not the intended effect.

On the other hand, Cantor's work ceases to make sense when her views are applied to works of horror that explicitly promise fear as an integral part of the experience. Audiences who come to horror willingly are disappointed if they fail to be scared. Yet Cantor suggests that these people are being victimized:

> … Cantor reasons [that] Hollywood television and movie producers may already know what she has to say. 'When I see a Stephen Spielberg film like *Poltergeist*, I feel he must have read my work because he knows exactly what buttons to push to frighten a child,' Cantor says. 'And the same is true of Disney' (Viadero, 36).

Putting aside the argument of whether or not Spielberg intended *Poltergeist* for youngsters, Cantor's suspicion suggests that producers have no other motive than to harm children. She does not address the possibility that the promise and enjoyment of fear have contributed to the success of Spielberg and Disney.

Not all critics agree with Cantor's conclusions; Deborah Stevenson, in her article *Frightening the Children?: Kids, Grown-Ups, and Scary Picture Books*, is at odds with Cantor. In her defense of frightening picture books, Stevenson points to what she sees as the emptiness of the notion that fear can harm young readers:

> The mere idea of fear – the idea of possible fear – can suffice to justify keeping a book away from a young audience. Such withholding of a book rarely comes as a result of its actual and continuing effect on children; most significant judgments on the scariness of a book are made before adults ever show it to a child. And few people expressing reservations are prepared to be specific about the negative

> effects of fear. The age-old assumption remains that strong emotions evoked by literature can "damage" the sensitive. … and the mysteriousness of the predicted negative result makes its possibility all the more unsettling. Will sensitive Wild Things readers remain permanently afraid of books, of monsters, of mothers? The fear seems to be that children will grow up shadowy-eyed and haunted, doomed always to sleep with the lights on, incapable of ever being productive citizens – in short, harmed (307).

Stevenson argues that the aversion to children's horror has more to do with adult reactions to the material than those of children – that keeping scary books away from children only serves to assuage the fears of their adult protectors. A root cause of this circumstance is the inability of adults to respond to literature as a child does. Consequently, adults make incorrect judgments on the effects a book may have on a child. Stevenson also points out that "a negative feeling is not the same as a negative effect," and uses the example of Beth's death in *Little Women* to illustrate how sad (and, on that basis, rarely controversial) books do not produce unhappy children. She concludes by claiming that children are capable of understanding the purpose of a horror story and the horror tradition – that "limited fright is the point of some literature, and that such fright is not a reason to avoid scary books but rather to embrace them" (314).

The Purpose of Horror

The renowned psychologist Bruno Bettelheim's work on fairy tales is occasionally cited by horror proponents wishing to justify the "usefulness" of the genre. Bettelheim, in his 1976 book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, makes the case that fairy tales serve an important role in the lives of children as they face the challenges of growing up and coming to terms with both the world and themselves. Bettelheim believed that fairy tales were distilled expressions of anxieties

that all people confront as they develop from children to adults. As these anxieties were dramatized and resolved in the tales, children were given an arena in which to confront their own personal and inter-personal troubles. However, the tales do so on a subconscious level. If a child were made aware of this function, the tales would become less potent. Thus, the purpose of fairy tales can only be fulfilled as long as the "meaning" of the tales is left unexplained.

Because many fairy tales are frightening, horror aficionados sometimes use Bettleheim's claims as a vindication for horror in general. However, Bettleheim suggests value for horror only inasmuch as horror is used in fairy tales, for it is the fairy tale form itself that Bettelheim finds important. Fairy tales owe their effect to their having been refined for centuries in the oral tradition. Due to this process, they retain only what is necessary for their narrative to perform their larger purpose. Bettelheim suggests that pictures and other elaborations are distractions which detract from the tale's effectiveness. He also favors stories from the oral tradition over those transmitted through writing. Thus, Bettelheim's conclusions rely too much upon the fairy tale form for his theories to apply to novels.

Nevertheless, Bettelheim is persuasive in countering the notion that fear itself is harmful. By suggesting the benefits of a major narrative form which relies heavily upon horror, Bettelheim is an authoritative rebuttal to views typified by Cantor. Indeed, Cantor addresses Bettelheim directly by suggesting that fairy tales are less offensive because they "usually are read to children by parents" and because parents can change the ending to take the fearful edge off the stories (Viadero, 36). By assuming that parents alter the fairy tale narrative, Cantor appears to suggest that fairy tales are less threatening than

other forms. However, this is an evasive response since Bettelheim's claims depend upon the coherence of the narratives to their original state.

Bettelheim's identification of a psychological function for fairy tales is frequently echoed by horror proponents who argue that horror tales serve a purpose by helping readers recognize and deal with their own fears. Annette Curtis Klause, author of one of the novels examined in this study, writes about a kind of ancient horror storytelling tradition. In *The Lure of Horror*, Klause begins by describing the motivation behind the origin of storytelling. Horror, unsurprisingly, plays a crucial role:

> Since the infancy of humankind we have been afraid of the dark, and that fear lingers still. For ancient people, this was a practical fear – the dark contained the unknown. To run afoul of something in the dark meant death, so dark represented death, and death was the ultimate fear, for no one knew what lay beyond. To cope with these fears, humankind invented stories to put order into them and to be prepared for what might be out there. Those stories became our mythology and folklore (38).

Klause reiterates the idea in her article *Why Vampires?*:

> Horror literature draws heavily on the archetypes of folklore – stories invented to put a face on our fear of the unknown and help us explain and cope with the universe and the cycle of life and death. Like supernatural folklore, horror literature allows the audience to explore subconscious fears … (28).

In both passages, Klause is attempting to justify the kind of fiction she writes by associating it with an ancient tradition of storytelling whose existence is, however plausible some may consider it to be, merely speculative. Horror tales undoubtedly have a long and ancient tradition, but the value Klause attaches to horror derives from generalizations of the psychological state of primitive humanity, which she presumably feels she is able to intuit.

