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Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy:

Domestic Gothic and Postwar Architectural Culture

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Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy:

Domestic Gothic and Postwar Architectural Culture

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Résume de synthèse

Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy: Domestic Gothic and Postwar Architectural Culture traite de la série de romans gothiques écrits par Shirley Jackson entre 1957 et 1962, de *The Sundial* à *The Haunting of Hill House* en passant par *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. L'ouvrage situe son rapport au style gothique domestique dans le contexte du discours contemporain sur l'architecture et les formes de l'après-guerre. En particulier, cette étude fait valoir que sa trilogie « House » est une véritable intervention dans l'histoire de l'architecture et le discours domestique, Shirley Jackson utilisant une poétique gothique de l'espace pour évoquer la répétition spectrale des structures de pouvoir et de l'imaginaire idéologique liés à l'architecture. Grâce à son symbolisme architectural approfondi, elle explore la maison américaine et ses racines à travers les mythes et croyances les plus tenaces et les plus discordants du pays, suggérant que la maison elle-même, à la fois structure physique et symbole structurel, est un « fantôme » sociologique qui hante le projet domestique américain. L'auteure nous rappelle que l'architecture et la culture domestiques ne sont jamais neutres et que, bien plus qu'on ne l'a reconnu, sa fiction met en lumière les caractéristiques particulières des formes, des mouvements, des guerres de style et des discours architecturaux ayant activement contribué aux structures culturelles des genres, des classes et des races en Amérique.

La carrière de Shirley Jackson, qui s'inscrit dans les deux décennies suivant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, coïncide avec le plus grand boom immobilier de l'histoire américaine, ainsi qu'avec l'une des périodes les plus expérimentales et les plus fébriles de l'architecture américaine. Pourtant, malgré les belles promesses et visions utopiques de cette époque, son architecture et sa culture domestique ont plutôt eu tendance à reproduire les structures de pouvoir oppressives du passé, qu'il s'agisse des normes de genre étouffantes de la maison familiale des

années 1950 ou de la ségrégation dans les banlieues. Les maisons de madame Jackson se veulent des allégories gothiques de ce milieu et de sa structure temporelle « fantomatique », marquées par la routine et les revirements angoissants. Chacune des maisons de sa trilogie témoigne de ce que l’on pourrait appeler une « historicité hybride », évoluant à la fois vers le passé et vers l’avenir à travers l’architecture et le discours domestique américains. Dans les manoirs des années glorieuses et les constructions gothiques victoriennes de ses romans, l’auteure satirise l’architecture d’après-guerre et son futur nostalgique, suggérant que les maisons du présent restent hantées par les fantômes du passé.

Contrairement à l’architecture de son époque, qui prétendait avoir banni ces fantômes, Shirley Jackson ne cherche pas à échapper aussi facilement aux spectres de l’histoire américaine et de l’assujettissement qui s’y rattache. Plutôt, elle entreprend de les affronter. Pour ce faire, elle pénètre dans la « maison hantée » de l’architecture et de la domesticité américaine : elle l’explore, l’examine, l’interroge et, finalement, la brûle, la met en pièces et la reconstruit.

Mots clés : Shirley Jackson, trilogie House, histoire de l’architecture, gothique domestique, littérature d’après-guerre, culture domestique américaine.

Abstract

Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy: Domestic Gothic and Postwar Architectural Culture considers Shirley Jackson's suite of gothic novels written between 1957 and 1962, from *The Sundial* to *The Haunting of Hill House* to *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. It places her treatment of the Domestic Gothic alongside the actual architecture and design discourse of her postwar moment. In particular, it argues that her House Trilogy constitutes an intervention within architectural history and domestic discourse, with Jackson using a gothic poetics of space to suggest the spectral repetition of architecture's structures of power and ideological imaginary. Through her extensive architectural symbolism, she probes the American house and its roots within the country's most abiding myths and divisive beliefs, suggesting that the house itself, as both a physical structure and structuring symbol, is a sociological "ghost" that haunts the American domestic project. Jackson reminds us that domestic architecture and culture are never neutral and that, much more so than has been acknowledged, her fiction excavates the specific design features, movements, style wars, and architectural discourses which actively participated in the cultural constructions of gender, class, and race in America.

Her writing career — from her first major publication in 1943 to her untimely death in 1965 — coincides with the largest housing boom in American history, as well as one of the most experimental and anxious periods in American architecture. And yet despite the era's broad promises and utopian visions, its architecture and domestic culture tended to reproduce the oppressive power structures of the past, from the stifling gender norms of the 1950s family home to the segregated suburb. Jackson's houses are gothic allegories of this milieu and its "ghostly" time structure of uncanny repetition and return. Each of the houses in her trilogy exhibits what might be called a "hybrid historicity," gesturing at once backwards and forwards through

American architecture and domestic discourse. Inside the Gilded Age mansions and Victorian Gothic piles of her novels, Jackson satirizes postwar architecture and its nostalgic futures, suggesting how the houses of the present remain haunted by the ghosts of the past.

Unlike the architecture of her time, which claimed to have banished these ghosts, Jackson does not seek to escape the spectres of American history and subjecthood so easily. Instead, she endeavours to face them. In order to do so, she enters the "haunted house" of American architecture and domesticity itself — exploring it, examining it, interrogating it, and, eventually, burning it down, tearing it apart, and remaking it.

Keywords: Shirley Jackson, House Trilogy, architectural history, Domestic Gothic, postwar literature, American domestic culture

Dedication

for my mother

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My deepest thanks to Prof. Caroline Brown, who took me on as a student and guided me through this project. Not only have her insights and comments deepened and enriched my thinking on Shirley Jackson, she has also been a steadfast (and very patient) source of encouragement and support. This project is indebted to her.

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Introduction

Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy:

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> [S]omewhere deep inside her she knew perfectly well that the house she inhabited had helped spoil her day; that it was harming her marriage and corroding her life. In fact, the corrosive process was well under way, for the Drones had lived in their new rambler for six months. The pattern of their lives was bearing out the truth in Winston Churchill's dictum: "We shape our dwellings, and then our dwellings shape us."
>
> The shape of Mary's dwelling was vile.
>
> — John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*

> By definition, only space can be haunted, and space is understood as that which houses. After all, the word "haunting" is etymologically bound to that of "house." Haunting is always the haunting of a house. And it is not just that some houses are haunted. A house is only a house inasmuch as it is haunted.
>
> — Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction*

I. Introduction: Anxious Houses and Regressive Futures

This dissertation is about Shirley Jackson's House Trilogy, her suite of gothic novels written between 1957 and 1962 and comprising *The Sundial* (1958), *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). By contextualizing her treatment of domestic architecture within her historical moment, it places her depiction of the haunted house in dialogue with postwar domestic culture and architectural history. More specifically, it considers her trilogy as a gothic intervention within the history of the American house, tracing its roots as a symbolic structure within the country's abiding myths, as a physical structure in its architectural design, and as a sociological "ghost" that haunts both the American past and the postwar present. Jackson's literary output coincides with a transitional period of profound anxiety and experimentation in American architecture. From her first major publication in 1943 to her untimely death in 1965, her career runs parallel to a series of rapid and influential changes

in how architects, advertisers, planners, and theorists conceived of American domestic culture and the space of the home, determining not only where people lived but how they lived as well. The architecture of this period has been described as one of "anxious modernism," an attempt to reject architecture's past altogether, and, in the wake of international upheaval and the calamities of the Second World War, to fulfil a utopian vision of the built environment that would instill egalitarian principles and democratic values.[1] Despite these claims, however, postwar design and discourse tended to reproduce the ideological underpinnings of domestic architecture and its past, perpetuating the old under the guise of the new.[2] Jackson's trilogy excavates this dynamic. Itself an "anxious" interrogation of the home, it uses the haunted house to suggest the regressive futures of her own architectural moment — the impossible repetition (or "ghostly" return) of architecture's structures of power and ideological imaginary.

As Jackson's most recent biographer Ruth Franklin points out, houses were one of Jackson's "lifetime obsessions" as well as "the gravitational center" (13) of nearly all of her work. Jackson herself came from a long line of architects and her interest in the built environment included research into architectural history and a substantial collection of architectural photography.[3] It was an interest further cultivated by her time and place. In a

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[1] See *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (2000), edited by Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, in particular pp. 11-22.

[2] Many architects, critics, and historians have commented on the misguided utopianism of postwar architecture, as well as the way in which its progressive visions and good intentions often reproduced the power structures of the past. See Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1973); Brolin, *The Failure of Modern Architecture* (1976); Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City* (1978): Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980); Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992); Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front* (2009); Urban, *Tower and Slab* (2012); Schuldenfrei (editor), *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture* (2012); Coleman, "The Problematic of Architecture and Utopia" (2014); and Kulic, Parker, and Penick (editors), *Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (2015), among others.

[3] At one point, during the research and writing of *Hill House*, Jackson even considered taking courses in architecture and architectural history. See *The Letters of Shirley Jackson* (2021), pp. 355-356. See also Jackson's essays, "Experience and Fiction" (1958) and "The Ghosts of Loiret" (unpublished; 2015), in which she discusses her family's background in architecture as well as her own interest in it. These topics are also explored at length in Ruth Franklin's biography, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (2016).

manner that is difficult to understand today, architectural design concepts and aesthetic debates were foregrounded in postwar culture, not only appearing in the popular magazines of the era — from *Life* and *Time* to *Good Housekeeping* and *House Beautiful* — but also figuring heavily in the political rhetoric surrounding Cold War anxiety, the gendered division of labour in the home, and the segregationist practices of urban and suburban planning. This is an important context in which to understand Jackson's houses. Although her fiction only rarely engages directly with the postwar milieu, her architectural symbolism resonates powerfully with its domestic discourse and design. While considerable attention has been paid to her houses as representational figures, not many critics have focused on the connections between her fictional architecture and the actual architecture of her time and place. A growing few have provided incisive readings of her work within the contexts of postwar culture in general and domestic culture in particular, to which this project is indebted. To my knowledge, however, there have been hardly any critical explorations of Jackson's domestic architecture specifically within the contexts of postwar design features, architectural movements, style wars, or debates. Nor has there been a full-length study of her House Trilogy.

It is a strange and bewildering circumstance that the brunt of this dissertation has been written during quarantine. With much of the world retreating indoors in the face of a global pandemic, Jackson's housebound fictions have taken on a new timeliness. Each of the novels considered here confines its narrative action to a single domestic setting and Jackson was a writer particularly attuned to the ways in which homes can feel like traps or prisons, upending their image as safe havens of family values and togetherness. She was also acutely sensitive to the ways in which one's lived experience of the built environment alters one's sense of time. Her poetics of haunting, for example, often illuminate the intersections between architecture,

embodiedness, and what might be called a gothic temporality. Over the past eighteen months, Covid-19 and the profound changes it has brought to everyday life have altered many people's experiences of time and built space. The virus has produced what tenured philosophers and middle-school TikTok users alike call "Coronatime," a warped sense of temporality in which hours slide into days just as easily as they slow to a crawl. It has also caused an ad hoc redesign of everyday spaces, from the grocery store to the living room, as well as a new phenomenology of embodiedness and proprioception. The plexiglass at the checkout, the arrows in the aisles, the home office in the hallway closet — all of this is a retrofit to how we design and experience physical space.

These changes have not been felt equally by everyone. That the virus has so starkly and so disproportionately affected people along class and racial lines is a further reminder of how these realities create radically different experiences of built space and so-called "collective" time. Reading Jackson's work right now underscores the political point that her architectural Gothic often makes — namely, that space and time are not experienced uniformly from one person to the next. Like Jackson and her postwar moment, we are living in an anxious time that might bring considerable changes to the built environment and how we experience it. These changes will necessitate a re-evaluation of what architecture and design mean to social and civic life. As we shall see, the postwar domestic culture in which Jackson lived and about which she most often wrote responded to its own historical moment with an increasingly ideological inwardness, emphasizing the nuclear family, the suburban enclave, and the private home. Jackson's "house" novels call into relief many of our own moment's uncanny alienations when it comes to built space and temporality; they might also be read as cautionary tales regarding what comes next, how we ourselves might respond to a moment of deep anxiety and upheaval,

whether to seize it as an opportunity for openness and real change or to retreat from it into further atomization and insularity.

Even before the pandemic, though, Jackson's work was proving more relevant than ever, often in distressing ways. Over the past five years, during the research and writing of this dissertation, the social and political backdrop of American life, particularly during the Trump era, has often seemed like an eerie and depressing mirror for her fiction and its preoccupations. As Alice Vincent recently noted, "our strange and fractured times" have been imbued with a distinctive "Shirley Jackson energy" ("Eerie, anxious, foreboding"), while the anxiety, fear, and mistrust that have become pervasive are, in the words of cultural critic Hayley Phelan, "pure Jackson territory" ("Evil of Complacency"). As Christian Lorentzen recently observed, the "tropes of the Trump administration were those of a gothic nightmare," from the sexual predation of a sinister (and national) patriarch to his transformation of the White House into a seemingly "haunted (and infected) castle" ("Like Rain on Your Wedding Day"). And indeed, the flourishing of the Gothic and horror genres in the last five years, particularly as interrogative modes aligned with social justice, is a reaction to these times and their anxieties. It would be an understatement to say that horror and the Gothic are experiencing a renaissance in the current moment. Many contemporary writers and directors invoke Jackson as a precursor to this resurgence, an author who at once revisited and reinvented gothic tropes in order to articulate the uncanny alienations of the home and what it represents, especially for girls and women living in a restrictive postwar era. Given our own moment's reckoning with gender, misogyny, and predatory male behaviour, Jackson's fiction has found particular resonance among young women writers and readers alike. She was also an author who used the haunted house to shed light on the shadow-side of the American dream and its most enduring symbol, the single-family home,

assailing its myth of American belonging. In her fiction, the family home is often a tool of division rather than a sanctuary of togetherness, representing a deeply acquisitive and insular ethos that belies the American civic project. Along these lines, her work resonates today with the current housing crisis in the United States and the deepening inequality that continues to follow the single-family home and its gentrification of lower-income neighbourhoods. From domesticity and gender to architectural theory and housing policy, Jackson's architectural Gothic reminds us that domestic culture is never ideologically neutral.

This is a long-buried dynamic that is still being excavated today. As architectural historian Dianne Harris points out, it "can sometimes be difficult to imagine that very ordinary, ubiquitous aspects of the built environment hold rhetorical power" (27). In both literary criticism and cultural history, houses and the surrounding spaces of the domestic domain have been conventionally understood as neutral, the background or backdrop against which identities are thrown into relief rather than actively shaped or defined. And yet it is precisely by being seemingly invisible and benign that domestic architecture serves as a potent carrier of ideology. As critic and novelist Jess Row argues, to consider built space a neutral expression of culture is to ascribe to the notion that culture can be divorced from power. Space, writes Row, is "only invisible, or 'natural,' to the person least likely to experience discomfort, the person comfortable in space created for her benefit" (120). In order to read space — quite literally the project of this dissertation — Row enjoins us "to see spatial comfort as an expression of the subject's relation to power" (120). This dissertation examines the cultural work performed by the American house by reading built space in this manner. It argues that domestic architecture is never neutral and that, much more so than has been acknowledged, Jackson's fiction excavates the deeply divisive ideologies embedded in American domestic culture, the specific design elements and

architectural discourses which actively participated in the cultural constructions of gender, class, and race in America.

