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Chapter Eighteen

Tiny Haunted Empires

Domestic Fabulism in the Home in Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's "Quadraturin" and Kelly Link's "Stone Animals"

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[18.0] A careful observer may glean a great deal of information about someone from their living space, such as their income level, hobbies, secrets, habits, cherished objects, history, and pastimes. The home is the part of ourselves which others may, with their whole bodies, enter and perceive. The organization of the private space of the home reflects larger cultural forces. It also showcases not only who we are, but who we want to be perceived as—and the gap between these two poles. In particular, the home often becomes the psychic receptacle for stresses related to unexpected change, and these stresses morph in some writers' capable hands into domestic fabulism. In domestic fabulism, living spaces break the expectations put on them by consensus reality. Distorted, they reveal deeper truths about the psychological states of their inhabitants. Short story writer Amber Sparks defines domestic fabulism as fiction that takes standard fabulist elements and "uses [them] like a magnifying glass, or rather, a funhouse mirror . . . [that] simultaneously distorts and reveals the true nature of the home, the family, the place of belonging ("New Genres"). When a paradigm shift occurs in the mental or emotional lives of inhabitants, those inhabitants experience their homes in startling new ways. The home, so familiar when grasping for a light switch or cup of water, becomes strange.

[18.1] This de-familiarization permeates the short fiction of Russian-born Soviet domestic fabulist Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky and American domestic fabulist Kelly Link. Though they worked on opposite sides of the world, in two

different cultures, and on either end of a ninety-year gap, they explored similar themes using similar methods. Though Kelly Link herself has not read Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky (Email Interview), both writers are part of the same larger conversation occurring in non-realist fiction; additionally, both trace their creative lineage back to Nikolai Gogol. Link has cited Ludmilla Petrushevskaya as the writer of one of her favorite books of stories ("6 Favorite"), and Petrushevskaya cited Gogol in her autobiography (57). Similarly, Krzhizhanovsky paid homage to Gogol in his short story "The Runaway Fingers" (Corpse 117), which has been described as a retelling of Gogol's short story "The Nose" (Maguire 181). Gogol is one of the Russian progenitors of fabulism, of which domestic fabulism is a subgenre. In his stories, noses disconnected from faces live on their own and ghosts thieve overcoats from the living. In the stories of both Krzhizhanovsky and Link, Gogolian events occur. In particular, unexpected changes take place within the scope of the home; these changes reflect their respective characters' internal states of mind and, ultimately, their characters' dissatisfaction with their current living situations.

This essay will examine Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's story "Quadraturin" in *Memories of the Future* (NYRB 2009) and Kelly Link's story "Stone Animals" in *Magic for Beginners* (Random House 2014). In Krzhizhanovsky's case, his protagonist lives in a tiny room within a collectivized apartment during the early Soviet era, in a city where living space for each individual comes at a premium. Over the course of the story, the apartment changes shape and size to become vast. The protagonist's discomfort with these changes manifests through alterations to the consensus reality of the story—through, in other words, domestic fabulism. Link's main characters are a nuclear family living in a sprawling historical home set back in the woods of a spacious suburb outside New York City. Her central protagonist, Catherine, begins to perceive changes to the objects within the home, and their haunted-ness takes fabulist form. Though in both stories the main characters live in what their respective cultures consider an ideal version of home, they are dissatisfied. Uneasily, they grapple with the sense of shame and secrecy which accompanies this dissatisfaction and with the break they perceive from consensus reality. [18.2]

Krzhizhanovsky's interest in the difference between the subjective and objective worlds can be traced to an interest in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which he read in childhood (Ballard 557). The borders around consensus reality, and hence objectivity, blur in works of domestic fabulism. Sutulin, the protagonist of Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's "Quadraturin," manages to snag his own room in a collectivized apartment, though living space in the time and place the story was written was already at a premium. At eighty-six square feet, his room is sufficiently small so that when he hears a knock on his door, he is able to open it with his toes while still in bed [18.3]

(Krzhizhanovsky 3). Movement within his domestic space—the only space in the city in which he can have some measure, however small, of privacy—is extremely limited. When he tries to pace the length of his room, "the corners of this living cage were too close together: a walk amounted to almost nothing but turns, from toe to heel and back again" (5). Even when he tries to be quiet, his flatmates follow his every move and pound on the adjoining walls to get him to quiet down.