Klause is a capable author, but her suggestion that horror is psychologically beneficial, if not therapeutic, is symptomatic of the preoccupation with value that characterizes young adult horror criticism. Because juvenile horror is stigmatized, favorable criticism tends to be defensive and prone to some measure of self-justification.

While horror advocates theorize about the benefits of horror, some critics are concerned that the genre serves a more menacing purpose. Betty Silliman explored the potential for the ideological indoctrination of young adult horror readers. Based upon initial readings, Silliman began to suspect that young adult horror routinely endorses patriarchal values by being violently hostile to females who do not conform to conventional conceptions of femininity. Her research confirmed to her satisfaction that these values were widely represented, but she found no evidence that readers were indoctrinated into the views presented. The girls she interviewed were attracted to the fiction by its depictions of "death, flesh, and fluids" (viii).

Speculations about a benign or harmful purpose to horror result from attempting to grasp the implications of horror's appeal. Children's fascination with material that repulses many adults has more than a few parents and educators concerned. Adding to the controversy is the fact that the most popular horror titles are series, which are largely considered to be inferior productions.

Literary Merit

The final issue affecting the tone of young adult horror criticism is the quality of the writing itself. Gothic, from the outset, has been accused of being a subliterary genre

both because of its subject matter, and because of its popular appeal. Spector, cited by Silliman, comments:

> While a modicum of decent work appeared, seemingly, anyone who could hold a pen contributed to the genre. Women readers of periodicals, believing (correctly) that they could do no worse than those who were providing them with Gothic claptrap, submitted their own weak and labored efforts (13-14, cited in Silliman, 4).

Silliman correctly identifies a vein of contempt for both gothic literature and its audience of women. Her reference to commentary in a 1795 edition of the *Critical Review* illustrates her point: "Another haunted castle! Surely the misses themselves must be tired of so many stories of ghosts and murderers" (Spector, 14 cited in Silliman, 4). Devaluing the literature also devalued the taste of the women who were its typical readers.

A similar devaluation was notable during the height of series horror – only children, instead of women, were the victims. While the critical output expended upon young adult horror was the highest it had ever been, the discourse took on the character of a debate with critics engaging in a kind of point-counterpoint dialog. On one side, the detractors claimed that young adult horror (or what was actually a generalization of young adult horror based upon series horror) was poorly written, sensational, and, in general, a waste of time. On the other side, defenders of the genre did not rebut those claims, but pointed out that writers like R.L. Stine at least got kids reading. The inferior literature they were reading might, many reasoned, act as a stepping stone to worthwhile literature.

Suzanne Wargo and Alberta Graham raise points typically brought up in the debate in a 1997 point-counterpoint article on the topic of whether kids should read *Goosebumps*. This short article perfectly condenses the larger debate surrounding horror,

and serves to illustrate pervasive views expressed by many critics. Wargo, who argues in favor of the books, actually has very little that is positive to say about them. Her defenses are left-handed at best, and only two points actually address the texts themselves instead of ways to take advantage of children's interest in them for educational purposes. First she writes, "Are they [*Goosebumps*] great literature? Certainly not. But, given the last-paced [Sic.] electronic age today's kids are growing up in, *Goosebumps* keeps kids reading – and that's worth a lot" (43). Wargo, like Klause, is attempting to ascribe some kind of value to the books, but she makes the job difficult by stating from the outset that, whatever value they may have, it is not as literature. She undermines herself so thoroughly that she can only vaguely state that they are "worth a lot," and only then in relation to the "electronic age" whose value she apparently holds in even less regard. Her other point, that "Students will outgrow books by R.L. Stine and learn to love reading," similarly undermines her stance because it is simply an assurance that interest in Stine's work will not last; an optimistic (from her point of view) prediction that cannot be supported.

In the same article, Graham, who takes a view opposed to Wargo, states the typical arguments for her side. Graham admits that Stine's books have "value" in that they are "well-orchestrated to sustain interest," and that "the child who reads *Goosebumps* is, at least, reading something" (43). However, this value is nullified because "Stine's work aims at such a low level, develops little artistic setting, and has few interesting characters and next to no mind-expanding value" (43). In short, the books are unedifying. The remainder of Graham's points describes more specifically how the books fail to educate children. Of particular note is her assumption that the books are

worth less because they are horror stories: "Stine engages his readers on only one plane – horror. The videos loosely based on his books are even gorier. They debilitate, rather than strengthen, children's minds" (43). She ends with another statement about the genre's value, this time in terms of currency: "As a reading specialist, I will not spend my hard-earned money on this type of limiting literature" (43). Graham, who admits that she is jealous of Stine's success, believes that the extent to which a book is enlightening not only determines its value as literature, but that this value can be expressed monetarily. Fans of *Goosebumps* not only have bad taste, they are irresponsible consumers.

In his book *What's so Scary about R.L. Stine*, Patrick Jones responds to both sides of the debate. Jones, like Siliman, is sensitive to the disdain shown towards readers of horror by its critics:

> To say 'Well, at least they're reading something' devalues not just Stine and recreational reading in general, but devalues the reader as a person. This attitude debases the reading experience by creating a caste system of books; it is elitist and counterproductive (xii).

Ironically, in making his case for Stine, Jones is criticizing the stance most often taken by his supporters. In fact, Jones himself once held a more ambivalent view of Stine. In an earlier article, he writes:

> We like to think of ourselves as being concerned with education, culture, and literature, yet our collections are becoming anything but bastions of those virtues. … Yet, the primary mission of libraries (school and public) is to provide material for patrons that they will read. … what libraries really have to fear from horror fiction is that we can't seem to find enough of it to keep up with demand. But, for those of you who hate it, have no fear. Like most youth fads, from New Kids on the Block to Vanilla Ice, it too shall pass soon enough (32).

By "horror fiction," Jones really means series horror. While Jones evidences a certain scorn for the genre in his earlier writing, he also offers a clue as to why his view evolved. Jones, unlike Graham, sees his role as a librarian as one which makes it possible for

patrons to make their own reading choices. Graham, and other opponents to horror, see their role as guides who influence the development of their patrons' characters through the choices they make available to them. Like the eighteenth century women mentioned in Siliman's study, the horror novel reading children are being exposed to material offensive to the values held by the literary establishment.