This thesis is therefore interdisciplinary, framing Jackson's work within architectural history and its discourse. All of the houses in the trilogy exemplify what might be termed a "hybrid historicity," at once gesturing toward the architectural past and its postwar present. On the one hand, Jackson's houses are firmly rooted in the American architectural tradition as well as the iconic architecture of the Gothic genre itself, from the eclecticism of the American Gilded Age to the smothering mansions of the Victorian Gothic. Jackson's own ancestors were in fact responsible for some of the most famous (and infamous) houses designed in these styles. Her great-great-grandfather, Samuel Bugbee, was San Francisco's first architect, building homes for the city's millionaire railroad barons. As Ruth Franklin writes, these mansions were "potent symbols of gilded age excess" (17), meant to signify the arrival of an American class of would-be aristocrats. They also physically represented an emerging spirit of capitalist excess and insularity.[4] More than half a century later, these same houses would prove deeply influential to the ethos and rhetoric behind the consumerist postwar house and its gated suburban enclave. Indeed, when placed alongside mid-century domestic design and discourse, Jackson's nineteenth-century homes become oddly resonant with her own architectural moment, not only echoing the conspicuous consumption and introversion of the time but also referencing specific design features and ideological debates. In this way, she suggests the "haunting" nature of architectural history and its structures of power. More specifically, in her own grappling with the

[4] Indeed, Samuel Bugbee's most famous commission was Charles Crocker's Nob Hill mansion, designed and built in the late 1870s. A 25,000-square-foot palazzo, the home necessitated the demolition of twelve other houses in the area. When one neighbour refused to sell, Crocker had Bugbee erect a forty-foot-tall "spite fence" around the man's house. The incident takes on some literary significance when placed alongside Jackson's fictional houses in the trilogy, all which are similarly surrounded by prominently featured walls and fences, often representing the growing divides of class and race in American culture and history. See Franklin, pp. 16-17.

American house, she uses the ghost to satirize and critique postwar architecture's claims on the future as in fact regressive forays into the past. In what follows, I therefore consider Jackson's houses in light of both postwar architecture and its historical antecedents, drawing connections between the two, the ways in which, for example, the suburban house was meant to be a miniature of the Gilded Age mansion, or how certain experimentations in mid-century biomorphism echoed the discourse of the Victorian interior.

My reading of Jackson's houses is thus embedded in American history and culture. In this, it follows a relatively recent and productive strand of Jackson scholarship which reconsiders her gothic narratives through a historically situated lens. For decades, critics tended to characterize Jackson's work as ahistorical, seeing her narrative poetics and character archetypes as mythic and timeless, such that they transcend the specificity of historical contextualization and instead gesture toward a thematic universalism. Critics such as Angela Hague, Bernice Murphy, Jessamyn Neuhaus, and Richard Pascal continue to reverse this trend, suggesting the ways in which Jackson's fiction responds to the specifics of postwar culture and society. As Pascal argues in an article on Jackson's much-overlooked first novel, *The Road Through the Wall* (1948), her work consistently explores and exposes the "dominant sociopolitical patterns of her era," revealing a "keenly discerning social critic" (90) whose tales of the postwar Gothic deserve to be considered alongside the postwar realism of writers like Richard Yates and John Cheever. Other recent studies have considered Jackson within the contexts of American suburbia, Cold War anxiety, the parenting debates of the 1940s and 50s, postwar domesticity, and second-wave feminism.[5]

[5] See Angela Hague, "'A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times': Reassessing Shirley Jackson" (2005); Bernice Murphy, *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (2009); Jessamyn Neuhaus, "'Is It Ridiculous for me to Say I Want to Write?': Domestic Humor and Redefining the 1950s Housewife Writer in Fan Mail to Shirley Jackson" (2009); and Richard Pascal, "Walking Alone Together: Family Monsters in *The Haunting of Hill House*" (2014).

The primary focus of Jackson's writing is women and the home, and her depiction of the haunted house as an ambivalent space of both psychological terror and potential empowerment is meant to explore the intersections between women, domestic space, and power. If there is a ghost that haunts the House Trilogy it is most certainly that of the lingering patriarch and the oppressive family structure both he and his house represent.[6] On the one hand, as Melanie Anderson writes, Jackson uses the supernatural and the unreal to open up "a space for the investigation of the very real terrors of the 1950s American culture for women" (48). On the other, neither her treatment of gothic space nor her feminist politics are ever this straightforward. Nearly all of the women in the trilogy, for example, perpetuate, instrumentalize, or embody at least to some extent the ethos of the ghostly patriarch, and it is precisely through the ambiguity of the Gothic that Jackson taps into the nuances of domesticity, gender, and power. These dynamics, moreover, cannot be disentangled from race. Without exception, Jackson's portrait of postwar womanhood is explicitly a portrait of white womanhood, and it is crucial to an understanding of mid-century domestic culture to remember that when we talk about the postwar single-family home we are talking about a space that was not only occupied almost exclusively by white Americans but also integral to the construction of whiteness in twentieth-century American culture and discourse. As Alexis Shotwell perceptively argues, in Jackson's fiction "gender is a relational enactment, suturing together material realities through racialized social interactions…Race, sexuality, class, and gender in her work are constructed through and with the relations between women and the houses they tend" (119).

This is a dynamic both impossible to ignore and easy to overlook within Jackson's work. This is because the historical context and architectural figures that motivate her critique of

[6] See Bernice Murphy, "'I Am God': The Domineering Patriarch in Shirley Jackson's Gothic Fiction" (2007). Here, Murphy considers this figure not only within the House Trilogy but across Jackson's fiction on the whole.

postwar domestic culture are necessarily bound up with the relational constructions of race and gender, and yet her fiction almost never depicts or articulates these dynamics outright. In the midst of the biggest housing boom in American history and at a time when merchant builders and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) were implementing a battery of segregationist policies and practices, it is impossible to separate the American home from this history of racism. As both a literal structure and structuring symbol, the postwar house was subject to endless metaphorization within popular culture and political discourse. The aim was to connect a normative national identity to a hygienic space of whiteness — namely, the American suburban home. I read Jackson's House Trilogy, then, as a politically resistant counter-poetics of postwar architectural space, a gothic account of how the built environment performs the work of a dominant culture and its ideology. And yet at times while her fiction seems to gesture toward the racism of this historical context, these gestures remain opaque. With only one or two exceptions, she almost never includes people of colour or representations of diversity in her work, nor does she explicitly name or examine in detail the racist policies she appears to satirize and condemn. Most significantly, her constructions of white womanliness and domestic space are made possible only through the construction of racialized identities that remain unseen and unnamed, and a contemporary understanding of her gothic poetics of space therefore requires us to remember that race is gendered and gender is raced. As Jess Row argues in his book *White Flights: Race, Fiction, and the American Imagination* (2019), it is instructive for readers looking back at the work of white American writers to wonder not only what we are being asked to see but also what we are being asked *not* to see (37).

More than anything, Jackson's House Trilogy trains the reader's gaze on the symbiotic relationship between power and built space, using a gothic lens to narrow in on the uncanny

alienations of a dominant culture. Dara Downey has written that the overall trend of Jackson's work is "an attempt to solve the problem of enclosed domestic space" (290). The trilogy addresses this problem head-on, first by interrogating the American house and excavating its repressed structures of power and then by deconstructing it and reimagining it anew. The domestic and architectural culture of Jackson's postwar time also sought to reimagine the American home, ushering in what it thought of as a "new world." As historian Monica Penick points out, postwar architecture was inseparable from the era's broader narratives of progress and change, with domestic culture and design making frequent claims to a "revolution" in built space; and yet, as she goes on to note, "there [was] no real 'revolution' in terms of gender roles here" ("The Style War"), just as there was no real revolution in terms of class or race. In short, the power structures inherent to the built environment remained the same. After all, the people who shaped this "new world" were builders, city planners, real estate developers, policymakers, and architects, almost all of whom were male and white. Just as their designs and theories were shaped by their own backgrounds, biases, and intents, the built environment that resulted was the material construction of an ideological vision for American life. The House Trilogy assails this vision. In stark contrast to the domestic and architectural rhetoric of her time, Jackson insists that the American home has not yet been "revolutionized," that it is still neither a sanctuary nor a refuge, that the problem of domestic space persists, that the so-called "new world" of postwar domesticity is founded on the nation's most divisive and abiding myths.

This dissertation tracks these myths as forms of cultural and sociological haunting. As Avery Gordon argues in her book *Ghostly Matters* (1997; 2008), this type of haunting might be understood as that which allows systemic structures and institutional forms of power to be felt on the level of everyday life, with the ghost an agent of mediation between history and biography,

social violence and the individual (19). In this introductory chapter, I trace such haunting through the entangled histories of architecture and Gothic studies, setting up the theoretical and historical frames for the dissertation, from the American Gothic and the "architectural uncanny" to postwar domestic design and culture. I conclude with a breakdown of the House Trilogy and what follows in my chapters on each individual novel. Ultimately, Jackson's "house" novels are reactions to an emerging culture that also calls into relief a long-standing one, an American past that continues to haunt the present. While the architecture of her time claimed to have banished this ghost and to have moved on into the future, Jackson does not seek to escape the ghosts of American history and subjecthood so easily. Instead, she endeavours to face them. In order to do so, she enters the "haunted house" of American architecture and domesticity itself — exploring it, examining it, interrogating it, and, eventually, burning it down, tearing it apart, and remaking it.

II. Architecture and the Domestic Gothic

In its unique attention to architectural detail and its emphasis on a critical phenomenology of the built environment, Jackson's domestic Gothic is an opportunity to reconsider the ways in which architecture has been traditionally conceived by Gothic studies. The reception of American gothic cultural production has focused on domestic architecture as metaphoric and metonymic, understanding the space of the home as the locus of psychic displacements and repressions. However, the house is more than a metaphor. It is a material presence in its own right, its architecture not merely an analogical backdrop or static setting. Despite having productively explored the house as a representational figure, gothic scholarship has "almost never considered [it] for what it basically is—a spatial presence" (Soon Ng 5).

Recent theory and criticism, moreover, allow us to rethink the plurality of the Gothic in terms of gender, class, and race. Such a critical rethinking is to acknowledge that public and private spaces hold specific historical meanings and traumatic temporalities for different racial, ethnic, and gendered groups, and that the legacies of colonization, slavery, and misogyny continue to inform particular spatial practices and poetics.

One way to reconsider the gothic house is to bring narrative poetics into explicit dialogue with spatial discourse and architectural history. After all, the history of Gothic literature begins with architecture. *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), widely considered the first iteration of the genre, makes an explicit parallel between the convolutions of its plot and the dark, winding passageways of its titular castle. Its author, Horace Walpole, was himself an architect most famous for the design of his home, Strawberry Hill, an elaborate and sprawling castle-like "folly" which took nearly three decades to build and still stands today.[7] Starting with the second edition of his popular novel, Walpole affixed the term "Gothic" to the subtitle, a word exclusively associated at that time with architecture, in particular the style of European cathedral that flourished between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. As an architect, Walpole was one of the chief proponents of reviving this style and transposing it onto the space of the private home, as he himself had done. As such, he was deeply influential in both the resurgence of the neo-Gothic, which spread throughout Europe from the 1740s to the 1870s, and in the development of Victorian architecture, the predominant setting for the extremely popular nineteenth-century ghost story. The literary Gothic most properly takes its name from this eighteenth-century architectural revival, rather than its medieval predecessor. This is apt, given that the literary Gothic so often involves the return of the past, a temporal disturbance depicted through spatial

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[7] For more on Walpole and the origins of the literary Gothic and architecture, see Roger Luckhurst, *Corridors: Passages of Modernity* (2019), pp. 261-264 and David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (2012), p. 101.

distortion and ambiguity. It is also one of the many apposite correspondences between the architectural and the literary Gothic, for Walpole's appropriation of the term was perhaps more fitting than he may have first realized.

The images and metaphors attendant to architecture, that is, are particularly conducive to the production of Gothic effects and tropes. As Fred Botting notes, the Gothic is a mode of excess and transgression, exploiting fears about the porosity of borders and the fluidity of boundaries (1-6). Architecture, by contrast, establishes boundaries, organizing space by defining limits and volumes. In this sense, if the Gothic exploits an anxiety about boundaries by dramatizing their dissolution, then what better source of anxiety than the very thing meant to assuage such fears? Moreover, the Gothic not only exploits architecture in service to its own anxieties, it also excavates the anxieties surrounding architecture's inherent ambivalences. In its most basic form, architecture distinguishes the inside from the outside. And yet this separation is never absolute, nor is it really intended to be. We can think of this in the abstract, as when the philosopher Gaston Bachelard somewhat poetically observes that the intention of the inside is always to be reaching out into the outside (43-48), or we can think of it more concretely, as when Le Corbusier remarks that people rarely want the security of their homes to be total — what he calls "a theme for a psychiatrist" (qtd. in Colomina 57). Architecture's interiors, in other words, are purposely penetrable — opening out onto the exterior, bringing the outside close, even inviting it in. The house therefore shelters within itself that which it shelters against. This ambivalence engenders the fundamental anxiety that resides at the heart of all architecture, and the Gothic exploits this ambivalence. Eve Sedgwick, for example, summarizes the spatial model of the Gothic as simply "what's inside, what's outside, and what separates them" (12). The Gothic is a mode that explores what happens when this separation breaks down, when something

previously hidden comes to the surface, when the outside gets in or the inside gets out. It is precisely by claiming to mark such a separation that architecture renders itself so susceptible to the compulsions of the Gothic — namely, that the boundary will not hold, that something will leak in, that something will spill out.

We can already hear in the language of architecture the spatial metaphors the Gothic seeks to manipulate and which, over the course of its long cultural production, have been applied to a diverse range of subjects and discourses. Fears of the outside getting in, for example, might be figured in the haunted house as a metaphor for xenophobia, racism, and miscegenation. Fears of the inside getting out, in turn, might dramatize the revelation of a secret, the return of the repressed, or psychological states of distress, such as dissociation. The social and cultural motivations behind these metaphors have been, at various times and in various iterations, ambiguous. As Roger Luckhurst notes, the history of gothic fiction is "complexly intertwined with progressive and regressive tendencies" (266). In its modern form, the Gothic tends to challenge social and cultural determination by representing that which power and epistemology render abject in order to define and delimit themselves. Botting, for example, notes a salient shift in Gothic representation, from an eighteenth-century emphasis on expelling evil in order to restore social limits to a nineteenth-century emphasis on interrogating those same limits as themselves potential forms of evil (10). On the one hand, the house stands for normative values precisely because it stands between its inhabitants and any external threats to these values. On the other, it is often these same conventional mores which constitute the true threat to the individual and the integrity of the home. More than a backdrop, the house then enacts the uncanny proximity of Gothic horror — namely, the insidiousness of conformity and its over-reliance on normativity and rationality.