[18.4] Those who live in the other rooms in his apartment are unrelated to him. They have been placed together to share living quarters by a bureaucratic agency responsible for determining the appropriate amount of living space to give to each person. Due to Krizhizhanovsky's inability to openly publish his work while he was alive, the exact date of the story's composition cannot be pinned down for certain. It seems likely that it was at the end of the 1920s, when collectivized apartments were the dominant mode of housing for city dwellers. His body of work was unearthed in state archives after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It appeared in English translation for the first time in the 2000s and 2010s, around the same time that Kelly Link's work first appeared in its original American English.

[18.5] In 1927, around the same time that Krzhizhanovsky wrote "Quadraturin," Soviet authorities introduced a new housing policy (the first of many which would unfold over the subsequent sixty-plus years). Space for workers in major cities was short, and construction on new homes for these workers faced major delays. The new policy was called self-compression or самоуплотнение (samo-uplotnenie). It required people who lived in spaces larger than the established minimum, or "sanitary norm,' to find others to share that space. If those who lived in larger spaces refused to comply, or were unable to find someone before their time ran out, the authorities matched them with a stranger. The publically established minimum was often larger than the space allotted in practice to residents of shared rooms. Though nine square meters, or about ninety-seven square feet, was the official sanitary norm, "the amount of space the average urban resident actually lived in went from 6.4 square metres [69 nice square feet] in 1923 to 5.8 [62 square feet] by 1926" (Attwood 46). Families, single people, and unrelated strangers were crammed together in makeshift rooms similar to the lofts of congested urban neighborhoods like Bedford Stuyvesant in the early 2000s—partitions rather than full walls were the norm and multiple people lived in a space designed for far fewer. Representatives from housing committees surveilled the rooms of residents to "identify likely candidates for self-compression, and report their findings to the local soviet and militia" (Attwood 46). The regular presence of others in living space which might, in other circumstances, be considered private meant that there was no complete privacy. As Attwood details, it also meant that the allocation of rooms was often subject to interpersonal pressures about which types of family units were deserving, or

worthy, of certain amounts of space—generally speaking, those with younger children and workers were given more than those unable to work and/or participate in the furtherance of the Soviet cause through reproductive futurity. Unlike the family in Link's "Stone Animals," Sutulin lives with unrelated roommates. Soviet housing policy was uninterested in the private sphere of family life, and some of the policies undertaken during the Soviet era were aimed toward wanting to replace the nuclear family with a collective unit.

[18.6] What had been apartments for single families before the Russian Revolution were transformed into multi-family dwellings which "now had [a different family] crammed into every room. . . . In some cases the original rooms had been subdivided so that still more people could be accommodated, with the partitions so flimsy they could provide little sense of separate space" (Attwood 3). As a result of cramped quarters, the competition for additional space was fierce, and historical examples abound of tactical moves undertaken to win individuals and families more space—often at a cost to someone else (48–52). Part of this competition, as well as the general social miasma of the USSR at the time, involved people who shared the same living space spying on each other for compliance with the rules and reporting to the authorities if someone else was taking more space than their due. Given that even in the small private space of one's own room, privacy was quite limited, this surveillance of others was easier than it would have been in separate, single-family apartments with individual locking doors. Cultural norms also limited privacy—as there was "no understanding that some areas of a Soviet citizen's life might legitimately lie outside of state attention and intervention" (4). The rules around the amount of space allocated to each person meant that the space itself would be measured, to ensure correct records and (ostensibly) enforce norms of equality.

[18.7] "Quadraturin" tells the story of Sutulin receiving a room-enlarging agent from a mysterious visitor. When he paints the chemical on his walls and floor, his room grows bigger. And bigger. And still bigger, until the story ends with Sutulin's cries of anguish being heard by the other denizens of his apartment. The expansion continues, and what at first seemed like a blessing becomes a curse. Of course, the full extent of the irony inherent in Sutulin's situation unfolds over the course of the story. At first he is pleased to have significantly more space in which to move around. The possibility of stretching his legs by pacing circles around a larger space opens up before him.