Jones contends that the products of Stine and, by extension, other writers of series horror should not be judged as art, but as products of popular culture. The series are strictly entertainments, which are not meant to be socially redeeming or edifying. Jones compares critics who are unable to appreciate Stine to people who only enjoy fine dining and are unable to grasp why millions of people might enjoy a meal from McDonald's. To compare the productions of a writer like Stine to an award winning author like Robert Cormier is unfair because the differences between the two are not so much in degree as in kind. For Jones, the proper question critics should ask about Stine's is not "Are these books quality?" but "What about these books makes them so popular?" (xx). One may pose the same question of other popular entertainments like videogames, anime, and comics – Stine's true competition. The concern then becomes the role of popular culture in libraries and the home. Although Jones' analysis successfully places series horror in the context of general popular culture, it is unclear why critics should be inspired to reevaluate their positions. His argument appears better suited to justify the existence of his own book of criticism.

However, by associating Stine and the general mass of series horror with other phenomena of pop culture, Jones has separated them from young adult horror novels whose ties to pop culture are less strong. By doing so, he has also distanced these novels

from the vast bulk of young adult horror criticism, which, with its preoccupation with Stine, does not discriminate between his style of writing and the work of authors with whom he has little in common. This study attempts to provide a fresh perspective of these authors by allowing their novels to stand on their own merit. Readers will be able to appreciate that, despite what the bulk of criticism may suggest, young adult horror is not defined by Stine, and has more storytelling potential than he chooses to explore.

Once series horror is taken out of the equation, young adult horror bears a great similarity to the work of writers like Judy Blume whose protagonists, like those encountered in gothic novels, are often individuals coming to terms with the necessity of assimilating into a world from which they are alienated. The process of assimilation may require that a family overcome disruption in order to re-establish order and stability as in *Tiger Eyes*, or may mean coming to terms with a society whose conventions make acceptance difficult, as with *Blubber*. At other times, assimilation is compelled and complicated by the onset of puberty, as is the case for the protagonist of *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*. Each of these tensions implies the struggle to achieve stability that is characteristic of young adult horror, and which is revisited throughout the novels examined in this study.

Blume's novels are also similar to young adult horror in their portrayals of disturbed or broken families. Cedric Cullingford argues that dysfunctional family settings serve a structural function in Blume's style of writing:

> One of the advantages of setting these stories in a divorced or dysfunctional family is that it places more responsibility on the survival instincts of the children themselves. It means that the concerns of the children are paramount, even within the home environment. And it throws attention on their rivalries. The tone of the books gives recognition, in a laconic way, to some of

> the concerns of children and through sarcasm in particular allows different types of concern – divorce, rivalries or school food – to become similar (143).

Young adult horror writers achieve the same effects through similar depictions of families. However, they differ in tone. Instead of sarcasm, fear and a sense of dread are used to articulate children's concerns. The survival instincts of the characters are highlighted to an even greater degree, and more than irony will be needed to set things right.

Young adult horror criticism will probably continue to address the issue of value as long as the value of horror itself remains in question. Consequently, the genre will remain in disrepute among adults who believe that children need to be protected from fear. This study does not attempt to resolve this debate. However, because young adult horror criticism tends to perceive all products of the genre as equivalent to series horror, there is no sense that the genre has something to offer beyond those sensations of fear, which are the sole purpose of writers like R.L. Stine.

III Methodology

This study uses manifest and latent content analysis to examine the family situations of the protagonists of sixteen young adult horror books. The depictions of family were compared to the notion of a "healthy" and complete family, and when discrepancies occurred, they were noted. A "happy" family is one which is not described as being unusually tense. Charged adjectives describing emotions or psychological states with negative connotations were identified and noted. Where these adjectives predominately characterized the family and its interactions, that family was judged to be unhappy. A complete family is defined as a unit living together and consisting of a biological mother and father and in which all children are alive.

The novels were selected by consulting media coordinators and reader's advisory sources like *NoveList* and the *2005 Subject Guide to Children's Books in Print*. Based upon this professional judgment, I identified a selection of horror titles published since 1980. I further constrained my choices by insisting that each book should be written by a separate author. In this way I avoided skewing my data to reflect the concerns of a particular writer. Furthermore, I excluded books if they were part of a series because I did not wish to conflate two different genres. The final selection consisted of the following sixteen titles:

- *Acquainted with the Night* by Sollace Hotze
- *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman

- *Devil's Race* by Avi
- *The Empty Mirror* by James Lincoln Collier
- *Fingers* by William Sleator
- *The Folk Keeper* by Franny Billingsley
- *The Haunting* by Margaret Mahy
- *In the Stone Circle* by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel
- *Jade Green* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- *Operating Codes* by Nick Manns
- *Out of the Dark* by Betty Ren Wright
- *The Silver Kiss* by Annette Curtis Klause
- *Skeleton Man* by George Bruchac
- *Thirsty* by M.T. Anderson
- *Wait til Helen Comes* by Mary Downing Hahn
- *Yaxley's Cat* by Robert Westall

I read the books completely through and compiled an analysis form (Appendix A) on which I recorded the status of each family member, the family as a whole, the attributes of the protagonist, the nature of the threat, and the nature of the resolution. To judge completeness, I looked for divorce, the death of family members, step-parents, and otherwise missing family members. To judge happiness, I looked for instances where family members were unable to communicate, argued, or cried. Other expressions of unhappiness were noted as they were identified. After the form was completed for each novel, the results were coded in three tables covering the nature of the family

dysfunction, type of threat, and resolution. Afterwards, I examined and analyzed the results.

Limitations

An important limitation to this study is that there is no strict definition of horror. The books selected for this study were chosen based upon professional advice but do not represent the genre definitively. Each of the sixteen features a supernatural antagonist, but stories featuring more mundane threats may also produce fear. These non-supernatural thrillers may express anxieties differently than the stories chosen here.