This dynamic has to do with the way in which domestic architecture physically defines space, as well as the way in which culture metaphorically represents domestic architecture. But it also has to do with the house itself as a mechanism of representation. In its idealized form domestic architecture persists as culture's collective image for interiority, detachment, and solitude. Because of this, it has often been used to reify the metaphysical "inside" of discourse's truth claims and knowledge production. As philosophers and architects alike observe, architecture is figuratively linked to the logocentrism of Western epistemology, supplying what Jodey Castricano calls "the coercive logic of spatial metaphors that ground the production of all meaning" (93). Architectural historian Mark Wigley takes this further. Architecture, he writes, is "constitutionally bound into the metaphysical tradition and cannot simply be subordinated as a metaphor. It can never be exterior to philosophy, as it produces the very sense of the interior on which that tradition is based" (*The Architecture of Deconstruction* 106). Invoked as the quintessential embodiment of authorial truth, architecture has historically demarcated what a given culture or discourse chooses to include and exclude. The house in particular — as the site of formative and intimate space, as the locus of the family and its genealogical claims — perpetuates and enshrines these divisions.

The Gothic excavates the underside of this process. That is, it sheds light on the violence of culture's negative self-definition, the way in which its exclusions are just as constitutive as its inclusions. Such violence is necessarily ideological and can render the subject abject, transforming the most quotidian and seemingly benign areas of life into sources of alienation and dissociation. It is perhaps for this reason that architecture frequently acts as a metaphor for the boundaries which enforce notions not only of rationality, but of sanity as well. Several psychoanalytic concepts related to estrangement and repression elicit figures of architectural

breach and defamiliarized space, most notably Freud's concept of the uncanny or *unheimlich* — literally, the "unhomely." In the etymological research that opens his 1919 essay on the uncanny, Freud traces the tangled definitions and connotations of the words *Heimlich* and *unheimlich*, effectively demonstrating how, over time, their meanings have overlapped and even blurred together ("The Uncanny" 2-4). The Gothic, in turn, frequently invokes the vertical structure of the house as isomorphic to the topography of Freud's model of the psyche, with the levels of the house corresponding to the layers of the mind, such that by now (to take one example) the basement in cultural production has become all but synonymous with repression and the Freudian unconscious.

These correspondences illuminate the central fear at the heart of the relationship between domestic architecture and the Gothic: the fear of some inherent ambivalence defamiliarizing the familiar, or, as Luckhurst puts it, the anxiety of the "unhomely coiled inside homeliness" (279). Both literally and figuratively, then, the house instantiates the liminality of inside and outside, of inclusion and exclusion, such that the very attributes for which it is sought — shelter, comfort, protection, succour — can transmute into their opposites, as it were gothically turning on the inhabitant. Rather than rendering the house uncanny through the use of the Gothic, Jackson and other horror writers uncover its inherent ambivalence, the shadows and perplexities which, from the beginning, have made the house a spectral place all along. As Wigley writes: "A house is only a house inasmuch as it is haunted" (*The Architecture of Deconstruction* 163).

III. American Gothic: A National Narrative

This is certainly the case within American narrative fiction. Jackson's haunted houses are part of a long literary tradition, one that uses the Gothic to grapple with America's tortured

histories and conflicted national self. As Donna Heiland argues, over the past two decades Gothic studies has increasingly focused on the genre's "rhetorical contribution to the work of defining a national identity" (129). A mode of oppositional and even subversive thinking, the Gothic illuminates the shadow-side of history by narrating stories and taking on perspectives which often remain untold or underrepresented by a nation's dominant culture. And, as Botting notes, while the Gothic crosses national borders and retains a consistent set of themes and motifs, its "figures have different significances, depending on the culture that uses them" (20). Henry James, the American master of the ghost story who spent nearly his entire career abroad, is instructive. The architectural haunting, for example, in his story "The Jolly Corner" (1908), set at the turn of the century in a rapidly modernizing New York, gestures toward an anxiety about the recent influx of immigrants to the city, as well as changes to American domestic living patterns and the rampant greed of New York's speculative real estate market. By comparison, almost the same images of domestic haunting in his gothic novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), set on a country estate in England, reveal a distinctly different set of cultural anxieties — from the generalized repression of sexual desire to the then-prevalent fears of child sexual abuse and molestation. The Gothic therefore reflects a national character insofar as it establishes "a place where cultural fears and fantasies are projected" (Botting 20).

In the case of the United States, the notion of a unified national character is often itself the central fantasy and primary source of fear within gothic cultural production. This is in keeping with American literature in general, a deeply conflicted tradition to say the least. As Richard Chase argues in his classic study *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1986), "the American imagination, even when it wishes to assuage and reconcile the contradictions of life, has not been stirred by the possibility of catharsis or incarnation" (2). According to Chase, "the

best American novels achieve their very being, their energy and their form, from the perception and acceptance not of unities but of radical disunities" (6-7). Even the most cursory knowledge of American history (or current events) reveals why such "radical disunities" continue to inform and catalyze the country's sense of conflicted self-identity. The Gothic, in its compulsion to return to the past and in its obsession with doubling and the split self, is particularly apt in representing the disharmony and fragmentation of the American character. It is perhaps for this reason that as a literary mode it has played an undeniably central role in the evolution of the American tradition. As critics Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy argue in their collection *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative* (1998), rather than achieving thematic comprehensivity or defining a unified subject, the "multivalent tendencies" of American Gothic are instead committed to the "dismantling of the national subject" (vii), bringing to the surface that which the national character either cannot accept or refuses to acknowledge. American Gothic therefore exposes a national identity but only by way of "a discursive field in which a metonymic national 'self' is undone by the return of its repressed Otherness" (Martin and Savoy vii).

In her book *African American Horror: Screams from Shadowed Places* (2012), scholar Maisha L. Wester extends this argument. American fiction, she contends, remains preoccupied with the Gothic precisely because it is an effective means of excavating the national unconscious. Given what Wester characterizes as "the nation's tendency to exclude and repress counter narratives from its dominant metanarratives" (4), the Gothic recuperates histories and subject positions which have either been unconsciously repressed or actively ignored. The literary critic Kathleen Brogan identifies this type of gothic narrative by the specific term "cultural haunting." In her study *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American*

Literature (1998), she distinguishes between the popular ghost story of the nineteenth century and more recent iterations of the genre. Whereas the focus of the former was predominantly "the tortured mind of the individual," stories of cultural haunting explore "the hidden passageways not only of the individual psyche but also of a people's historical consciousness," bringing to the fore "the communal nature of [a culture's] ghosts" (Brogan 5). As such, tales of cultural Gothic challenge a dominant ideology's limited perspective on the past. Moreover, as Wester argues, the Gothic is intrinsically a narrative mode that questions the authority of narrative itself (4). In this sense, its stories of spectral haunting and uncanny doubling mimic the ghostly construction of historical "truths" — authorial narratives haunted by their own elisions and occlusions. As Jeffrey Weinstock writes in his collection *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (2004): "The ghost is that which interrupts the presentness of the present, and its haunting indicates that, beneath the surface of received history, there lurks another narrative, an untold story that calls into question the veracity of the authorized version of events" (5).

The ghosts of American fiction — that is, the often-untold histories which lurk within its narratives and cannot help but interrupt the present — are, most pointedly, the haunting legacies of colonization and slavery. More often than not within American Gothic, these legacies are concentrated within the space of the home. Refusing to be domesticated, the past defamiliarizes the familiarity of the house, unsettling notions of place, self, and nation. That these legacies should incite a sense of occulted place is a logic that runs through the American literary tradition. The haunted house has supplied the images for this tradition to explore and interrogate the processes and patterns of a country's indefensible traumas and its near redemptions, of a nation continually coming together and continually breaking apart — a "house divided." From the "barely-discernible fissure" (Poe 163) that runs in a zigzag from the roof of the House of Usher

down into its very foundations, to Clytie standing in the window of Sutpen's Hundred "against a red background of fire, seen for a moment between two swirls of smoke" (Faulkner 376). From Sethe in the doorway of 124 holding hands with Beloved as all the women of the neighborhood gather "as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves" (Morrison 261), to the backyard tree at the end of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), its branches "full with ghosts…all the way up to the top, to the feathered leaves" (282). These images and others, at various times and in various ways, have embodied the nation's unassimilable tensions, forgotten histories, and abiding myths. They have, by turns, deconstructed the inequities of the past and been complicit in these same injustices. Ultimately, they invite a confrontation with history. Like Derrida's enjoinder "to learn to live *with* ghosts" (xviii), they provide the individual an opportunity to face their own alterity within a collective narrative. As Jojo, one of the many voices in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, says: "The ghosts shudder, but they do not leave" (Ward 284). And when Kayla, his little sister, sings to them and implores the ghosts to go home, they simply smile and stay — this *is* home.

If the land beneath one's feet has always been contested land, if the earth and soil carry "[s]o deep a stain" (14) — as the narrator of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) remarks — then how can one in the present feel secure, here, in where they stand? At the end of Poe's story, the fragments of the House of Usher are swallowed up by "the deep and dank tarn" (163) at the narrator's feet. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), one of the narrators recalls watching Sutpen's mansion simply rise "plank by plank and brick by brick out of the swamp" (Faulkner 37). The houses of American fiction are temporally and spatially out of joint, anachronic and anatopic, places that have come alive, places made incoherent by warped space — and all because,

foundationally, they are edifices erected on the swampy ground of the past, of what has been repressed and now cannot help but return.

IV. Shirley Jackson's Uncanny Architecture: Beyond the "Architectural Uncanny"

This sense of return is both the quintessential structure of gothic repetition and the quintessential pattern of the uncanny. In recent years, the uncanny has become a notoriously vague concept, applied across such a wide array of disciplines and invoked to characterize such a multitude of experiences it seems particularly prone to semantic slippage. Anneleen Masschelein's study *The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory* (2011) even tracks this slippage, tracing the genealogy of the concept through its development and the many paradoxes of its critical applications. Freud's original essay on the subject doesn't always help. The more he delineates the concept, the more it seems to slip away. From the uncertainty of whether an object is living or dead to getting lost in the red-light district of an Italian town; from severed heads and feet which dance around to a curiously shaped table with carvings of crocodiles on it — Freud's examples are at once staggeringly broad and oddly specific ("The Uncanny" 7, 10-11, 14, 15, respectively). Then again, such slippage is inherent to a concept which is itself about repetition and doubling, and within these examples a set of structural consistencies begins to emerge. Most notably, the uncanny involves a feeling of the familiar becoming strange, or vice versa. Its defining experience might be the eerie sensation of a specific place "coming back" or returning to the individual. This experience produces a kind of spatial *déjà vu* or "haunting" often accompanied by the thought "I have been here before," tinged with just enough uncertainty that both place and subject are doubled and defamiliarized. For Freud, this sense of dislocation is explicitly associated with the traumatic departure from the

womb. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), he characterizes the womb as our first "dwelling-house" (43), such that the uncanny is the return of a repressed "home-sickness" ("The Uncanny" 15). According to Freud, this "home-sickness" is a longing we have felt unconsciously ever since leaving the security of the maternal body, and in moments of minor disorientation or confusion it can re-emerge as a profound and even existential experience of alienation.

Given its explicit associations with space and architecture, as well as its structure of ghostly return and doubling, the uncanny has become all but inextricable from studies of gothic domestic space. As Roger Luckhurst observes, the *unheimlich* is the default mode through which to process the haunted house, itself "a space in which prior temporalities soak through and stall in traumatic repetition" (279). Indeed, Freud himself even characterizes the haunted house as the most "striking" example of the uncanny and notes that in many languages "an unhomely house" simply translates to "a haunted house" ("The Uncanny" 13). The most famous study along these lines is Anthony Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992), a cultural history that has had a profound influence on how the haunted house is read and interpreted through the critical lens of the unhomely. In his book, Vidler develops his titular concept by elucidating the cultural and subjective meanings that have been projected onto the space of the home. He presents the "architectural uncanny" as a kind of cultural residue that attaches to certain spaces and even architectural styles, enabling a given culture to express specific anxieties. To take a few examples: the Gothic house as a labyrinth of entrapment and live burial; the Victorian house as a consuming, repressive space; the modernist glass house as villainous and deceitful, transparent and yet still unable to banish its shadows. For Vidler, these meanings are not inherent to their corresponding forms of architecture; rather, they are produced by fantasies and psychological states, whereby the built environment itself remains neutral. "If actual buildings or spaces are

interpreted through th[e] lens [of the uncanny]," Vidler writes, "it is not because they themselves possess uncanny properties, but rather because they act, historically or culturally, as representations of estrangement…[T]here is no such thing as uncanny architecture" (11-12).

And yet, as one of the central arguments of this dissertation, Jackson's fiction depicts built space as more than a "representation of estrangement." Her work brings to light the often-repressed histories of spatial and architectural discourse, revealing the ways in which specific modes of historical suffering have specific poetics of space. And while what follows relies heavily on the concept of the uncanny, in particular its structure of gothic repetition and its association by Freud to the maternal body, my emphasis is on domestic architecture as a material presence which encodes, enacts, and enshrines the accepted boundaries of normative and suppressive culture. Moreover, as Mark Fisher has noted, while the *unheimlich* has been exceptionally productive for Gothic studies, its critical dominance has at times crowded out other affective modes related to the strange, the haunted, and the spectral (9). As we shall see, Jackson's "house" novels involve a poetics of haunting that is deeply rooted in the Gothic and the unhomely, and yet they also move beyond these modes into the less-charted realms of the weird and the hauntological. These modes allow us to see how the haunting considered here, while ghostly and even supernatural, is what Brogan terms "cultural haunting" or what Gordon calls "sociological haunting." For my purposes, such haunting encompasses historical legacies of power, oppression, and marginalization as they determine everyday physical space and continue to linger within it. As Gordon writes, haunting is "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (xvi).