[18.8] Then anxiety and shame overtake Sutulin as the full extent of the irony of the Quadraturin unfolds. Though at first Sutulin openly expresses excitement over his new domicile, he soon realizes that he must hide his extra space. He has gone against the official policy of self-compression to instead expand the space available for himself. No longer is Sutulin cramming himself and all of his possessions into a tiny space. Yet because his single occupancy was due to the measured size of the room, if others were to discover the extra space he

would be forced to share or to give up his room. The irony here is that the Quadraturin seems to foreordain a lightened mental load for Sutulin—with more space, he can pace to work off stress. Instead, his inability to control the extent of the expansion, coupled with his need to hide it, strain him to a breaking point. When the Remeasuring Commission, responsible for double-checking the precise size of each living space, comes through his apartment and knocks on his door, Sutulin panics. Rather than receiving them into an altered space, he twists the light switch until it breaks off and he hides in the darkness. The head apartment-dweller, responsible for managing household affairs, stands outside his door and convinces the official from the Commission to leave him alone. In another moment of irony, she tells the official, "Oh, what is there to look at? Eighty-six square feet for the eighty-sixth time. Measuring the room won't make it any bigger . . . you won't let [Sutulin] rest: have to measure and remeasure" (11). With the landlady shooing the official away to examine the rooms of people "who have no right to the space" (11), Sutulin is spared the horror of discovery. Yet it is only a temporary stay. Assuming that the Quadraturin continues to act upon it, no Remeasuring Committee will be able to keep up with its constantly expanding vertices nor its corners (which no longer angle at precise ninety-degrees).

[18.9] Equally disturbing, when Sutulin's room expands, it does so unevenly. Upon returning home from work about twenty hours after the initial application of Quadraturin, Sutulin finds that he forgot to paint the ceiling. This oversight means that the height of the room remains the same as it was prior to the Quadraturin, and the ceiling is in the same place. While, yes, his room has enlarged, it has done so only by means of the walls and center of the floor. The room, "distended and monstrously misshapen, was beginning to frighten and torment [Sutulin]" (Krzhizhanovsky 9). Instead of the slightly bigger room of Sutulin's hopes, he instead receives a space which is a "spacious and at the same time oppressive coffin-shaped living box." The physical manifestation of Sutulin's longed-for change to his living space is imperfect because the coffin shape of his room presses down on him as though he were being buried, as though he were dead already. His sanctuary becomes a poisoned chalice. (Although the Quadraturin spills on the floor, Sutulin does not find the floor expanding away from him below his feet—it merely stretches out to keep an even, steady seam with the movement of the walls.)

[18.10] The grave-like shape of his room becomes metonymous for the strictures of 1920s Soviet housing policy. Even though Sutulin finds what appears to be a loophole in the sanitary norm for his space—namely, that he can enlarge the space itself—he remains suffocated within. His apparent freedom from self-compression finds him compressed due to his own actions (i.e. forgetting to paint Quadraturin on the ceiling). Although Sutulin was able to find momentary relief from his lack of privacy, sanitary norms, re-measuring, committees, commissions, public policy, and the whole apparatus of state bureau-

cracy, this freedom (such as it is) is temporary and incomplete. In *A Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard argues that sometimes "the house grows and spreads so that, in order to live in it, greater elasticity of daydreaming, a daydream that is less clearly outlined, are needed" (51). The promise of a spread-out living space providing more space to daydream is quashed by its reality. Instead of letting his thoughts grow fuzzy, Sutulin panics in crisp, sharp, anxious detail: "So, something forces its way out of a tube and can't stop squaring: a square squared, a square of squares squared. I've got to think faster than it: if I don't think it, it will outgrow me and . . ." (10). The exponential growth of his room correlates to the exponentially increased pace of his thoughts.

[18.11] After Sutulin breaks his lightswitch while hiding from the Remeasuring Committee, he is no longer able to see into the darkened corners of his expanded room. To combat the feeling of dread and unease this produces in him, he turns his back to the darkness: "He knew that there, behind his back, the dead, Quadraturinized space with its black corners was still spreading. He knew and did not look around . . . again the black wilderness closed in" (13). The exuberant uncontainability of his room remains outside his control, and it is the unknown quality of its size which terrifies him. He not only does not know how large his room has truly grown, he cannot—and does not—see all of its corners and edges.