IV. **Analysis**

The content analysis demonstrates that each novel presents the family in a major dysfunctional state. In every case, the defeat of the horror threat is only a means to address the problems inherent within the family. The horror becomes a metaphorical representation of familial disorder, and confronting the horror entails a simultaneous confrontation with the dysfunction represented by the horror. Because the horrors in the novels are supernatural, they, as representatives of actual family states, imply that dysfunctional families are themselves at odds with nature. Thus, overcoming the horror is not simply an act of bravery; it is a corrective action that harmonizes the family with natural order.

Familial disorder takes several different forms, but all have the effect of making one or more family members inaccessible to the protagonist. When family members are not physically absent, they are emotionally distant. Typically, the stories either involve restoring communication among members or restoring or replacing missing members. When communication is the goal, it is frequently a preliminary step to the ultimate goal of replacement, which may or may not occur in the story.

Some novels, like *Yaxley's Cat* and *Thirsty*, do not resolve with the restoration of order to the family. These are the pessimistic exceptions to the rule, but they do not deviate from the shared anxieties of the other novels. The protagonists of these stories

are just as isolated from their families as those of the others, but are unable to bridge the gap that would allow them to make contact. Their failure to rise to the occasion in facing down the threat in their stories reflects their ultimate failure to mend their dysfunctional families and their dysfunctional universes.

In this section, the individual books are discussed grouped according to the familial circumstances depicted in the novels. The books comprising each grouping are made manifest by the result of the content analysis, which is displayed below. Once the groupings are made, thematic comparisons are made between the books in order to demonstrate how the nature of each family determines the type of anxiety expressed by the story.

Death in the Family

Of the sixteen books, just over 50% feature protagonists dealing with the death of a family member. A common issue in novels featuring a family death is the consequence of being unable to express feelings about the deceased or the occasion of the death. Characters unable to recover from the event are still "haunted" by it when the story begins. In such cases, the story involves confronting a threat that, at the same time, results with the characters confronting a death in the immediate family, usually by talking about it with a parent.

The teen narrator of *In the Stone Circle* has only the vaguest memory of her mother who died when she was three, but her father never discusses the death with her. The narrator is unable to come to terms with her mother's absence even though she herself is unaware of her anxiety. As a result, she, like the ghost she encounters, is

unable to move her existence forward. Her case stands out because she is unaware how her mother's death has affected her. The novel is largely about her gradual awareness of her repressed feelings brought to the surface by the ghost who she, in turn, helps move into the realm of death. Once the ghost is confronted and banished, she is able to express her feelings about her mother to her father who has, he reveals, just begun to consider remarriage. Her father's consideration of a potential bride is indicative of the family's progress from stasis to movement and new possibility. The family restructures itself around a new order, and begins to move towards the future instead of remaining trapped in the past.

Similarly, the young protagonist of *The Haunting* is unable to come to terms with the loss of his mother. Because he has never been able to express his feelings about his mother's death, he is unable to communicate with his family when he is haunted by a voice since he fears that the anxiety his problem creates would endanger the life of his pregnant stepmother. This fear isolates him, and the novel does not describe him as being terrified by his haunting so much as miserably burdened by it. He is only relieved of his burden when his secret is revealed and the channels of communication within his family are opened.

By communicating his fears, he is not only relieved of his misapprehension, but he allows the stepmother to be accepted into the family. While he was trying to protect her, he not only isolated himself, but her as well since she was unable to get close to him. Once communication is established, the stepmother is able to fully fill the position left open by the death of the protagonist's mother. Once she does so, the family is made complete. Just as with *In the Stone Circle*, the family's successful reordering of itself

indicates that its dysfunction has been dispelled, and that it has made a break with the past in which it was trapped.

Wait til Helen Comes tells essentially the same tale yet again. The younger step-sister of the protagonist has joined forces with the malevolent spirit of a little girl with whom she has certain attributes in common. The two form a team to terrorize and cause strife in her new family, which has yet to bond. As the protagonist learns more about the spirit, she realizes that her step-sister is being lured to her death. After rescuing her from the spirit, the two stepsisters stumble upon the remains of the ghost's parents who she accidentally killed. The ghost, marooned by her feelings of guilt and inability to reach her parents is isolated from both the world of the living and the dead. The young stepsister, too, has a secret. She blames herself for her mother's death in a fire she accidentally created. Once she tells her story to the narrator, she is convinced by her to tell her father, who, it is suggested, will relieve her of guilt and thereby allow the family to become closer.

Once again, confronting the ghost opens communication between family members. When this communication takes place, the family breaks with a past that thwarted their attempts to reorder and heal. Once the family is restructured with each role occupied, the anxieties afflicting the characters are resolved.

In *The Empty Mirror*, an orphaned boy is plagued by a spirit who takes his shape in order to commit crimes that ultimately cause his community to attempt to kill him. The boy, now living with his uncle, lost his parents in a flu epidemic that decimated the entire town. His uncle, a survivor of World War I, and the rest of the community tell him that it is best not to talk about such things. However, when it turns out that the ghost is of

a nameless boy who wandered into town and was denied shelter when he was infected, the protagonist is forced to confront the past. His uncle made a decision to deny the boy shelter because he was already doomed and the protagonist, then an infant, was sleeping in the house. The characters are forced to grapple with survivor's guilt and to confront the morality of decisions made in a crisis.

The protagonist and his uncle successfully address these issues by finally talking about the epidemic and the behavior of those who lived through it. However, the resolution for the town is more ambivalent. Once the ghost is finally revealed to the community, it retreats by disappearing into a lake, but it is not clear that it is banished. Even after seeing the ghost, the townspeople refuse to recognize their past. Excuses are made both to rationalize the ghost's existence and their own mob behavior as they pursued the protagonist through the woods. The townspeople's refusal to examine their actions contrasts with the self-examination that the protagonist and his uncle undergo.

Because the townspeople do not successfully confront the ghost and, by extension, their past, their anxieties are left unresolved. In an adult gothic novel this lack of resolution would create an ambivalent ending. However, because the family is microcosmic in young adult horror, there is no ambivalence since the boy and his uncle resolve their own anxieties. Disorder outside the family is extrinsic to the universe of the protagonist, and readers are left with no sense of an irresolute conclusion.