In this sense, feminist architectural theory is particularly useful to a consideration of Jackson's gothic poetics. As Mark Wigley argues, throughout the Western tradition "the role of

architecture [has been] explicitly the control of sexuality" ("Untitled" 336), rendering the home for some inhabitants decidedly *un*homely. This argument forms the basis for a series of feminist interventions within both architectural history and spatial discourse which, emerging in the 1990s and covering a wide range of topics and disciplines, continues to be an often-overlooked strand of the "spatial turn" within theory and literary criticism. The philosopher Elizabeth Grosz's accounts of identity formation, for instance, revise those of Freud and Lacan, pointing out the assumption of a universalized body within the spatial paradigms of psychoanalytic theory (*Space, Time, and Perversion* 85-87). In turn, her writings on Plato's concept of *chora*, following those of Julia Kristeva, constitute an intervention within the spatial turn itself, demonstrating how spatial theorists like Bachelard use "the endless metaphorization of femininity as the condition for men's self-representation and cultural production" ("Woman, *Chora*, Dwelling" 219). Within architectural history, Diana Agrest has examined architecture's appropriation of the maternal body as a metaphor for its own creativity and innovation, enacting what she calls "man's ever-present procreative fantasy" (362). Specific movements, figures, and periods within architecture have similarly been deconstructed through this lens, including Joan Ockman's exploration of American postwar technology and its influence on the gender biases of domestic and suburban design, and Beatriz Colomina's recuperation of the architect and designer Eileen Gray, whose modernist masterpiece E.1027, now the subject of several histories and documentaries, was not only defaced by Le Corbusier but, for decades, attributed to him as well.[8]

These are only a few of the many and ongoing contributions to this field. For my purposes, these interventions discursively underpin the ways in which a lived experience of space can be alienating and even uncanny, specifically due to an architecture which, through its

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[8] See Ockman, "Mirror Images: Technology, Consumption, and the Representation of Gender in American Architecture since World War II" (1996), and Colomina, "Battle Lines: E.1027" (1996).

theories and practices, actively marginalizes and represses. More than a "representation of estrangement," domestic architecture has participated in such marginalization and repression. After all, as Kim Tingley writes, the built environment has always been "designed for people who embody dominant cultural norms" ("How Architecture Could Help"). As she goes on to note, from Leonardo da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" to Le Corbusier's "Modulor Man," the universalized body of Western architecture has been exclusively young, white, and male. In the case of Jackson's House Trilogy, her depiction of architecture narrows in on the family home as the most enduring symbol of this history and its ideological imaginary. In its legitimation and enforcement of marriage as a social institution, its conflation with the figure of the *paterfamilias*, and its embodiment of a male line of inheritance, the family home enshrines the values of white patriarchal culture — namely, male dominance, heteronormativity, and whiteness. In architectural discourse from Ancient Greece and Victorian England to postwar America, the house is an extension of the patriarchal body, not just the site of female confinement but a physical and discursive technology of surveillance and control. As Wigley argues, domestic theory and design redefined female identity and sexuality to such an extent it created what he calls a "new body" — the female body as reconceived by the architectural imaginary and its male-driven fantasies ("Untitled" 346).

Moreover, as critical race theory and intersectionality make clear, the construction of white female identity is necessarily imbricated with the construction of racialized identities as well. The American mid-century milieu, in particular, demonstrates this to potent effect. In the white patriarchal imagination, the postwar house was a protected space in which to confine and preserve the purity of white female identity and sexuality. Doing so in turn required preserving the racial purity of the home and the communal enclave, and the segregationist practices of

redlining and suburban blockbusting, coupled with government-sanctioned housing policy, were largely meant to enforce racial boundaries in service to a patriarchal conception of white womanliness and virtue. By extension, as we shall see, the postwar shelter press and real estate market advertised domestic goods — from better lawnmowers to increased privacy — using racialized rhetoric, selling commodities and design features alike as signals of not merely class privilege but, more specifically, racial privilege *as* class privilege. It is little wonder, then, that the traditions of Black Gothic and horror cultural production in the United States have so often focused on real estate and domestic culture, from *Candyman* (1992) to *Get Out* (2017).

The house therefore cannot be considered a neutral backdrop, let alone a protected site of agency and self-development. Jackson's domestic spaces dramatize this reality. Her use of the Gothic calls into relief the horror of the everyday, finding terror and depersonalization precisely where the normative values of American mid-century culture coalesced: the family, the suburbs, the home. Consider the following paragraph from 1951, written by Richard Neutra, one of the most significant and influential architects of the American postwar era. It comes from a book on the principles of architectural siting and it discusses how the architect can use the surrounding landscape to instill certain social and cultural values within the space of the family home. Neutra writes:

> If you beat your wife or kiss her, the natural setting supplemented by the skill of the architect will perhaps permit privacy for the event and may keep censure or envy, as the case may be, from growing and rankling in your neighbor's heart. There is social significance in building on a dominating slope or in, so to speak, a defenseless ditch. The site, its size, character and configuration is [*sic*] the significant anchoring place of your problems. Although, in itself, we may not

> have to consider the site as animate and living, it exercises a potent influence upon souls and life. (16)

It seems unnecessary to point out here the myriad ways in which a passage such as this exemplifies the flagrant misogyny of the postwar moment in general and its architectural discourse in particular. For now, I would simply like to underscore Neutra's final sentence and to suggest the deeply ironic fashion in which it both embodies and embraces my central argument regarding the architectural uncanny versus uncanny architecture. The critical commonplace often derived from Vidler's concept is that built space does not produce uncanny effects; instead, it provides a backdrop upon which the cultural and subjective representations of the uncanny can be projected. And yet, to paraphrase Neutra, while we may not need to consider the house as literally animate and living, we should acknowledge the ways in which architectural discourses and design features have been informed by repressive and oppressive beliefs and biases, and how, in turn, these discourses and features continue to exercise — as he puts it — "a potent influence upon souls and life."

V. The Counterdream: Postwar Domesticity, Gender, Race, and Class

In order to better acknowledge such an influence, it is important to consider architecture's historical ties to power. For Jackson, then, we might consider the repressive and oppressive beliefs and biases of her own architectural moment — that is, the social and cultural backdrops of the time at which she was writing her trilogy. In a discussion of Jackson as an influential figure in the development of the Suburban Gothic, Bernice Murphy acknowledges that the connection between Jackson's fictional houses and the actual domestic culture of her time has gone largely overlooked. "Part of the reason for this oversight," she writes, "is the fact that

Jackson rarely dealt *directly* with contemporary social issues" (*Suburban Gothic* 18). Nonetheless, as Murphy goes on to note:

> [Jackson's] fascination with homes and with the people who live in them was cultural as well, prompted to no small extent by the pervasive anxieties and sociological fixations of post-Second World War American society. There is a very real link between Jackson's obvious preoccupation with houses and living spaces and the enormous and rapid changes in American living and domestic patterns which took place during the time at which she wrote. (18)

This is a compelling argument and one that this dissertation explicitly pursues. While it is true that the "house" novels almost never engage directly with postwar society or culture, it is here, in the two decades immediately following the Second World War, that the "ghosts" of Jackson's cultural haunting can be found. These ghosts track backward into the American past, illuminating the country's history, while also projecting into its present, shedding light on the shadows of Jackson's own time. In order to contextualize her House Trilogy within this period, the following section frames postwar domestic culture according to a set of questions derived from Murphy's argument. What exactly were the "pervasive anxieties" and "sociological fixations" of the American postwar era? And what were the "rapid changes in American living and domestic patterns" which occurred during Jackson's lifetime? Finally, what precisely constitutes and substantiates the "very real link" between these changes and Jackson's work?

The suburban housing boom of the postwar period was pitched as a "new world" — the utopian dream of the American future. Cultural historian Andrea Vesentini has characterized this dream as really a "counterdream," one that only takes on its full "significance when contrasted with [its] nightmare" (63). That is, rather than expressions of freedom, the American mid-century

home and its postwar suburb were articulations of a negatively defined national identity, what Vesentini calls a "freedom from" (63) — a freedom from the racialized fears and class struggles of the city; a freedom from the communist "Red Scare" and the anxieties of the nuclear bomb; a freedom from female independence and self-determination beyond the home. The "anxious modernism" of postwar American architecture was, in many respects, a reflection of this milieu, an approach to the built environment that attempted to reconcile the era's social, political, and cultural tensions. And yet, while many movements in postwar design were developed to alleviate these tensions, others merely reinforced the era's divisions or came to embody the very problems which they themselves had sought to remedy. As Robin Schuldenfrei writes in *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture* (2012), the tensions and insecurities of the postwar years resulted in designs which at once "mask[ed] and unmask[ed] broader ideologies, serving to reveal fears, bluster, and deeply ingrained cultural beliefs alike" (xiii).

The mass retreat to the suburban enclave was itself an ideologically revealing inward turn, one that "masked and unmasked" the specific fears of the white patriarchal imagination. Along with the bomb and the Cold War, these were the "pervasive anxieties" and "sociological fixations" that Murphy alludes to, and they directly shaped the "living patterns" of mid-century American domestic culture, from housing policy to housing design, from predatory exclusion and town planning to picture windows and perimeter fences. The rhetoric surrounding the single-family home and its suburban enclave — from marketing slogans to presidential speeches — explicitly tied suburban expansion to the colonial New World and nineteenth-century frontierism.[9] As with the equally fetishizing obsession with suburbia's so-called "wide open

[9] See Vesentini, pp. 99-100 for the connections between suburban planning, the nuclear family, Cold War civil defense, and the frontier spirit. The presidential speeches alluded to here include ones by Truman in 1952 (cited in Vesentini, p. 100) and by Kennedy in 1961 (cited in Vesentini, p. 98).

spaces," this rhetoric tapped into the American myth of Manifest Destiny and the revisionist fiction that before the arrival of European colonists the Americas had been indeed "wide open," a fiction that rewrote the country's histories of colonization and genocide.

Like the colonial New World and the American frontier, the postwar suburb coupled expansionism with the preservation of a national subject, one predicated on race, gender, and class. This expansion was incredibly massive and incredibly fast. As the housing crisis became the housing boom, merchant builders developed nearly three million acres of land (Lane 4). In 1944, builders constructed 142,000 housing units; by 1946, that number had skyrocketed to over a million (*The Suburb Reader* 257). Just four years later, at decade's end, this number had nearly doubled to 1.9 million. In the two decades from the end of the Second World War to 1965, "the building industry constructed over 26 million nonfarm homes, most of them in the suburbs" (257). As Barbara Miller Lane writes in her book *Houses for a New World* (2015), by 1970 "more than 20 percent of the entire population of the United States lived in [the] tract houses" (4) and suburban communities developed within the previous ten to twenty years alone. The result of this expansion was that, between 1940 and 1970, there was no greater symbol of national and civic belonging than homeownership — what Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor calls the "American particularity of property rights as an expression of citizenship" (2).

And yet as more and more families gained access to these rights through government-backed loans, merchant builders and the FHA practised legal and extrajudicial forms of discrimination, using restrictive property covenants to deny homes to people of colour, Black Americans, and immigrant buyers. The Levitt Organization was perhaps the most famous of these merchant builders, having branded each of its seven developments, from Long Island to Maryland to Puerto Rico, with its own name. As a matter of company policy, the Levitts openly

refused to sell to Black families. As William Levitt put it: "We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two" (qtd. in *Crabgrass Frontier* 241). By 1960, his Long Island development had 82,000 residents — not a single one was Black (K. Jackson 241). The Levitt name has since become synonymous with these types of segregated communities, but as Kenneth T. Jackson points out there was nothing unique about the company's policies or its suburban developments — nearly all building firms enshrined restrictions that ensured the racial homogeneity of their communities (241).

For decades, these practices were officially described as "*de facto* segregation," meaning they were carried out by private, rather than legal or governmental, entities: independent builders like the Levitts denying access to their developments on the basis of race; private banks refusing loans to people of colour and thereby "redlining" whole districts and communities; individual white homeowners abandoning certain neighbourhoods ("white flight") or banding together and driving Black owners away. And yet as was openly known at the time and as Richard Rothstein meticulously catalogues in his book *The Color of Law* (2017), these segregationist tactics were often sponsored by and coupled with consistent and racially explicit government policy on the federal, state, and local levels. Postwar segregation was then not only a *de facto* reality borne of private prejudice; it was also *de jure* — a policy in law.[10] Moreover, as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor demonstrates in her book *Race for Profit* (2019), the predatory exclusion of postwar housing policy was followed by the "predatory inclusion" of the 1970s real estate industry, with banks and merchant lenders extending loans to Black families and people of colour at exorbitant rates precisely so that these homeowners would then default on their mortgages, leaving them

[10] See Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, pp. vii-xvii.

and their neighbourhoods mired in debt.[11] This type of discriminatory capitalism specifically preyed on the dream of the American home and its promise of national belonging.

This is an important context in which to understand the suburban house and its constructions of white patriarchal power and white womanliness. These constructions, in turn, are crucial to a contemporary reading of Jackson's gothic houses. Unquestionably, Jackson's fiction presents the domestic sphere as an oppressive tool of male domination and control, a veritably haunting structure that alienates female identity from itself. Her "house" novels seek to deconstruct these forms of power and to disentangle women from their spectral legacies. But these same novels are also deeply anxious about how women seize power for themselves, with Jackson's portraits of female empowerment and self-sufficiency ambivalent and at times even troubling. As her trilogy progresses, the problem of domestic space becomes increasingly the difficulty of establishing female autonomy without merely reproducing the same oppressive systems of the male power structure. And yet, these novels never address this dynamic directly in the contexts of race or racialized identity construction, an absence that becomes glaring especially when thrown up against the backdrop of Jackson's postwar era, from its legal and extrajudicial forms of segregation to its deeply prejudiced domestic design and rhetoric. The fact that nearly all of the women in the trilogy are elite and white only further complicates Jackson's portraits of female power in the home, as well as her depictions of gothic space and their connections to the postwar house and its suburb.

Jackson herself grew up in an affluent and racially homogenous suburb, and her fiction returns to this milieu as both a site of social realist critique and uncanny horror. Her first novel, *The Road Through the Wall* (1948), uses the fictional suburb of Cabrillo as a thinly veiled stand-

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[11] See Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*, pp. 1-23.

in for Burlingame, California, the actual suburb near San Francisco where she was born and raised. It is her only novel to be firmly rooted in the realist mode, and her depiction of American suburbia anticipates many of the criticisms later levelled at suburban life, from its class-conscious voyeurism and misogyny to its social isolation and normalized racism. The suburban landscape also appears in Jackson's short fiction. Here, the postwar house is often an explicit mechanism of entrapment, the embodiment of stultifying domestic routines and unhappy marriages. Significantly, these stories see Jackson inflecting her contemporary social milieu with elements of horror and the uncanny. In "The Good Wife," a jealous husband literally imprisons his wife in the bedroom of their suburban home; in "The Beautiful Stranger," a young homemaker becomes convinced her husband has been replaced by a doppelgänger, a confusion Jackson ties to the disorienting sameness of the suburban grid and its sea of identical houses. The House Trilogy marks the culmination of this progression, with the Gothic, the uncanny, and full-blown horror now becoming the lexicon through which Jackson expresses her postwar critique. As we shall see, the multi-layered and multi-directional architectural symbolism of the trilogy sees Jackson using the ghosts of the past to force a confrontation with the present. More specifically, the Gilded Age mansions and Victorian Gothic piles of the trilogy call into relief the acquisitive and deeply divisive nature of the postwar house, placing it on a continuum of American domestic architecture and its discourse, a tradition impossibly entangled with the nation's haunting legacies of historical suffering. Far from a "new world," the domestic and architectural culture of Jackson's time exemplified the spectral repetition of these legacies and their structures of power.