[18.12] Since the expansion of his room is unpredictable in terms of speed and size, Sutulin is unable to trust it. Throughout "Quadraturin," he bumps into walls, finds himself adrift and grasping in empty, darkened space, and cannot determine the precise location of objects whose whereabouts he was certain of a moment earlier. The mental map Sutulin made of his room prior to the application of Quadraturin no longer reflects the actual space. Though any individual mental map will highlight certain paths and objects while leaving others uncertain or eliminated entirely, to have one's map completely obliterated contributes to an inner sense of instability.

[18.13] Gaston Bachelard claims that a house "constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (17). Bachelard, here, is useful insofar as he allows us to consider new ways of looking at the relationship between fictional characters and their houses or living spaces. When we consider how houses allow their inhabitants a sense of self and stability, it follows that those whose homes become unstable find themselves unstable, too. Once Sutulin realizes that his own body of images—his mental map—is no longer reflected in the real physical space of his room, and that his room is unlikely to ever be the same, he experiences an unease that seems to shake him to the core. His insecurity culminates in a cry of anguish so piercing that it brings his flat-mates out of their rooms from concern. Bachelard ties the house to the mind of its inhabitants: "[t]he house, even more than the landscape, is a 'psychic state,' and even when reproduced as it appears from the

outside, it bespeaks intimacy" (72). Sutulin's intimacy with the space of his apartment is ruptured once it enlarges, and his persistent headaches throughout the scope of the story are a physical manifestation of this dissonance and discomfort.

[18.14] The illusory quality of Sutulin's room size is representative of the tenuousness of his life in a collectivized apartment. He can no longer trust that his housing will stay the same, nor that it will stay available to him. Sutulin's sense of stability falters as the mental map of his room is destroyed by his insecurity; it now appears false to him. At any time, he knows, the Remeasuring Commission or another office in the housing apparatus might take his room from him. His room is his only with their permission, and he can be moved at their behest whenever they desire. While always true in Soviet life, Sutulin only comes to fully experience his vulnerability once his struggle against his small, confined space is momentarily lifted.

[18.15] The continual growth outward of Sutulin's room (walls and floor space) has caused some critics to describe it, in a geometrical sense, as expanding "infinitely into the fourth dimension as a skewed hypercube" (Rosenflanz 542). The temptation to see the room's largeness as actually expanding beyond three-dimensionality is borne of trying to find an explanation for the narrative moves into domestic fabulism that Krzhizhanovsky makes. The idea that the space added to Sutulin's room must necessarily be taken from another room assumes that the story's laws of physics adhere to the laws of physics as readers understand them. However, it is more likely that Sutulin's room expands outside the laws of physics in consensus reality. The expansion of his room has not led to the contraction of anyone else's room. Surely, if others in the surrounding rooms and apartments found their space being impinged upon, they would call attention to it, seek its source, and find Sutulin. With space being so scarce, and highly valued, to lose any of it would be cause for concern. It is this transgression of the laws of physics that leads "Quadraturin" into fabulist territory.

[18.16] Critics of fiction that moves beyond realism often succumb to the temptation to attribute non-realist aspects of stories to mental or emotional turmoil on the part of the narrator or main character(s). Such critics typically imagine that this turmoil causes the character(s) to hallucinate or believe in story structures outside the rational. The opposing critical orientation takes non-realist happenings as part of the world of the story—a contractual consensus reality between the writer and the reader. For example, Alisa Ballard argues that "Sutulin believes too much in the fantastical solution to his cramped quarters, and the hyperbole of his end is tragedy. In this, as well as in other stories, Krzhizhanovsky's use of the fantastical быт [everyday life] does not provide a happy alternative to the troubles of our real быт [everyday life]" (573). While I concur with Ballard that the apparent fabulist solution to Sutulin's cramped quarters turns out to not provide a happy alternative, I

question whether it is because Sutulin "believes too much." Indeed, it is his disbelief that fuels his mental break at the end of the story. Ballard's reading of the text hinges on an assumption that the fabulist shift in the story is intended as an interpretation about Sutulin's mental state, rather than a shift in the reality of the story. However, my reading of the text is that Krzhizhanovsky intended for the domestic fabulism to be a shift in the rules of the world of the story, and a step away from consensus reality, rather than merely of Sutulin's perception of it.