The sentimental tale told by *Acquainted with the Night* features a less frightening ghost. Unlike other novels where the death of a family member is a central dysfunction, the dead in *Acquainted with the Night* are forced to compete with other sorrows for

prominence in the general melancholia enshrouding the family. In this novel, the ghost represents all the dysfunctions rather that just one in particular.

Although the ghost does present a few moments of fright, she is more affecting as a sorrowing figure whose presence is a warning to two closely related cousins not to repeat her sin of incest. The suicide of the protagonist's uncle, who is the father of her cousin, is just one of the sad events that keep the characters of this story bound to a tract of land on an island. Unfortunately, it is unclear why they respond to their various tragedies in this manner, or what any of it has to do with why the two cousins are attracted to one another. The ghost is the spirit of a woman who was cast out of society for, among other things, inadvertently marrying the son she was forced to give up as a younger person. The novel suggests that she was a scapegoat for the sins of society, so when the two cousins perform a quasi-religious ceremony in which they forgive the ghost's sins, they also cast a benediction over their entire family. It is difficult to know why the family members are sinners just because they have problems, but cleansing the ghost results in their cleansing as well.

The novel suggests both reconciliation with the past as the sins of each family member are forgiven, and a restoration of moral order. The author's use of "sin" and "forgiveness" demonstrates the Christian underpinnings of the novel in which the moral authority of God is reasserted over the family whose sinfulness has driven them to a disorderly state. Not only does good triumph over evil, the ethical order of Christianity in particular is affirmed. Because of the intangible nature of a benediction, the resolution of this novel contrasts with those of the others in this group. No visible restructuring occurs since the effects are spiritual.

Jade Green features another warning spirit. In this book, a girl who has recently lost both of her parents travels across the country to live in the old Southern mansion of her old uncle and cousin, neither of whom she has had contact with before. Soon, she begins to be visited by the severed hand of a girl who was a previous occupant, and who died, apparently, of a violent suicide. The hand is misinterpreted as malevolent, but it turns out to be trying to help the protagonist by protecting her from her cousin who is the real cause of the girl's death. When the cousin attempts to rape the protagonist, he is strangled by the hand. With the cousin gone, the protagonist finds herself the inheritor of her uncle's estate and free of all obstacles to marry her beau. The resolution not only places the protagonist's life in order, it also ensures the continued order of the family estate, which has been removed from the grasp of the immoral and prodigal cousin. Additionally, with the poisonous influence of her cousin gone, she is able to form a closer bond with her uncle and his housekeeper who will replace her dead parents.

The Folk Keeper does not feature a ghost. Rather it is the story of an orphan girl who is returned to her mother's estate as a servant. In the novel's world, a race of ravenous and evil beings living in subterranean darkness requires a special kind of servant called a folk keeper to appease them. The protagonist takes her job seriously and spends most of the time in the cellar where she finds pitiable laments scratched onto the walls by the former mistress of the household who is known to have gone insane before she died. It turns out that the mistress is the girl's mother, and that she was actually a sealmaiden, a type of water-spirit, being held captive by the girl's recently deceased father. The novel resolves with the girl discovering her mother and inheriting the estate. She is also free to pursue marriage with her love interest.

In this novel, order is restored not only by settling the estate and through marriage, which allows the character to enter society, but by restoring order to the protagonist's sense of self. Before she discovered her parents, she was an orphan girl posing as a boy. Her hair, which she kept shorn to maintain the illusion, turns out to be a source of power that connects her to her mother and the rest of the sealmaidens. Thus, the novel is her journey from orphanhood to family and from self-rejection to self-acceptance.

Annette Curtis Klause's *The Silver Kiss*, tells a more immediate tale of death. Because her mother's death from cancer is imminent, the protagonist is not haunted by the past, but is still affected by her inability to express her feelings. Her father, more than she, is unwilling to talk about her mother. His motivation for causing this lack of communication stems from a belief that she should be protected from death. However, this circumstance only isolates them from each other. Because the death is occurring in the present, a more suitable antagonist than a ghost is needed. Ghosts are associated with the past being imposed on the present, but the vampires Klause creates for this story represent an eternal stasis of the present. By forming a romance with a vampire, the protagonist is engaging in wish fulfillment where the people she is close to do not change or die. However, by taking part in the slaying of an older vampire, who is stuck forever being a child, she breaks the spell and allows death to occur. Once the spell is broken, her vampire lover accepts his own death. Thus she reaffirms natural order by reinstating the balance of life and death. The resolution ends with the lines of communication being opened up between the father and daughter at the encouragement of the mother who has also accepted that she will die. Order here is established by reuniting the daughter with

her father as well as her mother who the girl is now allowed to see more often. It is also reestablished by the protagonist's acceptance of death and change.

In Avi's *Devil's Race*, the protagonist does not lose his parents, but his uncle. However, since his parents are almost entirely absent from the narrative, the uncle's function is more like that of a father. When the uncle is killed by an ancestral ghost who, like the ghost in *The Empty Mirror*, commits crimes in the protagonist's form, the hero of the story is left on his own to combat the spirit. Teaming up with a distant, cousin, the protagonist confronts the ghost and embraces it as a part of his own being. The ghost, it turns out, was only acting out the worst impulses of the protagonist himself. By banishing the ghost, the hero is free to pursue a relationship with his cousin, although the author does not seem to intend this as incest. Similar to *The Folk Keeper*, this story depicts the completion of a self. By recognizing his own evil impulses, the protagonist is able to have power over them and establish order over his self. Moral order is achieved by sublimating evil into the larger order of the self. Whereas Jekyll and Hyde represented the annihilation of the self into its constituent parts, *Devil's Race* depicts a victory for the cohesiveness of the self. While the two stories deal with the same horror, the young adult version ends optimistically with a triumph of the self. This victory is represented in the family as the purgation of an ancestral curse that the ghost seems to have represented. Prior to the protagonist's struggle, only his uncle was willing to talk about the ancestor whose shadow has been cast down on the family for generations. By accepting the spirit as his own, he also, by extension, does the so in the name of his entire family.