VI. "Inside-Out Books": The House Trilogy—Chapter Breakdown

In a brief lecture given at Syracuse University in 1957, Jackson discusses the writing of *The Sundial*, the first novel in what would become her trilogy. She describes the book as marking a shift in her fiction up to that point. Whereas before she had been writing what she calls "outside-out" books — novels which place a wall around "some forbidden, lovely secret" and then attempt (unsuccessfully) to breach this wall — she began to wonder what would happen if she reversed this structure:

> It occurred to me, then, that the thing to do was to write a new book, and *start* inside—write a kind of inside-out book, and maybe see what I have been writing about all these years when I have been writing outside-out books. (374, emphasis in the original)

In the context of mid-1950s America, the decision to start *inside* the house was timely and apt. Her commitment to a fiction of introversion and insularity is most certainly a reflection of her time and place. From the Cold War policy of containment to the inward turn of mid-century domestic culture; from the segregationist planning of the postwar suburb to the isolation and confinement of the 1950s homemaker — the postwar era was defined by what Patrycja Antoszek calls an "ideology of containment" (78). Starting "inside" — both literally and figuratively — Jackson's trilogy explores this ideology through its architectural symbolism.

Moreover, in these novels domestic enclosure not only involves physical confinement but temporal stall and historical repetition as well. In Jackson's writing, to be enclosed or entrapped in domestic space often means to be stuck in a kind of time loop, "haunted" by the recursion of history and its systems of power and therefore constantly reminded of how easily power reproduces itself. For women in particular, this is a spatial and temporal paradigm — in other words, a trap — which makes both self-transformation and social change almost impossible. And

indeed, the House Trilogy is fundamentally concerned with these types of change: how to move from the "inside" of a dominant culture to its "outside" — that is, the "outside" of patriarchy, of gendered and racialized capitalism, of heteronormativity, or, better yet, simply the "outside" of an ideology of containment altogether. To make such a move "inside-out," Jackson would have to dismantle not only the physical structures of the American house but its time structure as well, the way in which, for example, the family home perpetuates heteropatriarchal power from one generation to the next, or how the postwar house simply reproduces and reinforces the racialized class system of the American past. This movement "inside-out" is the effective arc of the trilogy, with each successive novel an attempt to deconstruct what might be called the architecture of the "inside," and only Jackson's final novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, in part succeeding. In what follows, I track the progression of this trajectory.

In my opening chapter, I consider *The Sundial* alongside the "inward turn" of postwar domestic culture and its particular time structure. The novel dramatizes the increasing insularity of the Halloran family in light of an apocalyptic prophecy handed down by the ghost of their founding patriarch. Critics such as Richard Pascal and Angela Hague have helpfully situated the novel within the postwar contexts of the suburb and the nuclear bomb. More recently, Jill Anderson and Emily Banks have considered its depiction of bunker mentality through the lens of "queer futurity," while Julie Baker and Christiane Farnan have revisited its treatment of women and domesticity using the gender politics of the time as well as contemporary feminist theory.[12] Here, I build on these readings while also developing a more involved analysis of the novel's

[12] See Pascal, "New World Miniatures: Shirley Jackson's *The Sundial* and Postwar American Society" (2005); Hague, "'A Faithful Anatomy of Our Times': Reassessing Shirley Jackson" (2005); Anderson, "Homemaking for the Apocalypse: Queer Failures and Bunker Mentality" (2020); Banks, "[Fall]ing [Out] of Line: *The Sundial*'s Apocalyptic Queer Futurity" (2020); Baker, "'I May God Mad, but at Least I Look Like a Lady': The Insanity of True Womanhood in *The Sundial*" (2020); and Farnan, "Domestic Apocalypse in *The Sundial*" (2020).

architectural conceits and their connection to American history, postwar design, and domestic culture. First, I look to the mansions of the American Gilded Age and the anachronism of their architectural eclecticism, the way in which such stylistic hybridity was an attempt to insert the American patriarch into European legacies of landed nobility and aristocratic lineage, connecting this tendency to the Halloran family and its founding father. I then consider the ways in which the postwar moment's own tendency toward prophecy and apocalyptic vision transformed the single-family home into a deeply ideological space, one in which the contours of a national subject were established by domestic culture and then policed by specific architectural features, including perimeter walls, blunted picture windows, and private gardens. This dynamic connects the era's inherently classist and racist forms of identity construction with the actual construction of what has been called the "introverted postwar house" (Vesentini 55-59), a space which, perhaps more than any other, was subject to mid-century America's projective visions and prognostications. In the end, *The Sundial* uses its extensive architectural symbolism to satirize and lament the "nostalgic future," a spurious form of prophecy that merely perpetuates the same power structures and social hierarchies of the past, all in the name of a so-called "new world."

In Chapter Two, I turn to *The Haunting of Hill House* and consider Jackson's most architecturally detailed novel alongside the discourse of the family home in both architectural history and Gothic studies. Using spatial theory and phenomenology, I argue that the novel depicts the family house as a spatial system deeply ingrained within the subject, a dream-like "diagram of inhabiting" (the phrase is Gaston Bachelard's) which functions as a mechanism of subjectification and control. In the novel, this system prevents Eleanor Vance, the main character, from establishing an identity of her own. While *The Sundial* is about the impossibility of social change in the face of white patriarchal power's "ghostly" repetition, we might say that

Hill House is about the inability to self-transform in the face of internalized patriarchy and its acculturated notions of womanhood and heteronormativity. In this sense, Hugh Crain's mansion, the titular Hill House, is an "oneiric house," a dream machine haunted by the fantasies of an obsessive and controlling patriarch. I connect this aspect of the house to the actual Victorian interior, which, in both architectural history and its discourse, was presented as a similarly oneiric space, one that was specifically meant to project and reflect the dreams and psyche of the father. In turn, I reconsider the mansion's undeniable maternal associations in light of architecture's long-standing tradition of male-driven "womb fantasies," placing Crain on a continuum of real-life architects, from Renaissance Italy to postwar America, who likened their creative process to pregnancy and birth and who saw their buildings as "motherly" if not "womb-like." This leads me to a consideration of mid-century biomorphism, a movement in architecture and design which explicitly adopted the womb as a spatial model. In particular, I place Hill House alongside a case study in biomorphic design, a project named *Endless House* by the Austrian-American architect Frederick Kiesler, whose plans openly endeavoured to recreate the prenatal environment and whose theories characterized the private home as a "machine for dreaming." Ultimately, *Hill House* debunks architecture's own intrauterine fetish. The novel's horror reasserts the monstrous connotations of a return to the womb, while its architectural symbolism traces such a fetish back to the male imagination, its co-optation of feminine reproductive power, and its socialization of female identity in general.

In Chapter Three, I consider the final novel in the trilogy, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. Although the novel includes far less architectural detail than either *The Sundial* or *Hill House*, it is perhaps Jackson's most involved examination of the family home's gothic poetics, as well as its inextricable ties to heteronormativity and male domination. Its depiction of domestic

witchcraft and food magic pits female-coded forms of resistance against patriarchal capitalism and its seemingly "spectral" omnipotence. In the figure of Cousin Charles, Jackson not only implies the ghostly repetition of the *paterfamilias*; she also traces this haunting to the family home itself, once again tapping into the conflation between the house and its patriarch. Such haunting leads the novel's main character and narrator, Merricat Blackwood, to a profound disillusionment about the family home she cherishes, realizing that its connections to male power have compromised her own visions of female independence and self-sufficiency. Her decision to "alter the house" — first by vandalizing it and then by destroying it — constitutes Jackson's most radical intervention within the heteropatriarchal order of the archetypal family home. It is here, in the ruins of the Blackwood mansion, that Jackson's trilogy finally turns the house "inside-out." Not only is Merricat's new home a literal dismantling of her father's mansion; in the broader contexts of Jackson's literary project as well as her historical moment, it is also a clear rejoinder to mid-century architecture's own claims of breaking with the past and establishing an altogether new approach to domestic design and theory. As disturbing as Merricat's house may be, it is indeed new, an inherently "weird" object that stands critically "outside" both architecture's past and its spurious visions of the future. This home has no postwar parallel, and as such I see it as an anticipation of later movements in architecture and art, namely deconstructivism and "anarchitecture," both of which emerged in the early 1970s and were themselves deeply critical of architecture and its ties to capitalism, patriarchy, and power.

In the end, Jackson's trilogy depicts the American house as a gothic extension of the white patriarchal imagination and its haunting presence within the nation's history. In these novels, architecture becomes entwined with everything from the settler-colonialism of the Puritan enclave and its racialized millenarianism to the New England witch-hunts and the

persecution of female power. Against the backdrop of postwar domestic culture and its own anxious constructions of gender, race, and class, Jackson's fictional houses call into relief the ways in which these historical antecedents still inform the mid-century moment. Which is to say, her trilogy conjures the ghost at the very heart of the American domestic project, and, through her depiction of architecture, reveals its lingering presence within both the houses of the past and the homes of the postwar present.

Chapter One

"In a Pocket of Time": Anachronic Architecture and the Nostalgic Future in *The Sundial*[13]

> To pretend the world is a garden is an essentially apolitical act, a turning away from the woes that keep it from being one.
>
> — Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*

I. Introduction: Temporal Stall and the Inward Turn of Postwar Domestic Culture

As its title suggests, *The Sundial* is a novel about time — more specifically, time out of joint, the blurring of past, present, and future. It is Jackson's most sustained satire, assailing the social and political atmosphere of her postwar moment through an increasingly elaborate allegory that reaches backward and forward through American history, from its Puritan colonial roots to its mid-century visions of the future. The novel concerns the nouveau-riche Halloran family and its household of hangers-on. The story opens in the wake of Lionel Halloran's death, the heir apparent, with the rest of the family, including his wife Maryjane and their ten-year-old daughter, Fancy, openly suspecting his own mother, Orianna, of pushing him down the stairs in order to gain control of the house and family fortune. The power struggle that ensues is interrupted when Aunt Fanny, one of the last Hallorans by blood, receives an apocalyptic prophecy delivered in the spectral voice of her long-dead father, seemingly booming down from the heavens. This prophecy not only foretells the imminent destruction of the world, it also promises that anyone living inside the mansion — a house and world unto itself largely designed and built by Fanny's father — will be spared the coming cataclysm. Comprised almost entirely of social climbers and opportunists, the household quickly converts to a doomsday cult, and while Jackson parodies their hapless plans and preparations, she also turns the tedium of their

[13] A version of this chapter appears in *Shirley Jackson: A Companion* (2021), edited by Kristopher Woofter.

waiting into serious satire. As the end of the world approaches outside, the Hallorans become a scathing portrait of class and racialized privilege inside, their elitism and entitlement as a chosen people defined as much by the nearby village and its working-class population as by the "shadowed" figures who crowd around the house in their apocalyptic visions, barred from entering the new world to come.

Published in 1958, the novel's historical moment is a kind of spectre that haunts the narrative. Jackson's portrait of women vying for control over a family household is cast in stark relief against the stifling oppression of the 1950s patriarchal home. Her depiction of an elitist family barricading themselves inside a mansion stocked with household goods parodies the consumerist and class-conscious insularity of postwar domestic life. Her extensive use of particular architectural features, such as perimeter walls, picture windows, and the private garden, satirizes postwar fears related to privacy and voyeurism. And her depiction of an apocalyptically-minded family who transforms their home into a fallout shelter parallels Cold War nuclear anxiety and its bunker mentality. These historical analogues are impossibly bound up with the deeply racialized domestic culture of the time, and although the novel never explicitly mentions racial intolerance, its architectural figures and their historical contexts are entirely informed by it, in a way that has not yet been fully explored or analyzed. The family's prophecy of a pastoral new world, one that necessitates a domestic retreat as well as the exclusion of unwanted others, directly parallels postwar "white flight" and the so-called new world of the segregated suburbs. Their introverted house, its doors and windows barricaded and covered over, echoes the racially motivated inward turn of mid-century domesticity, from the racialization of privacy to debates over glass architecture, exposure, and racialized identity construction. In turn, the family's explicitly millenarian prophecies and subsequent

transformation of the family home into a private bomb shelter respectively mirror the postwar civil defense establishment's racist rhetoric of "only the worthy will survive" as well as its extensive nuclear simulations which speculated (and then determined) who should get shelter and who should not. Finally, Jackson's portrait of an empowered (if unscrupulous) cast of women running their own household is complicated by the intersections of gender, class, and race. If the novel's women gain power by seizing the patriarchy for themselves, then the fact that they are all elite and white suggests exactly at whose expense they are able to do so.

At the centre of the novel is a prophecy that imagines a possible future only by nostalgically looking backward to a white patriarchal past. In this chapter, I argue that this same time structure was also at the heart of postwar architecture, planning, and domestic culture. Jackson's architectural and domestic conceits therefore illuminate one of the era's most pressing ironies: while visions of the future proliferated during the postwar era, they tended to be troublingly nostalgic, looking to a divisive and overidealized past rather than to a progressive future. The novel's treatment of "world building" and its related explorations of the miniature and the replica are integral to this dynamic. Jackson posits world-building prophecies as almost always regressive, from the New World apocalypticism of the colonizing Puritans, which she satirizes in the opening pages of the novel, to the postwar new world of suburban domestic culture, which motivates much of her architectural allegory. Meanwhile, her near-obsessive return to the miniature and the replica, from Fancy's dollhouse to Fanny's attic apartment, similarly assails the fundamentally conservative impulse behind these worlds within worlds — namely, the impulse to arrest time and renounce change.

In the end, this is what the Halloran mansion most consistently represents: a world within a world wherein spatial closure and architectural isolation enact the severing of a social bond,

wherein the nostalgia for an inequitable past means the exclusion of others in the present. These readings are borne out by the home's multiple guises and historical associations. A Gilded Age mansion that replicates the English country manor and its feudal past, the Halloran home also gestures toward the postwar house and its exclusionary suburb, themselves respective miniatures of the manor estate and the English village. As the family's apocalyptic ark, the house is also a Cold War bunker, yet another domestic miniature which, as we shall see, purposely replicated the architecture and interior design of the suburban home. The circular nature of these associations calls into relief the way in which the postwar inward turn was not only a spatial retreat but a regressive, temporal one as well.

As a ghost who haunts the grounds of his own estate, the Halloran patriarch is himself a spatial and temporal disruption similarly representing regression and stasis. His spectral return sends up the spurious promise of all millenarian prophecies: despite the projection that "all things will be changed," his lingering presence suggests recursion and repetition, the re-establishment of the old world and its old order. His haunting implies that the time structure at the heart of both Jackson's novel and the postwar culture it critiques is essentially a ghostly time structure — that is, a refusal to leave the past, an evasion of the future by way of temporal stall. The fact that his prophecy is so quickly adopted by the women in the house further suggests the regressive continuity of the status quo, the ability of power to reproduce itself, and, more to the point, the flexibility of the heteropatriarchal structure in co-opting those under its control to perpetuate its oppressive systems. These dynamics converge on the family home, wherein Jackson explicitly connects domestic inwardness with ideological stasis, privilege and whiteness with the future of humanity. Within the Hallorans' domestic ark, there are only so many spaces and only for the right kind of remnant. *The Sundial* therefore uses domestic culture to explore the

persistent myths of American national belonging, the divisions between insiders and outsiders, and the ways in which identity, both individual and collective, is often negatively constructed through exclusion and expulsion. These are through lines and thematics that appear across the House Trilogy. In *The Sundial*, they take on new life when placed alongside the actual architecture and domestic culture of the postwar period.