[18.17] The uncanniness that Sutulin experiences in his room transcends the space itself and extends to the whole of his life—he can trust neither the reality of the physical space of his room nor the reality of his life as a citizen and worker. Elaine Blair claims that "Krzhizhanovsky realizes that the Soviet revolution not only overturned government, economic and social status, religious practice, and traditional means of employment; it was also an assault on one's very perception of reality. The rules of logic might be violated by the press, the most obvious lies passed off as truths." Sutulin is unable to trust the physical space of his room as well as the geographical and political space of his country. The laws of physics are violated in "Quadraturin," just as the rules of truth and falsehood were violated in state-run media in Soviet Russia in the 1920s. Impossibilities stand in both circumstances. Krzhizhanovsky, in writing "Quadraturin," connects the skewed reality of Sutulin's room with his own skewed reality as a political subject. Throughout his lifetime, Krzhizhanovsky was a vocal critic of public policy, especially the self-compression expected of artists and writers. He refused to change his own work in ways that would allow it past state censors and onward to wide circulation, and his dissent is the major reason that his work remained largely unpublished while he was alive. In fact, he never bothered to show the majority of his stories to publishers ("Evicted")—likely because he knew they would not make it past the censors anyway. Sutulin is illustrative of Krzhizhanovsky's political dissent. There is, perhaps, no better way to adequately represent the surreal qualities of life in 1920s Soviet Russia than by telling it through domestic fabulism.

[18.18] Similarly, the American domestic fabulist Kelly Link considers dissatisfaction with surreal living circumstances in "Stone Animals" from her story collection *Magic for Beginners* (2014). Link's main characters live in a large single-family dwelling and are all related by blood, unlike Krzhizhanovsky's protagonist Sutulin. Additionally, Link's characters have purchased this house during twenty-first-century American late capitalism, rather than having the home assigned to them by a commission or committee. The home is occupied by a nuclear family: the father, Henry, works in the city; the mother, Catherine, recently changed occupations from a professorial career. Their two children, Tilly and Carleton, spend a great deal of time in the home's suburban yard. The reason given by Henry and Catherine for their move out

of the city and into the great expanse of tamed greenery is to give their children an idealized version of childhood: a childhood for which both adults yearn. They seek to gratify their own desire to return to an idealized childhood by providing their conception of one for their children.

[18.19] In "Stone Animals," the suburbs themselves become a place of liminality between the strange hubbub of the city, where Henry works, and the creeping edge of the forest, near which the children play. The inside of their home is depicted as a place of safety and respite while outside the rabbits behave strangely and the woods are dark and deep. The family's possible return to their apartment in the city, which they have kept and maintained, is never discussed. Like Sutulin in "Quadraturin," the family in "Stone Animals" is stuck in their living space—not by bureaucracy, but by their own choices about where and how to live.

[18.20] This is not the suburbia of houses close-together on wide expanses of grass devoid of trees—instead, this suburbia is set back in the woods, where the closest neighbor lives yet far enough away to not be able to see their home. There is little to no chance of surveillance taking place by anyone except those already present or those who the family have invited to their home. Because they do not have roommates or unrelated people living in the same house, they ostensibly have privacy within the home. Yet from the very first page the characters sense another presence in the home, a presence that watches them.

[18.21] The first line of "Stone Animals" is a question from Henry whose answer the reader can only infer: "Henry asked a question. He was joking. 'As a matter of fact,' the real estate agent snapped, 'it is'" (Link 77). The question, based on inferences from later dialogue in the story, is: 'Is the house haunted?' Narrative omissions like this one (telling the reader that Henry asked a question rather than relating the question itself) permeate the story. Though the question of haunted-ness weaves itself throughout the first half of the story, few classic horror tropes are at play. There are no unexplained sounds, nor ghost sightings, and the reader is never told what the evidence exists of a haunting. Instead, the creepy and suspenseful aspects of the story operate via domestic fabulism.