Of the nine novels featuring a family death, seven are ghost stories. The ghosts act as metaphorical manifestations of a past which keeps families from growing into new, complete units. The disorder presented in these instances has to do with death imposing itself on the province of life. Until the family is able to confront and overcome the trauma, it will remain unhealed and unable to proceed with life. In effect, the family is trapped in stasis in the past at the time of death. By confronting the spirit, the protagonist comes to terms with loss and initiates a reorientation of the family from the past to the future. This reorientation often involves making the position held by the deceased open to a new occupant through marriage. The gap left by the deceased family member is no longer a painful reminder of the past as much as a promise of future possibility. By restructuring itself, the family resists the entropy brought on by death, and by doing so represents a victory for order over chaos.

Divorce

Divorce plays out similarly to death in that the characters are forced to confront their feelings about it. Also like death, divorce leaves a vacant spot in the family. However, unlike death, divorce carries with it the pain of rejection. The characters in both novels where divorce occurs are forced to come to terms with the resentment and hurt of abandonment.

In the Stone Circle has already been discussed, but divorce forms an important subplot that is worth mentioning. The daughter of the woman the protagonist's father becomes romantically engaged with is having difficulty coming to terms with the less than savory character of her divorced father. Instead of acknowledging the hurt she feels

as a result of her father's neglect, she blames her brother and mother for driving him away. When she is able to confront the truth about him, she is able to accept both her mother and brother. In this way, the family is healed. A worthless member is finally expelled, and the bad influence he created is banished.

Divorce is another of the evils afflicting the protagonist of *Acquainted with the Night*. While her relationship with her father is close, she rarely gets to see him and wishes she could have more contact with him than their planned weekly phone calls allow. He is notable for being one of the people the climactic cleansing scene affects. We are told that he has done something wrong, but we are not sure what. By cleansing the ghost, the protagonist may be allowing herself to forgive her father for things she alone blames him, but we are not told.

Step Family

Issues of bonding surrounding step-families are significant in these novels. Both *The Haunting* and *Wait til Helen Comes* have already been discussed. William Sleator's *Fingers*, however, offers a more complex perspective. In this story, the protagonist lives with his mother, step-father, and half-brother. As the one person with ties outside the family unit, he is isolated and held in some contempt by everyone except his brother, whom he scorns. He, along with his mother and step-father, manipulates his brother into thinking that he is receiving dictation from the spirit of a deceased composer in order to create a sensation that will reignite his brother's sagging musical career. As it becomes clear that manipulation is having a detrimental effect on his brother, the protagonist attempts to put a stop to the scheme. He is met with defiance by his mother and step-

father who care more for their income than their son's wellbeing. More tension is caused by the fact that the spirit of the composer being imitated may actually be present and hostile to them. The story resolves with the two brothers fleeing their parents with a descendent of the composer who, it turns out, owns an isolated island. We are left with an image of the three living an idyllic life of ease together. The story undermines traditional ties that bind families together. The family we are first presented with is kind neither to the step-child nor the biological child. Where in the other two books, step-families are drawn closer together, it is completely torn apart in this one. Instead, a better replacement is established. In this new family, the bonds are spiritual rather than dictated by necessity.

Missing Members

Two novels featured family members who are kidnapped by supernatural antagonists. George Bruchac's *The Skeleton Man* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* tell stories about young girls facing demonic beings holding their parents prisoner. In these stories, the roles of protector and protected are reversed. The children are forced to depend on their own resources to rescue their helpless parents at the same time they are forced to deal with their own peril. Both protagonists are first faced with the need to find their parents and then escape beyond the reach of monstrous beings.

It is easy to dismiss these tales as lessons for self-reliance, but they are also acts of wish fulfillment gone awry. Children wish for independence from their parents, but getting that independence is a frightening thing. In *The Skeleton Man*, the protagonist finds herself alone and engages in behavior that many children wish they could also

engage in. She orders pizza for herself, watches television, decides when she will go to bed, and can go to school as she chooses. However, her situation is frightening instead of fun. She searches for reminders of normalcy, like school, and hides her situation because she does not want to admit that her parents are, indeed, missing. The eponymous hero of *Coraline* resists the temptation to choose a more accommodating version of her family before her parents are kidnapped by her tempter who continues to promise her all she desires. Her ordeal centers on her effort to restore her family. Both of these stories reinforce the hierarchy family roles. While children may wish to escape from their parents, the reality of doing so is too frightening.

These stories are about the horror of social upheaval – a theme present in gothic since the French Revolution. Both of these stories depict a reversal in the social structure of the family. The children achieve their independence from their parents, but, unlike the French revolutionaries, they are too frightened by the result and strive to restore the authority they lived under. These novels assert the order of the status quo and restore the natural relationship of parent and child.

Strained Relationships

Some stories depict dysfunctional families dealing with bad marriages or facing the possibility of divorce. Most often, these strains are resolved by families recommitting themselves to each other. At other times, the tension remains or becomes even worse. This is the only category where every novel does not end happily. In these cases, the world-view of the novels is very pessimistic. The state of the family, as a microcosm, reflects the state of the universe as a whole.

The novels with positive resolutions still outnumber those with negative. The parents in *Fingers* have little respect for one another, but they each depend on the other. The mother needs the small income her husband's estate grants him, while he is dependent on the mother's intelligence, organizational skill, and power to come up with new enterprises and business schemes. As noted before, the family in *Fingers* breaks apart completely, but a better, non-dysfunctional one is created for the brothers.

The resolution of Betty Ren Wright's *Out of the Dark* involves an easing of tension when the protagonist's parents find themselves in a better financial situation. Unlike the ghost in the story, the mother is able to realize that she is responsible for her own success in life. When she comes home with a new job that she convinced her boss to give her, she no longer blames her husband for holding her back. The divorce that readers see on the horizon is avoided and the family is restored to harmony.