II. The Halloran Mansion and the Architecture of Anachronic Eclecticism

From its initial descriptions in Jackson's opening pages, the Halloran mansion is depicted as an embodiment of disjointed time, its architectural eclecticism gesturing at once toward the English country manor and its feudal past, the nouveau-riche imitations of the American Gilded Age, and the suburban houses of the postwar era. If its stately library, summerhouse, and man-made lake (*The Sundial* 8-9) are meant to evoke earlier traditions, then its "picture window" (100), electric dishwashers, and automatic coffeemaker (206) are decidedly mid-century. These styles and movements, moreover, exist on a continuum — the postwar house a miniature of the Gilded Age mansion, the Gilded Age mansion a replica of the English country manor. By embodying these styles simultaneously, the house exemplifies what might be called an architecture of anachronic eclecticism.[14] Jackson depicts this aesthetic as gothic, with the Halloran mansion not only haunted by the ghost of its founding patriarch but also the ghosts of the architectural past. Her obsessive descriptions of the house overwhelm the reader with

[14] Eclecticism, as an architectural movement, in fact thrived in the United States at the turn of the century, becoming one of the more dominant styles in both public and domestic architecture. This was due to two interrelated factors: first, the increased prosperity of American industry and its individual industrialists and, second, the way in which eclecticism recycled and hybridized the aristocratic signifiers of European architecture, precisely so as to mark America's newfound affluence and status. The Halloran mansion, as itself a Gilded Age home, can be read within this context, although its eclecticism is extreme, suggesting a tendency toward dissonant anachronism rather than the more harmonious aesthetic of Eclecticism proper. For more on American Eclecticism, see Walter Kidney's *The Architecture of Choice: Eclecticism in America, 1880-1930* (1974) and Frederick Platt's *America's Gilded Age, Its Architecture and Decoration* (1976).

architectural details culled from various bygone periods and styles, mimicking the compulsive and at times overwhelming revivalism of the mansion's confused aesthetic. Finally, the house embodies disordered temporality in yet another sense when it becomes the site of the family's apocalyptic prognostications, themselves deeply nostalgic and ideologically regressive. Hanging above the landing in the mansion's grand staircase is an inscription that asks, "*WHEN SHALL WE LIVE IF NOT NOW?*" (2). This question hangs ironically over Jackson's novel as well, just as the titular sundial that sits "badly off center" (10) in the estate's expansive grounds also suggests that, here, time is "off" or out of joint.

The sundial has an inscription, too, another ironic question: "WHAT IS THIS WORLD?" (10). This world, the reader quickly learns, is the personal creation of the first Mr. Halloran, the family's upstart patriarch who, a generation earlier, made a fortune and then built (as well as largely designed) the estate that preoccupies Jackson's story and its characters. In the opening pages of the novel, we are told that Mr. Halloran built his mansion with the intention of creating "his own world" (8), a world he then filled with all the status symbols of the aristocratic Old World. He demands that the house be "endlessly decorated and adorned," that it should "contain everything," that there be "a great deal of silver, a great deal of gold," the interiors to be "painted in soft colors with scenes of nymphs and satyrs," the grounds to include "swans" in an "ornamental lake," a "[hedge] maze," a "pagoda," and "a rose garden" (8). He sets his heart on the idea of a sundial and personally "select[s] the spot where it w[ill] go" (8), its off-centre placement implying his own manipulation of time. The house he builds, in other words, is not merely a monument to his newfound wealth and status, it is also the corrective symbol that rewrites his humble beginnings and personal history, a form of world building that allows him to turn back time and realign the family story with the signifiers of a dynastic legacy. As Bernice

Murphy argues, these types of houses reconfigure the generic codes of Old World wealth and status for new world American parvenus in search of class and standing; they are built by men like Mr. Halloran, "exemplars of American free enterprise, the new aristocracy in American life" ("The People of the Village" 114). In turn, the Halloran mansion belongs to an American literary tradition that dramatizes such upward mobility and what might be called its doomed aspirationalism, specifically as represented by prominently featured and deeply symbolic homes, from Silas Lapham's house on Beacon Street to Jay Gatsby's mansion in West Egg.[15]

Jackson taps into this tradition while also connecting the Halloran home to a much darker and even gothic version of the American dream and its rapaciousness. The mysterious source of Mr. Halloran's sudden fortune, which is never revealed, implies an origin story if not criminal then at least nefarious enough to be elided. His absent backstory recalls the robber barons of the Gilded Age and a brand of American self-invention more closely associated with ruthlessness and opportunism than individualism and opportunity. In order to realize his personal kingdom, he decimates the surrounding wilderness, his veritable army of architects, carpenters, and decorators erecting a vulgar monument to his mastery over nature. As Richard Pascal describes him, he is "a colonizer, carving out a personal empire within a space that has been transformed, through the power of brute wealth, into virgin land" ("New World Miniatures" 85). Once this process is complete, he "plunder[s] ruthlessly" the outside world in order to furnish his private estate with its countless "objects of beauty" (*The Sundial* 8). This, too, is a reference to the tycoons of the Gilded Age, men who toured Europe pilfering its works of art, its tapestries, and coats of armour, as well as its long history of architectural styles. Not only did they then bring back these objects and design features to fill their homes and influence their architectural

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[15] See William Dean Howells, *The Rise and Fall of Silas Lapham* (1885) and F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

eclecticism but, more importantly, they used them to signal their own inheritance of the Western tradition, its feudal past, and its rigid hierarchies. Such houses included the gaudy mansions that Jackson's own great-great-grandfather and great-uncle built for the railroad millionaires of late nineteenth-century San Francisco, as well as the private homes and country estates of families like the Vanderbilts and Astors.

In *The Sundial*, Jackson situates this architectural legacy within the literary lineage of the Architectural Gothic. Her novel conjures a patriarch and family seat that recall Manfred and Otranto, Montoni and Udolpho just as easily as the new aristocracy of the American Gilded Age and their palatial homes. In this way, she uses the tropes of the literary Gothic to invest the American past with its own historicity and hauntedness. At the same time, her novel references the American Gothic tradition as well. As always, there is the palpable influence of her two most obvious forebears, Poe and Hawthorne. And Mr. Halloran perhaps most closely resembles the eponymous patriarch from Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), a man who never properly appears in the text but haunts its proceedings, who carves his estate out of the American landscape using slave labour and according to mathematical specifications, and who fosters within his children a religiosity so puritanical it warps into murderous fanaticism. Mr. Halloran is similarly depicted as a man whose rapaciousness is matched only by his need for domination and control. Jackson describes him as a "methodical man" who conceives and constructs his estate as if it were "a temple to some minor mathematical god" (9). The rigidity of his specifications, with every detail laid out precisely and the house perfectly symmetrical (aside from the sundial, of course), is a suggested analogue for the stern and censorious values he espoused and continues to represent. When he was alive, his daughter-in-law, Orianna, knew well enough that women in his presence should treat him with "appreciation and docility" (10); when he returns from the dead

to visit his only daughter, Fanny, his appearance immediately follows a sexual fantasy she has repressed (23), his disembodied voice both comforting and hectoring her with the promise that he and his house will keep her safe: “Within the father there is no fear” (26), he creepily tells her.

These are motifs and themes that echo throughout Jackson’s “house” novels, with founding patriarchs and the houses they have built slowly becoming one and the same, their architectural obsessions and idiosyncrasies acting as physical representations for the haunting presence of their values and legacy. One of the ways Jackson rewrites this tradition is by leaning into the lurid and even tacky nature of these homes, particularly as they replicate and clumsily assimilate a hodgepodge of architectural features and styles. In doing so, she not only taps into the camp that the Gothic sometimes delightfully serves up but also the garishness of her own American architectural inheritance. In turn, she exposes, often with biting and sardonic humour, the violent and haunting insecurities of her self-serious and hypocritical patriarchs, insecurities their homes were meant to cover up.

The Halloran mansion is no exception. With its two hundred and twelve marble pillars propping up a Palladian balustrade (9), its garden grotto borrowed from sixteenth-century Italian Mannerism (168), and its castle-like tower transplanted from the Gothic Revival (15), Mr. Halloran’s house is an eclectic hybrid meant to assuage what the narrator calls his “first anxiety” — namely, that “if [something] existed he meant to have it” (168). This kind of bric-a-brac showiness brings to mind specific mansions of the Gilded Age. George Vanderbilt II’s Biltmore Estate, for example, may have served as one of Jackson’s models. An architectural monstrosity which is still the largest privately owned residence in the United States at an outstanding 135, 280 square feet of interior space, Biltmore, much like the Halloran mansion, was cobbled together out of the British country house, the French château, and the Italian palazzo. After

several tours through Europe, George Vanderbilt stuffed it to the brim with Old World artefacts and priceless works of art. Jackson's satire of the Halloran mansion's own ostentatious size, its mismatched eclecticism, and its appropriation of aristocratic codes echoes similar criticisms made by turn-of-the-century commentators about Biltmore. When Henry James visited the estate in 1905, he wrote to Edith Wharton that it was a "strange, colossal [and] heart-breaking house," so overwhelming in its proportions and profusion of styles that it was simply "indescribable" (qtd. in Dwight 133-134). "I can't go into it," James wrote. "*In effect*, [it's] like a gorgeous practical joke—but at one's own expense, after all, if one has to live in solitude in these league-long marble halls, & sit in alternate Gothic and Palladian cathedrals" (133-134).

The Halloran house reads like a practical joke, too, but one that, like James's estimation of Biltmore, becomes more and more "heart-breaking" as the novel progresses, representing the unbridled greed and social isolation that undergirds a much more distressing imaginative violence. Ultimately, *The Sundial*'s treatment of anachronic eclecticism satirizes an aesthetic garishness that stands in for a moral one as well, allowing Jackson to depict the postwar present as a worrisome echo of the American past and its continued obsession with an exclusionary commodity culture. And yet, to its inhabitants, the Halloran mansion is no less desirable because of this garishness. In fact, not only does Jackson's plot dramatize a vicious and even murderous feud over ownership of the home, her apocalyptic allegory elevates it from the figurative promised land of the American social climber to the eschatological Promised Land of the true believer. The two characters who represent these different understandings of the house, and who also take up the most room in both the novel and the mansion, are Orianna and Fanny. For both women, the pursuit of power and privilege involves yet another repetition of the past, just as it did for the first Mr. Halloran. Ironically, their respective visions for the house therefore

transform it once again into a space of temporal retreat and social withdrawal, a castle and shrine for the family's regressive and insular beliefs.

III. Cleaning House: American Millenarianism and Domestic Miniatures

Significantly, both Orianna and Fanny embody different facets of Mr. Halloran's legacy. While Orianna is the would-be successor to his "kingdom" and the monarchical self-conception that comes along with it, Fanny is the prophetess of his patriarchal puritanism, the daughter who founds a millenarian cult after being visited by his spirit. Part of the novel's satire is to show just how similar these two belief systems are, or at least how they pursue what amounts to the same thing: a purified and preordained future dynastically secured for and perpetuated by a chosen elite. These dynamics collapse into the space of the Halloran mansion and, more specifically, the feud over its ownership that preoccupies Orianna, Fanny, and much of Jackson's plot.

For Orianna, the Halloran mansion is a near-phantasmatic object of desire. Like her father-in-law, she comes from neither wealth nor family, and the house, with all its trappings of status and cultural capital, becomes the personal lodestar to all her ambitions and social climbing. In a flashback to her wedding night, she blithely tells her new husband she only married him for his father's house (11); in the present, following her son Lionel's death, with her husband now ill and confined to a wheelchair, she finally assumes control of it. Almost immediately, she announces a set of changes to the household's living arrangements. First, she banishes a trio of hangers-on: her granddaughter's governess, Miss Ogilvie; her own lover, Essex; and her daughter-in-law, Maryjane, the grieving widow. All of them are meant to leave the house the following day. Next, she decides that her sister-in-law, Aunt Fanny, will be permitted to stay, but only on the condition she move into the house's abandoned tower. Finally,

she announces that her ten-year-old granddaughter, Fancy, the new heir apparent, will come under her charge. As she puts it: "Fancy is mine, too, now…and I think to keep [her] with me" (16).

Orianna characterizes these changes as a bit of "housecleaning" (14), but they are clearly meant to consolidate her power and to assert her new role as the household's would-be monarch. Indeed, Jackson explicitly portrays Orianna as the ultimate fulfilment of her father-in-law's aristocratic pretensions. Symbolically, she is linked with Elizabeth I. Richard Pascal, for example, reminds us that "Oriana" was Elizabeth's nickname ("New World Miniatures" 98). He also draws our attention to the visual parallels between an early scene in Jackson's novel and the famous Armada portrait of Queen Elizabeth. In the portrait, Elizabeth is seen lightly caressing a globe of the earth, as if to suggest her command over it; in the novel, Orianna is depicted as "mov[ing] her fingers caressingly along [the word] WORLD" (*The Sundial* 41), as inscribed on the surface of the sundial ("New World Miniatures" 98). Meanwhile, Orianna's machinations echo those of the British royal family and its long history of bloody in-fighting. In the space of a few pages, she separates the infant heir apparent from her kin and draws her close; she imprisons the only other blood relative in a Tower; and she exiles a group of palace gossips and potential intriguers, all while refusing to address the open allegation she murdered her son in order to gain possession of the house. As if these indications were not enough, late in the novel she has a custom-made crown sent to the house and, on the eve of the apocalypse, insists on wearing it before the local townspeople, receiving them while seated in a "great chair" under "a golden canopy" (*The Sundial* 183). Representing the same social trajectory as her father-in-law, Orianna becomes closely associated with two important symbols within the house: the staircase and the sundial. If the former suggests her ascent to power by way of the murder of her son (and later,

her own fall, both literal and metaphoric), then the latter suggests her ability to reach into the past and rewrite her humble beginnings, just as the first Mr. Halloran had done.

The novel pits Orianna and her plan for the house against Fanny and her apocalyptic vision. And yet, as with Orianna, Fanny's conception of the Halloran mansion is nothing more than a retread of Mr. Halloran's legacy and values. After all, he is the source of her prophecy. Moreover, the vision he instills is not merely puritanical but explicitly Puritan, in both the religious and historical senses of the word. Indeed, the opening pages of the novel seem to collapse the American colonial backstory into the family crisis that initially besets the Halloran household. To everyone except Orianna, her changes are not so much "housecleaning" as they are a *housing crisis* — that is, a series of displacements and forced evictions. Allegorically, her exiles are then not unlike the Pilgrims who eventually colonized America, a group of outcasts persecuted by a "monarch" who forces them to search for a new home. When Fanny stumbles into breakfast the next morning and announces the first of her visions, she conveniently supplies the group with just such a home — a post-apocalyptic new world akin to the New World of America, another post-apocalyptic land supposedly destined for a chosen people. As Fanny's initial descriptions have it: "The house would be guarded during the night of destruction and at its end they would emerge safe and pure. They were charged with the future of humanity; when they came forth from the house it would be into a world clean and silent, their inheritance" (35-36). Beautifying the notion of a utopian future achieved through divine purification, Fanny's prophecy is not simply apocalyptic but millenarian in creed, placing herself and her followers on an ideological continuum with their colonial forebears.