[18.22] The eponymous stone animals of the story's title flank the front door of the family's new suburban home. They are two rabbit sculptures, which are accompanied on the property by a sizeable population of wild rabbits. Henry, the father, observes the rabbits hanging out on the lawn in the early morning, "just sitting there like they were waiting for the sun to come up" (Link 89). Normally, a human seeing rabbits would expect them to be active in the early morning—searching for food, running from predators, and so forth. Instead, the rabbits are waiting, and the horror of the moment comes from not knowing what, precisely, they are waiting for. It is not only their presence that makes Henry uneasy, but their attentiveness as well. When faced with an

average suburban rabbit, humans expect that rabbit to be unaware of the fact humans are taking actions, let alone of the significance of those actions.

[18.23] Many of the horrifying elements of "Stone Animals" operate in silence. We stare at rabbits, though they tend not to stare back. The awareness of an intelligence which far surpasses the expected creates and underpins that sense of the uncanny. Henry perceives the rabbits as "funny, like some kind of art installation. But it was kind of creepy too" (Link 89). Kelly Link herself considers the crux of "Stone Animals" to be the balance between humor and horror. In an interview with the literary journal *Conjunctions,* she discussed her writing process: "because the premise [of the story] was comical, I had to think about comedy differently . . . anything that I might be tempted to handle in the manner of a soufflé in other stories is, in 'Stone Animals,' more somewhere between dour humor and inexorable nightmare logic" (Hand 234). This nightmare logic operates, at first, in silence, with scenes like that of the rabbits sitting on the lawn to indicate that something is not quite right.

[18.24] About her own work, Link says that she depends on domestic fabulism in her stories, especially in the quality of uncanniness, to create a sense of altered reality for her readers. In her stories, everything "is in service of the uncanny or to allow an easier approach to a certain kind of structural difficulty. I'm not entirely sure what the uncanny is in the service of: representing life as it seems to me, I suppose" (Hand 230). Link moves toward representation of real life via fabulism—she tells it slant, like Krzhizhanovsky, and many of the fabulist moves she makes are quiet, even silent.

[18.25] The foundation of Henry and Catherine's new house is built over a warren of holes dug by rabbits in their yard. Like their marriage, which is recovering from a recent fake affair made up by Catherine, their home is built on shaky ground. They cannot trust the foundation of their house to stay in the same place, nor, because of the warren can they trust it to actually support the house. Yet the rabbits only take action in the story in response to human movements. When Catherine plants flowers in an attempt to make the house more of a home, the rabbits "eat off all the leaves. They bite through the vine" (Link 105). The family members become interlopers in the rabbits' lives, rather than the other way around.

[18.26] The juxtaposition of expected versus observed rabbit behaviors comes to the fore with a startling realization by Henry when he sleeps inside their new home alone. During the night, "someone comes and stands and watches him sleep. Tilly. Then he wakes up and remembers that Tilly isn't there. The rabbits watch the house all night long. It's their job" (Link 121). At first, Henry attributes the presence to his daughter, Tilly, who frequently sleepwalks at night. Link's narrator does not clarify who it is that comes and watches Henry sleep, only that it is "someone." And the free indirect discourse in this part of the narration means that the speaker noticing it is

"someone" may be Henry, the narrator, or someone else entirely. Given that the rabbits are outside attending to their house-watching duties, the narration opens the possibility that the someone watching Henry is a haunted presence—perhaps a ghost or alien specter. Additionally, while the behavior of the rabbits unnerves the family, they do not see the rabbits themselves as part of the haunting.

[18.27] Instead, the characters begin to see their own possessions as haunted. The structure of the home in "Stone Animals" stays the same, unlike the apartment in "Quadraturin," and the characters in "Stone Animals" do not see the home or yard as haunted or changed. The family members who spend the most time at home—the children and mother—first notice a strangeness about individual objects. Catherine, the mother, retrieves a shirt for Henry from their closet. When she does so, she notices that the "pink shirt is haunted. She pulls out all of Henry's suits, his shirts, his ties. All haunted. Every fucking thing is haunted" (Link 126). Because of this haunted-ness, Catherine gathers all of Henry's clothing into plastic garbage bags and disposes of them. This discomfort with the haunted-ness of objects spreads until it becomes a miasma which infuses everything inside the home.