Operating Codes resolves when a work-obsessed father is accused of leaking government secrets when the operating codes for a weapon he was helping develop are leaked to the internet. The experience leaves him more appreciative of the time he has with his family, and he leaves what the book suggests is an immoral line of work. When he does so, the novel dissociates him with the military ghosts haunting the house, which was once a chemical weapons manufacturing site. The family is not only brought closer together by divesting it of the dysfunction created by the father's workaholic tendencies, but also by purging it of the taint of evil.

Yaxley's Cat, by Robert Westall, ends on a less upbeat note. The protagonist, repressed wife to an authoritarian business man, retreats to a small cottage in a rural town populated by peasants of an almost anachronistic rusticity. The cottage turns out to be

the former home of a local shaman who was killed by the locals when they suspected his charms were responsible for the death of a villager. Led to a cabinet full of arcane paraphernalia by the former occupant's supernatural cat, the woman and her two children are mistaken for magicians themselves when they are seen examining the equipment. Throughout the book, the protagonist seems ready to assert herself and take command of her inner-power. Instead, she spends the entire story spinning her wheels while her young son protects her from the populace. When the son successfully defends the house against an assault of villagers intent on killing them, his mother follows the order he condescendingly issues in the same manner as her husband. When, miraculously, the police arrive, readers are soon transported to a police station where her son is identifying the attackers under his father's approving eye as they are marched by. The mother, who is disturbed by this, asks a nearby priest in what are the final lines of the novel, "Oh, Father … Is there no mercy anywhere?" The priest replies, "Yes, there is mercy … In Mr. Gotobed [the villager who alerted the police] … And in you yourself, my dear" (147). The book is not very good, but it presents an image of the world as oppressive as the marriage in which the protagonist is doomed to remain.

The cat, as the stand-in for the murdered shaman, represents the outsider in a hostile world. The mother, who is an outsider in her own family, constantly rebuffs the cat's attempts to acquaint her with its former owner. This failure prevents her from confronting her own anxieties, which she would have had to face had she become more familiar with the shaman. Because she is so intent on avoiding conflict, she is unable to assert herself to improve her situation or even gain any influence over her children. She remains a repressed and impotent member of the family, and is incapable of being a

corrective presence to her husband's domineering snobbishness. As a result, her world remains unhappy and oppressive.

T.M. Anderson's *Thirsty* is by far the most pessimistic of the novels. It tells the story of a boy who, in his mid-teens, begins to turn into a vampire. The world of the novel is one in which humans form the dominant group, but in which other groups also exist. Vampires, changelings, and sea beings are all mentioned, but they are made somewhat mundane as they are marched through the legal system and persecuted by the humans in much the same way that humans are persecuted by them. The parents of the protagonist dislike each other, but remain married for the benefit of the children. As the protagonist's condition becomes clearer, his family begins to turn against him.

What makes this story affecting is the effort the protagonist makes to do the right thing. As a vampire, he has been banished from the forces of light, but he is not prepared to turn to evil even when the changes occurring in his body urge him to do so. As the story progresses, it becomes increasingly hard for him to distinguish good from evil, or to find good at all. Those beings that are innocent – babies, dogs, an awkward friend – suffer at the hands of a cruel world where it is impossible to know the right course of action.

The protagonist, forced to make a decision between equally unpleasant choices, ends up in a fetal position on the floor of his bedroom trying to decide a course of action. His body is urging him to commit actions his mind urges him against, while morally there is no clear path to choose. Rather than a resolution bringing the protagonist's family together, the tensions in their relationship remain. It is impossible for his mother and father to live with one another in harmony, but it is unclear whether getting a divorce or

choosing to stay together for the children's sake is the best answer. Like his family, the world outside is tense and chaotic; a world in which choosing to do good is often not an option. What determines the unhappy ending of this story is the failure to establish order. The efforts of the protagonist point to the futility of doing so, both in his relationship with others and in the world.

Results of Content Analysis

Family

Books	Death of Member	Divorce	Step-Family	Missing Members	Strained Relationship
The Haunting	Yes		Yes		
Yaxley's Cat					Yes
Fingers			Yes		Yes
Operating Codes					Yes
Wait til Helen Comes	Yes		Yes		
Out of the Dark					Yes
Devil's Race	Yes				
In the Stone Circle	Yes	Yes			
Jade Green	Yes				
The Folk Keeper	Yes				
Skeleton Man				Yes	
Acquainted with the Night	Yes	Yes			
The Empty Mirror	Yes				
Silever Kiss	Yes				
Thirsty					Yes
Coraline				Yes	

Antagonist

Books	Ghost	Vampire	Demon (Humanoid Monster)	Other Supernatural	Human
The Haunting	Yes			Yes	Yes
Yaxley's Cat				Yes	Yes
Fingers	Yes				
Operating Codes	Yes				
Wait til Helen Comes	Yes				
Out of the Dark	Yes				
Devil's Race	Yes				
In the Stone Circle	Yes				
Jade Green	Yes				
The Folk Keeper				Yes	Yes
Skeleton Man			Yes		
Acquainted with the Night	Yes				
The Empty Mirror	Yes				
Silver Kiss		Yes			
Thirsty		Yes			
Coraline			Yes		

Resolution

Books	Family Breaks Down	Family Reunited	Family Restructured	Potential for New Family Created	Reconciliation
The Haunting			Yes		Yes
Yaxley's Cat	Yes				
Fingers			Yes		
Operating Codes		Yes			Yes
Wait til Helen Comes				Yes	Yes
Out of the Dark					Yes
Devil's Race					Yes
In the Stone Circle		Yes		Yes	Yes
Jade Green				Yes	
The Folk Keeper				Yes	
Skeleton Man		Yes			
Acquainted with the Night					Yes
The Empty Mirror					Yes
Silver Kiss			Yes		Yes
Thirsty	Yes				
Coraline		Yes			Yes

IV. Conclusion

The anxieties of young adult horror protagonists are depicted as dysfunctions within the family, which are microcosmic and indicative of the character's state of being. When the family unit is disrupted by death, divorce, or some other strain, the change is reflected in the wellbeing of the protagonist. The anxieties created by these disruptions may throw a family into a dysfunctional state. The novels symbolize these anxieties as monsters whose supernatural nature illustrates the unnatural disorder of the families. As manifestations of anxiety, the horrors force a confrontation before the anxiety can be dispelled. However, the resolution of the story is not achieved until the family is repaired. This repair not only indicates a resolution for the characters, but a realignment with natural order.