In contrast to Orianna's "housecleaning," this vision is a much more extreme form of "cleaning house," purging the entire world of non-Hallorans and securing the family mansion as

both their ark and their bunker. In this way, Fanny speaks to the group's inherently classist and ultimately racist sense of elitism, validating it through their now preordained status as a chosen people. As John Parks notes, Jackson not only depicts the divisiveness of the apocalyptic imagination but its dehumanizing effects as well, for such an imagination "sees only itself as being worthy of survival and salvation" (87). In the end, the Hallorans are united only by way of everyone else's annihilation. Even Orianna eventually concedes she "cannot afford to ignore [Aunt Fanny]" (41). As S.T. Joshi writes, to her "it is of no consequence whether Fanny's prophecy is true or false; all she is concerned about is emerging on top when the new dispensation (if there is any) comes" (42).

Fanny's vision, in short, is an offer too good for the rest of the household to reject. By transposing her father's prophecy onto the space of the family home, she creates a cult of privilege that combines a moral and spiritual exceptionalism with private property and materialism. If this prophecy recalls the New World of the Puritan colonists, then it also brings to mind the new world of 1950s suburbia. Predicated on utopian and yet deeply divisive visions of the future, each involves a retreat into segregated enclaves reserved for a so-called chosen people, what Richard Pascal characterizes as "new world miniatures" (81-85). The novel's dual-directed time structure, at once reaching into the American past and gesturing toward its present, allows Jackson to indict what Darryl Hattenhauer terms "the central myths" behind these miniatures and their social isolation — from the persistent belief that America is "God's favourite nation" to its long-standing self-conception as a "new world" and "paradise" designated for God's chosen elite (137).

The architecture of the Halloran house is integral to this allegory. A garish mansion modelled on those of the Gilded Age, it embodies the acquisitive and fiercely individualist spirit

that continues to define an exalted national character — namely, the enterprising and ruthless man of success whose home is indeed his castle. It was this figure, and the dream of just such a private, castle-like home, that served as a model for much of the rhetoric and imagery behind the postwar housing boom and its values, from its exurbanizing impulse to its domestic introversion, from its patriarchal family structure to its conspicuous consumption.[16] While the Halloran estate may not look like the typical suburban home one would have found in, say, Levittown, it instantiates an architecture of privacy, insularity, and excess which is fundamentally anti-social and divisive and which, in the novel, serves as both a precursor and allegorical reflection of the postwar milieu and its domestic culture.[17] The Halloran family's prophecies are then connected to a social and domestic impulse that echoes throughout American history and, as the novel suggests, is necessarily bound up with the home's lingering patriarchal figure. Indeed, in *The Sundial*, Mr. Halloran and his ghostliness represent the mansion's (as well as the novel's) own timelessness, the way in which the house spectrally references multiple historical pasts in addition to hypothetical futures, all while insisting on a domestic introversion that is socially insulated and temporally recursive.

After all, there is nothing new about the new world Aunt Fanny promises. Believing she will emerge unscathed from this world to walk forward into the next — what she later describes as "the loveliest of all fresh beginnings" (*The Sundial* 108) — she invokes the apocalypse only to reaffirm and preserve the wealth and privilege she has enjoyed in *this* world. Her vision, supplied

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[16] See also Pascal, "New World Miniature," p. 85.

[17] Angela Hague makes a very similar point, one worth quoting in full here. She delineates the same link by turning to historian Elaine Tyler May's descriptions of the postwar suburban house and its ideological introversion, writing: "Although the fenced opulence of the Halloran estate may appear to have little in common with the typical suburban home of the 1950s, May's characterization of the new ranch-style suburban house of the time as offering 'a sense of security as well as privatized abundance,' seeming to 'evoke protection' while 'exuding isolation, privacy, and containment,' precisely describes the Halloran house in *The Sundial*" (87).

by her father's ghost and presented as her inheritance, merely extends the values and beliefs of the first Mr. Halloran, just as Orianna's vision is simply the continuation of this same patriarch's phony nobility and excessive materialism. Jackson therefore suggests the historical repetition of national myths and hegemonic codes via the gothic return of the heteropatriarchal structure. As with all hauntings, there is the sense that the house itself compels this return. Both a literal and symbolic structure, the house all but conjures its *paterfamilias*, a dynamic that becomes central to Jackson's House Trilogy and its poetics of architectural haunting. Like nearly all of the female characters in the trilogy, the women of *The Sundial* must decide what to do with this ghost — how to reckon with it, how to live with it, whether or not to exorcise it, or even to invite it in.

IV. Haunting the Patriarchal Home: From the Gingerbread House to the Dollhouse

It is safe to say that, in the case of *The Sundial*, the women in the house use Mr. Halloran's ghost to their own advantage, complicating Jackson's depiction of female empowerment. Pursuing a form of domestic enfranchisement that reproduces their own class and racial privilege, the women in the house constitute an increasingly ambiguous portrait of elite white women and domestic space, especially when considered against the historical backdrop of the suburban home and its own constructions of gender and racialized identity. This ambiguity is partially explored through a set of deeply symbolic domestic fantasies and interiors, from Orianna's daydream of a gingerbread house to the Harriet Stuart house-museum, from Fanny's secret apartment to Fancy's dollhouse. These spaces, all of which revisit the novel's interest in the miniature, the replica, and the world within a world, are ambivalent visions of female self-sufficiency and resistance. They are also, each in their own way, a kind of response or shadow image to the Halloran mansion and what it represents, alternative visions of domesticity which

have been cast into the background and therefore rendered spectral. Haunted by the patriarchal legacy, they also haunt this same paradigm in their own right.

In Orianna's daydream, for instance, she pictures "a little small house of [her] own" (102) deep in the woods and surrounded by darkness, a hermit's hut where she reads alone by a fire at night. Evoking rustic simplicity and self-reliance, her ideal home could not be more different from her father-in-law's mansion and its conspicuous consumption. The only objects she owns are the ones she needs: "one cup, one plate, one spoon, one knife" (102). As she slips further into sleep, however, this dream quickly curdles into a nightmare. In an echo of "Hansel and Gretel," a boy and a girl show up seeking food and help. They presume that whoever lives here will be only too "glad to give [them] shelter" (102), and, claiming the house is made of candy, they begin eating away at it without asking. When Orianna protests the destruction of her home, the children dismiss her as an "old witch" (102), a barren, unmotherly figure. Miming a saccharine maternal voice, she traps the children inside and sits in the sun while listening to their screams (103).

The whole sequence rejects the Halloran legacy for which Orianna so brutally competes. In place of a domestic vision where home is a monument to the male ego and family is an oppressive tool of the same, Orianna imagines a refuge beyond the familial-patriarchal structure, a space of self-reflection and independence. When this space is threatened, instead of inhabiting the role of a tyrannical patriarch she assumes that of a witch, a figure that throughout Jackson's work stands in for female creativity and empowerment. At the same time, the nightmare also conveys Orianna's tortured anxieties, her deep-seated maternal ambivalence and visceral rage. The violence she metes out to the children is an uncomfortable echo of her real-life infanticide of Lionel, and if the dream dramatizes the legitimate horror of forced maternalism and the

reproduction of mothering, then it also depicts the horror of the monstrous mother, a figure that preoccupies Jackson's fiction and returns as a voracious force in *The Haunting of Hill House*.

Many of these same motifs appear in the Harriet Stuart story (70-74). Here, Jackson uses a thinly veiled fictionalization of Lizzie Borden to probe the ambiguities of female violence, especially when it erupts within the family home. Accused of murdering her entire family with a hammer at the age of fifteen, Harriet was tried and acquitted, living out her days in the same house where the crimes occurred. When she was alive the notoriety of the case turned her into something of an urban legend and in the present it continues to lend the village a macabre cachet, with the Stuart home now a museum and tourist destination. The story dramatizes the double-edged nature of essentialized notions of gender while also calling into relief the misogyny of the patrilineal class system. We are told Harriet had two younger brothers, both of whom, despite her seniority, would have passed her over in the line of inheritance. Instead, the murders have "put an abrupt end to the Stuart family tree" (71) and Harriet takes over the family home. At the same time, Jackson implies that Harriet benefits from certain assumptions about her gender and class. Much like Borden, Harriet is acquitted not because of a lack of evidence but a lack of imagination, the townspeople simply incapable of believing that a fifteen-year-old girl could commit such grisly crimes. Harriet, in turn, appears to instrumentalize these assumptions. In her version of events, she claims a mysterious "tramp" snuck in through one of the windows and committed the murders, although this man was never found and there is scant evidence he existed at all. In fact, Jackson leaves very little doubt that Harriet is guilty. The scapegoating of an imaginary transient is then a deft deflection, one that taps into class anxiety and its demonizing stereotypes. Moreover, while this figment is not explicitly racialized in Jackson's

text, Harriet's claims conjure the spectre of the "imaginary Black man" so often invoked in cases of white female crime.

The story therefore explores the morally compromised nature of Harriet's actions and claims while also critically examining the place (if any) that female resistance is allowed to occupy both within the family home and, more broadly, patriarchal culture. Anticipating the Blackwood sisters in Jackson's later novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, Harriet is an "outsider" figure, someone the villagers use to negatively define themselves. They make a legend out of her, but if this legend memorializes her actions it also diminishes them, reducing the murders and their complexity to salacious gossip and rumour. This is a way to neutralize Harriet's violence and the recalcitrance it signifies. The transformation of the Stuart home into a museum and the tourist industry that springs up around it are the ultimate realizations of this impulse. The house-museum arrests time and transfixes the domestic interior, objectifying Harriet's actions precisely so they can be held up and publicly abjected. With its explanatory plaques and ogling tourists, the museum turns female violence into nothing more than a sordid curiosity, evading its hard questions and ignoring its root causes.

Jackson revisits the museum and its manipulations of time in her depiction of Fanny's secret apartment (157-162), another staged and curated domestic interior that ambivalently memorializes a female figure — in this case, Anna Halloran, the long-dead family matriarch. The apartment, tucked away in an abandoned attic of the Halloran mansion, is an exact replica of Fanny's childhood home, the "bleak and uncomfortable" (157) top floor of a two-family duplex where the Hallorans lived before moving into their mansion. If, downstairs, Mr. Halloran used the trappings of aristocratic luxury to suggest his inheritance of the Western tradition, then, up in the attic, his daughter has restored the family's true history by putting their actual heirlooms on

display. Here, the table covers are “imitation velvet” (158), the cabinets “imitation mahogany” (160). An old box labelled “work clothes” (161) and a row of books comprising Mr. Halloran’s “mail-order education” (159) in turn suggest how keenly he wished to escape the class designation of these furnishings and keepsakes. To Fanny, however, they summon the bygone world of her mother. Looking at an old kitchen cabinet, she remembers its built-in flour sifter and watching Anna bake and cook, and how afterward she would be charged with washing the dishes and cutlery herself; she remembers the feel of the silverware in her hands and the way her mother taught her to place each piece carefully back in the drawer (160). In short, the apartment is a shrine to Anna and her maternal presence within the home, conjuring family traditions redolent of togetherness, domestic work, and the tactile value of things.

And yet, while the apartment certainly memorializes Anna, in another sense it “ghettoizes” her as well, removing her memory from the Halloran house proper and cordoning it off in an ancillary and near-spectral space.[18] In a key scene, Fanny invites her grandniece Fancy up to the apartment in order to foster, in her words, “a kind of continuity” (163). She clearly sees the apartment as a way to pass down certain feminine if not matriarchal values, and yet rather than modeling these values within the house itself, she has oddly hidden them away, relegating them, quite literally, to the dusty attic. Her replica is a strange, heterotopic space integral to the rest of the house only in its instantiation of “Otherness.” At one point, she describes it as her “doll house” (163) and demands that she and Fancy play a game: Fancy will pretend to be a young Fanny while Fanny will pretend to be a young Anna. They both must remain completely quiet and still while an imaginary Mr. Halloran studies his books and, in another room, an imaginary Richard — Fanny’s brother — studies his lessons (163-164). The game effectively

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[18] While not explicitly gothic per se, the apartment brings to mind *Jane Eyre* and by extension the trope of “the woman in the attic.”

transforms Fanny and Fancy into a pair of dolls, suggesting the way in which the dollhouse, as a symbolic structure, is internalized by women, socializing them into an understanding of the domestic interior and their so-called "place" within it. For Fanny, this is the kind of "continuity" the apartment ultimately represents. Even downstairs she plays the role of a doll, where for all intents and purposes she is her father's puppet, parroting his divisive prophecies and espousing his patriarchal insularity.

Fancy, of course, has her own dollhouse, a miniature replica of the Halloran mansion. The game she plays with it, however, could not be more different from her aunt's. Whereas Aunt Fanny sees the dollhouse as a chance to play a doll, Fancy sees it as a chance to play God, moving the dolls around, determining their actions, and controlling their environment. As she tells Fanny in an earlier conversation: "I have my doll house…And all the little dolls…They fit exactly into the chairs and beds…When I put them to bed they have to go to bed" (17-18). For Fancy, the dollhouse merely rehearses her eventual inheritance of the mansion. "When my grandmother dies all *this* is going to belong to me," she says. "I am going to smash my doll house. I won't need it anymore" (18). Later, after Fancy's teenage cousin Gloria arrives on an unplanned visit and joins the group, the two young women talk about the dollhouse once again. Gloria compares it to the outside world, what she characterizes as one big dollhouse of artificiality, conformism, moral vacuity, and conspicuous consumption (166-167). Her comparison is a transparent critique of postwar society, its own houses of ticky tacky, its cookie-cutter normativity, its rampant consumerism, and, of course, its gender scripts. As Gloria puts it: "I wouldn't like being a doll in a dollhouse" (166). It's a salient point, but like Aunt Fanny, she appears to have misunderstood Fancy's interest in the dollhouse and the game it allows her to

play. After all, Fancy is not Fanny's heir but Orianna's — why be a doll when you can be a queen?

Jackson returns to the dollhouse throughout the novel, and in many ways it effectively encapsulates the ambiguities and ambivalences of these other (and "Othered") domestic interiors, especially when it comes to women and power within the family home. In the end, these interiors — from the gingerbread house to the dollhouse — are a way to posit female interiority itself, specifically as it struggles to exist "outside" of a patriarchal "inside" — in other words, to move "inside-out," as Jackson suggested the House Trilogy would do. The frustrations of this process, and in particular the fact that neither female subjectivity nor female resistance has a place (or room) of its own, inevitably lead to eruptions of misdirected rage and violence, both physical and imaginative: infanticide, familicide, or, as is the case in many of these examples, the reproduction of patriarchal structures in all but name. Indeed, as Christiane Farnan has recently argued, *The Sundial* might be read in part as a cautionary tale directed at postwar women and the burgeoning women's movement, satirizing a character like Orianna as "a woman who molds her brand of matriarchy in the cast of the patriarchy she overthrew" (138). If these dynamics — as Farnan, Angela Hague, and other critics have suggested — are linked to Jackson's critique of the 1950s patriarchal home and its insulated suburban lifestyle, then they are also tied to that same domestic ideology's inherently classist and racialized construction of white womanhood. As the novel progresses and it becomes an increasingly scathing portrait of postwar domestic introversion, it is important to remember how the Halloran family's own divisive insularity intersects with Jackson's ambivalent portrait of the elite white women who populate and control her fictional mansion.