[18.28] From their possessions, the haunted-ness leaps to the characters themselves like a contagion. When Henry and Catherine lay in bed together, she tells him that he "can't touch that breast" because "it's haunted" (Link 106). Tilly notices that "while she wasn't paying attention, Carleton's become haunted" (Link 123). Krzhizhanovsky's narrator Sutulin in "Quadraturin" is unable to trust the ever-expanding interior boundaries of his own home, though the objects in it remain untouched. Sutulin, too, remains physically untouched by the expansive qualities of "Quadraturin." In contrast, it is the items and people within the home in "Stone Animals" which are affected by the changing dynamic of haunted-ness. Like Sutulin, none of the characters in "Stone Animals" actually see this haunting occur. When they are not actively observing their possessions, or each other, only then do they become haunted; this hauntedness is only perceived when the characters notice it. Similarly, Sutulin does not perceive the walls moving away from him as it occurs; he only becomes aware of it when he observes them again after they have moved. Even though the family in "Stone Animals" can trust the physical dimensions of their house, they cannot trust whether their possessions, or themselves, are haunted or not. The walls and the wood hold up to this sense of haunted-ness without absorbing it themselves.

[18.29] In both short stories, characters cannot trust their living spaces. Because of this lack of trust, the liminal spaces between the inside of the home and the outside of not-home gain importance. In "Quadraturin," Sutulin's landlady comes to his doorway on several occasions, both alone and with the Remeasuring Committee. Sutulin invests a great deal of mental and emotional energy on inventing reasons to keep her at bay, even though the real reason is that he

does not want her to see his enlarged room. From the outside, though, the landlady still believes that the room remains the exact same size. Sutulin's loneliness increases because he knows that the room has changed, but he is unable to tell anyone. Similarly, in "Stone Animals," the doorbell rings over and over without a visible presence on the doorstep. Neither the narrator of the story nor any of the characters relate why the doorbell is ringing—there is simply the fabulist fact of it ringing: "[W]hen Catherine goes to answer it, no one is there. Later on, after Tilly and Carleton have come home, it rings again, but no one is there. It rings and rings . . ." (Link 107). The effects of the doorbell being haunted are felt only inside the house, via Catherine's emotional distress. When she opens the door, nothing seems to have changed outside.

[18.30] In the final, surreal scene in "Stone Animals," Henry commutes back home from the city by train and bike. Though arriving late for a dinner party with neighbors, Henry leaves his bike at the station because it feels haunted and walks the distance to their house. When he gets back, instead of going inside, he stays outside where the "rabbits are out on the lawn. They've been waiting for him, all this time, they've been waiting. . . . He has something in his other hand, and when he looks, he sees it's a spear. . . . In a little while, the dinner party will be over and the war will begin" (Link 130). The fabulist imagery of a rabbit war is the note on which the story ends. While over the course of the story Henry has been moving away from his family, in this scene there is an apparent finality to the separation. Rather than being watched inside the house, as when he was sleeping, he is now watching from outside.

[18.31] The protagonists in both Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's "Quadraturin" and Kelly Link's "Stone Animals" grapple with the deleterious mental and emotional effects of living in houses whose rules change. The influence of Nicolai Gogol reverberates from early fabulist stories into the domestic realm as portrayed in the short stories of Krzhizhanovsky and Link. In consensus reality, apartments do not grow, nor do malevolent groups of rabbits watch over houses in the dark of night. These strange events in otherwise realistic stories project characters' fears and desires. The living spaces in each story are symbolic human universes and the imagined physical changes, or haunted forebodings, that each author injects into their respective stories are the fabulist vehicles designed to reveal the human emotions that living spaces evoke. As living space "is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard 4), and because humans spend much of their time alive at these coordinates in spacetime (x, y, z :: home, home, home), the domestic sphere occupies a correspondingly large territory in the literary imagination. This space connects geographically disparate literatures.

[18.32] Consideration of the relationship between the domestic as represented in fiction and the interior psychic states of characters allows for a close exam-

ination of the effect one has upon the other. Dissatisfaction with idealized notions of the home—the collective apartment for Sutulin, the big suburban house for Catherine and Henry—is illustrated symbolically in these two stories via domestic fabulism. This technique denotes the importance of the environment on characters' inner lives, for houses encompass spaces more vast than their physical footprint. Rather, houses occupy the human imagination.

[18.33] ## WORKS CITED

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