Young adult horror is concerned with the same themes as adult gothic literature, but, unlike horror written for adults, young adult horror is an essentially optimistic genre where uncertainties are resolved and order is reestablished. As long as the family remains in a state of uncertainty, incompleteness, or anxiety, the threatening element persists. For the tension to resolve, the family must face the horror, which then allows their anxiety to dissipate. Once familial order is achieved, all uncertainties are banished; characters may or may not have remaining challenges to face, but there is little doubt that the worst is over and that life only gets better. The resolution in young adult horror does

not occur with the defeat of a monster, but only afterwards when the family is addressed in a kind of familial repair scene that serves as an epilogue. In these scenes, the universe, through the family, is righting itself. Establishing order within the family has the effect of reaffirming a cosmic order.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Content Analysis Form

Title _____

Author _____

Protagonist _____

Age _____

Gender _____

Notes:

Status of mother _____

Status of father _____

Status of siblings _____

Notes:

Nature of threat _____

Notes:

Resolution

Family restored?

Broken?

Restructured?

Potential for marriage?

Appendix B

Annotated List of Titles

Anderson, M.T. *Thirsty*. Cambridge, MA.: Candlewick Press, 1997.

A teen named Chris finds himself turning into a vampire in a world where monsters live in hidden communities amidst humanity. Caught in the middle between the conflict between light and darkness, he struggles to find the moral course of action.

Avi. *Devil's Race*. New York: Harper Collins, 1984.

John Proud, an average teen, is unwittingly introduced to the dark legacy of his family when an ancestral ghost begins committing crimes in his name. John's confrontation with the ghost rids his family of its threat by forcing him to accept the darker part of his own self.

Billingsley, Franny. *The Folk Keeper*. New York: Atheneum, 1999.

Corrinna, the Folk Keeper, is brought to a large estate on a rugged northern island where she is to keep the subterranean Folk at bay. While there she discovers her connection to the estate, and the identity of her parents.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Skeleton Man*. New York: Harper Collins, 2001.

A young girl awakens to find her parents missing. When her "great uncle" comes to claim her, she realizes that he is a demon from the past with designs to eat her. Molly must then rescue her parents and escape from the demon.

Collier, James Lincoln. *The Empty Mirror*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2004.

When a ghost takes on the form of a boy and incites a mob to try to kill him, the boy and his uncle are forced to confront the past. The ghost was a victim of a local flu epidemic who was denied shelter and died alone. By taking on the boy's identity, the ghost attempts to once again enter the world of the living.

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. New York: Scholastic, 2002.

A young girl discovers a passageway leading to an alternate world which perversely mimics her own. The Beldame, a grotesque imitation of her mother, promises to love her more than her real family if she stays. Coraline refuses but must return to face the Beldame when her parents are kidnapped.

Hahn, Mary Downing. *Wait Til Helen Comes*. New York: Avon, 1986.

A pair of siblings come into conflict with their younger stepsister when she teams up with a ghost to thwart their parent's marriage. When the intentions of the ghost are discovered, Molly must rescue her stepsister despite their resentment of each other.

Hotze, Sollace. *Acquainted with the Night*. New York: Clarion, 1992.

A pair of cousins confront the long-suffering ghost of an ostracized woman. Their efforts to set the ghost at peace results with the easement of their own sufferings. Themes of incest, war, divorce, loneliness, suicide, and depression abound.

Kimmel, Elizabeth Cody. *In the Stone Circle*. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

When Cristyn moves to Wales with her father, she encounters a spirit trapped in the house they move into. She, along with the children staying with her, help the ghost move on to the next world. In the process, she comes to terms with the death of her mother and the possibility of gaining a stepfamily.

Klause, Annette Curtis. *The Silver Kiss*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1990.

A girl, troubled by her mother's terminal illness and her father's inability to talk with her about it, becomes romantically involved with a vampire. When the two lovers band together to destroy another vampire, the two to accept death – both their own and that of others.

Mahy, Margaret. *The Haunting*. New York: J.M. Dent, 1982.

When Barney begins hearing a voice in his head that claims to be coming to get him, he is too afraid to tell his parents lest his stepmother experience complications with her pregnancy. Once his secret becomes known, his family rallies around him and the their lineage as a race of magicians is revealed.

Manns, Nick. *Operating Codes*. Boston: Little Brown, 2000.

When two children move into a new house with their parents, they begin to be haunted by the spirits of the military who were once stationed at a nearby chemical weapons manufacturing plant. When the operating codes to the weapons system their father was developing are leaked to the public, a similar case is revealed involving the ghost of one of the soldiers.

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *Jade Green*. New York: Atheneum, 1999.

A recently orphaned girl moves into her unknown uncle's mansion. She grows close to her uncle and his housekeeper, but is harassed by her no-good cousin and the disembodied hand of one of the house's former occupants. As she uncovers the history of the ghost, she is drawn into conflict with her cousin.

Sleator, William. *Fingers*. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

When two brothers start channeling the spirit of a dead composer, it first means a financial windfall for their family. As the channeling begins to threaten their wellbeing, their abusive parents attempt to make them continue. The brothers escape to an island with the composer's son where they live in harmony.

Westall, Robert. *Yaxley's Cat*. New York: Scholastic, 1991.

When a woman moves into an abandoned cottage for a vacation with her two young children, she is met by a strange cat who lures her family to the secret cache of a

murdered shaman's arcana. The local peasants turn on the family, but the mother is just as frightened by her own son's fierce defense.

Wright, Betty Ren. *Out of the Dark*. New York: Scholastic, 1995.

A girl and her recently unemployed parents move to the country to live in her grandmother's house. While the parents struggle to find work and get along, the girl encounters a local ghost who blames her grandmother for her lack of success in life.