V. The Introverted Postwar House: Prophecy, Consumerism, and Insularity

If Mr. Halloran's prophecy involves a temporal retreat into the past, then it also involves a spatial retreat inward, a withdrawal into the private home that is both physically and ideologically insular. Jackson's novel depicts a gradual but ultimately total domestic introversion, one that directly parallels the "inward turn" of postwar domestic culture. Notably, this inward turn can also be traced to a prophecy: what design historian Monica Penick has called the "prophecy" of the postwar single-family house ("The Style War").[19] As both the wartime promise and the postwar dream, this prophecy was met with a level of expectancy and anticipation difficult to convey. Appearing non-stop throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s within the pages of home decorating magazines, at design fairs, and in model showrooms, the "Home of Tomorrow" or "House of the Future" became nothing less than what architectural historian Andrea Vesentini calls "the civic monument of a nation" (57). More than any other symbol of postwar culture, the single-family dwelling signalled the collective values of normative American life: family, individualism, consumerism, and privacy. By way of these principles, it enshrined the notion of a national identity that was prohibitively white, heteronormative, patriarchal, and class conscious.

The Hallorans are an exaggerated embodiment of these ideals, and their increasing insularity at once caricatures and illuminates the ideological motivations behind postwar introversion. Almost immediately following Fanny's first vision, they begin to close off the estate, barricading most of its doors and windows, fortifying its perimeter wall, and stocking up

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[19] Contemporaneous commentators similarly characterized the speculation surrounding the postwar house as prophetic. To take only one example, architects George Nelson and Henry Wright, writing in 1945, expressed exasperation with the era's widespread prediction and prognostication. "For years," they wrote, "the crystal-gazers have been telling us what tomorrow's house will be like. We have no crystal ball" (8). Nelson and Wright were apparently exceptions to an industry rule. By then, architects, merchant builders, and real-estate developers had transformed the postwar house into a prophecy that dominated the American imagination both during and after the war. See Nelson and Wright, *Tomorrow's House: How to Plan Your Post-War Home Now* (1945).

on household goods. This process is ongoing, and, in the meantime, they expand their ranks. In addition to Gloria, they take in Mrs. Willow, an old acquaintance from Orianna's past, and her two adult daughters, Julia and Arabella, as well as a man they call the Captain, a stranger from the village recruited to increase the number of men in the house (that is, to ensure the repopulation of the new world). The group also briefly considers joining forces with a rival doomsday cult, the True Believers, but when their leader describes their own prophecy of spacemen descending from the sky and whisking them away from their homes (and all their worldly possessions), Orianna balks. They have "no respect for private property" (*The Sundial* 93), she says, kicking them out and demanding the gates are locked and the wall is patrolled (94). She even tells Essex that if any of them comes back he should "inflict the most direct bodily retribution" (94).

The scene establishes an important connection between an ideology of private property and a resultant insularity, suggesting that anyone who rejects the family's personal creed will be barred from their house and excluded from the new world. This dynamic explicitly parodies the class-conscious consumerism of the postwar house, as well as the pervasive anti-communist rhetoric of American mid-century culture in general. In the contexts of the Red Scare and the McCarthy hearings, consumerism was a deeply political form of identity construction, signalling the pro-capitalist values required for national belonging. As Dianne Harris writes, "To buy was, in effect, to be American" (160). The era's shelter press — the home decorating publishing industry that reached the peak of its popularity during this time — was instrumental in reinforcing this message. A notable example is Elizabeth Gordon, the powerful editor of *House Beautiful*, who, for over two decades, wielded her magazine's influence to propagate a polemical America First message, one that stoked Cold War tensions and stood in fierce opposition to what

she saw as an encroaching socialist ethos. At times, Gordon's transposition of these politics onto the space of the American home bordered on the ridiculous. In her most famous editorial, for example, "The Threat to the Next America," published in 1953, just five years before Jackson's novel, she railed against the lack of storage space in the typical postwar house, arguing that such a lack was a dangerous carry-over from European modernism and its motto of "less is more." Minimalism meant less spending amongst American consumers. If homeowners were truly capitalist, Gordon reasoned, then they required more built-ins and more storage space for more accumulation — anything less was un-American (Penick, *Tastemaker* 115-128).

Jackson satirizes the Hallorans as a cult of conspicuous consumption in this vein, one whose ideological commitment to private property is divisive and whose introversion increases in direct proportion to its accumulated goods and commodities. The novel includes very few scenes that take place outside of the Halloran mansion, but those that do almost exclusively depict the group going into town to shop, stocking up on goods precisely so they can go back to the house and leave it less often. This was a living pattern explicitly promoted by postwar domestic culture. As Harris writes, the design literature of the time "insisted that home was better than anyplace else, and the goal was to leave it as seldom as possible" (305). As part of the group's preparations, Fanny places orders with several "supply houses" in faraway cities, sending out for a dizzying array of goods, what the narrator calls an "exceedingly odd assortment[t] of material[s]" (*The Sundial* 105). In an echo of Gordon's famous editorial, when the first truckloads of these provisions arrive, Fanny complains of a lack of storage, not knowing where to put everything (105). Exemplifying the novel's cutting symbolism, she directs the deliverymen to the library, where the family's books are quickly replaced by cans of spaghetti and bottles of olives. "A library is really a very good place to store things," Essex, a librarian,

ironically says. “I had never realized it before” (107). The scene takes an even darker turn when Orianna orders the leftover books to be burned, each member of the household dutifully chipping in, and, without objection, taking them in baskets to the barbecue pit (107).[20]

The novel suggests that insularity and introversion breed exactly this type of mindlessness, with the Halloran mansion becoming a hotbed of divisive prophecies and projections. Like the prophecy of the postwar house promoted by architects, merchant builders, and the shelter press, the Hallorans’ own prophecy imagines a future in which they want for nothing, they barely work, and they rarely leave the house. These projections coalesce into an idyllic vision of a pastoral and classless society, not unlike the original vision of the postwar house and its predominantly suburban landscape. The novel indicts these parallel visions as blinkered and naïve, wilfully blind to their own dynamics of racialized privilege and class conflict. When Maryjane imagines a utopian future in which “there are to be no more differing classes” (50), and when Fanny says that in the new world everyone’s “wants [will be] supplied from nature” (108), their predictions eerily echo those of suburban architects and planners. As architecture critic Clifford Clark writes: “[T]he postwar housing boom was part of a one-dimensional frame of mind that stressed the possibility of creating a perfect society” (qtd. in Beuka 5). This possibility was directly tied to housing design and landscape. For architects and developers, the supposed appeal of suburbia was, as Robert Beuka writes, its “prospect of perfectability” (5). The idea was to create a new world, one in which homogenized architecture and the exurban landscape not only reflected but also instilled egalitarian principles and small-

[20] The scene seems to refer to the postwar controversy surrounding communist texts and book-burning incidents. Jackson and her husband Stanley Hyman were in fact investigated by the FBI for alleged Communist activity, an investigation that started when a carton of their books broke open during a move and one of the movers happened to see texts by Stalin, Howard Fast, Earl Browder, and others, later reporting Jackson and Hyman to the government (Franklin 311).

town rural values. If these plans "bespoke a desire to elide the very notion of difference" (5), as Beuka notes, then they were only successful insofar as creating the seeming appearance of classlessness and social harmony. In reality, the postwar suburb was a world defined and organized entirely *according* to difference: a hyper class-conscious pressure cooker for conformity; a stifling domestic trap for housewives and homemakers; and, of course, a racialized enclave that expressly sought, in the words of Adrienne Brown, "to expel and export blackness from its borders" (181). There was then a considerable gap between the "perfect society" envisioned by suburbia's architects and planners and the postwar world they in fact created.

There is a similar gap between the utopian world envisioned by the Hallorans and the actual world for which they plan and prepare. When Orianna questions the need for all of Fanny's provisions, citing the bounteous "world of plenty" that awaits them, Fanny responds that "[e]ven in a world of plenty…you could hardly imagine that we would process our own olives" (*The Sundial* 107). "I shall continue a lady" (107), she adds. Indeed, as soon as the group realizes that eradicating the class system also means eradicating their place within it, their preparations change. As Fanny explains: "[I]n this finer world of ours you do not suppose that we, you and I, will work with our hands? Surely you appreciate the need for a…what shall I call it?…a servant class? Who, after all, are to be the hewers of wood and the fetchers of water?" (118-119). The apparent need for a faceless proletariat — not unlike the all but invisible servants who presently maintain the Halloran house — more than slightly tweaks the family's original vision of a rustic and egalitarian idyll.

The result is a confused if not contradictory set of prophecies that are directly tied to the mansion and its evolving associations. While on the one hand the group continues to wax poetic about a bucolic paradise in which they live out their days "in the fields and woods" having "no

thought of houses" at all, on the other they talk about hoarding their family's collectibles, their jewels and *objets d'art*, as pseudo-religious tokens, putting them on display, and converting the mansion into what Fanny calls an "altar" and "shrine of the gods" (109) — namely, to the Hallorans themselves.[21] The house and the insularity it protects are central to these aggrandizing plans and predictions. As Fanny says, rationalizing the mansion's preservation: "we must not let a sense of beauty vanish from the world" (109). Orianna is more direct, telling the group: "The rest of you may live in trees…[but] I will *not* leave this house in my lifetime" (110).

These scenes exemplify the way in which the family revises their original prophecy, practising a form of prognostication that shapes (rather than predicts) the world they want (rather than a world foretold). This dynamic parallels postwar domestic culture and its own visions and predictions. As architectural historian Andrew Shanken notes, the home-front and postwar years were a highly anticipatory period, one that mitigated the anxiety of an emerging new world with visions of the future and a widespread culture of planning. This culture tended to be regressive, sentimentalizing the past and actively maintaining its divisions and hierarchies, all while lending its plans and designs a spurious aura of prophecy — a process Shanken calls "romanc[ing] the nostalgic future" (17; 15-58). The Hallorans, too, find themselves in a profound state of anxious anticipation, waiting out the days in what Fanny calls "a pocket of time" (*The Sundial* 39) and what Essex complains is an existence that has lost all reality. "We are…gathered here waiting," he says, "and yet we have no way to prepare; this is not real, what we are doing now—we have

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[21] It may be of interest to note that a "shrine" is more or less what the actual Gilded Age mansions that Jackson references were in fact turned into, a process that started just as she was writing her novel. The Biltmore Estate, for example, was converted into a museum in 1956, garnering national headlines just two years before *The Sundial*'s publication. As with The Breakers in Rhode Island and other turn-of-the-century mansions across the country, Biltmore became a tourist destination, with visitors flocking to ogle the splendour and ostentation of storied American families like the Vanderbilts and Astors, veritable "gods" in the pantheon of American capital and industry. Later in the novel, Gloria says that in the future people will come to the Halloran mansion "on a kind of pilgrimage" (110), looking over its furniture and paintings; her comment echoes what was just then happening to the real-life mansions of the American Gilded Age.

no function, beyond waiting" (58). The group solves this problem by supplementing Fanny's vision with visions of their own — what Mrs. Willow describes as firming up the "who, what, where, when, and how" (63) of the original prophecy — predicting the future themselves and even inventing their own séance-like ritual of divination.

Unsurprisingly, their visions only further entrench the old order, advancing the group's own interests and placing themselves once again at the top of a racialized class system. As they indulge in these predictions, Jackson develops her most salient architectural conceit: the window. As both a projective and reflective surface, the window allows Jackson to explore the way in which postwar visions of the future merely reflected back the dominant culture already in place. Windows were also one of the most fiercely debated design features of postwar architecture, stirring up concerns about domestic privacy and the reversibility of the gaze that were necessarily bound up with prevalent anxieties of race and class. Ultimately, Jackson's satire of mid-century domestic culture coheres in her extensive use of the window, depicting the postwar house as a regressive prophecy, one in which the era's ideological introversion is both enacted and enshrined.

VI. Reflections on the Picture Window: Race and Postwar Housing Design

The Sundial almost obsessively returns to the motif of the window, an architectural figure Jackson exploits to considerable effect. In nearly every scene of prophecy, windows make prominent appearances, serving either as the means through which the Hallorans glimpse the future or as a reminder of their narcissistic insularity. In an early sequence involving Gloria and Mrs. Willow, for example, Jackson establishes an important connection between windows, prophetic visions, and the group's fear of outsiders. "You are looking through a window," Mrs.

Willow says to Gloria, "a strange window because it looks out onto a world you have never seen before" (65). In fact, Gloria is looking at a mirror, one Mrs. Willow has just smeared with olive oil. Remembering a game from girlhood, Mrs. Willow says that by staring into the mirror a virgin can see into the future. In the background, the rest of the group looks on expectantly. The only thing stranger than the game itself is that it works. In quick-moving glimpses, Gloria sees the white, fiery destruction of the surrounding landscape, followed by the sight of people, rows and rows of them standing outside the Halloran house, their "eyes all looking [in]" (66) at those sheltered inside. "They want something" (66), Gloria says. Slowly, as they move closer, they begin to frighten her — "eyes, eyes all looking" (66), she exclaims. In a panic, she tells the others to "shut the window against them" (66), ending the vision abruptly.

With its rows of people looking in at the Hallorans in turn looking in at them, the scene plays on the reversibility of the gaze. This dynamic might even be turned on Jackson's 1958 audience: peering through the window of her allegorical novel, her readers may have seen a mirror image of their own time and place, a world obsessed with not merely envisioning the future but also predicting (and ensuring) who that future would include and exclude. As the novel progresses, the mirror/window becomes the group's preferred method of visionary experience and each one of Gloria's successive visions repeats the original sequence: a bucolic world seemingly purged and purified of people, the Halloran mansion the only thing still standing, and then, slowly, the emerging sight of others, first in the distance and then crowding around the house trying to get in (65-67; 112-116). These visions recall the divisive and deeply racialized domestic culture of Jackson's time, particularly when it comes to glass architecture, the penetrating gaze of outsiders, the suburban landscape view, and, finally, the suburb itself as a bucolic and racially "purified" new world. In her visions, Gloria can see clearly certain members

of the Halloran group as they frolic in their pastoral paradise, and yet the people who clamour for shelter outside the mansion remain indistinct, only vaguely human — "they're all like shadows" (115), she says.

Jackson's descriptions of these "shadows" and their prying eyes allude to the hotly debated issue of privacy within mid-century domestic architecture. Played out in the popular shelter magazines of the time — many of which had been publishing Jackson's writing for over a decade — these debates were not limited to residential design. Within postwar discourse, privacy was what Dianne Harris calls a "racializing concept" (119), one the shelter press deployed as a normalizing figure to denote respectability and purity. In June 1950, when *House Beautiful* announced the year's "3 Big Ideas" in an editorial, privacy was first among them. Accompanying the article was an illustration that visually echoes Gloria's fearful description of "eyes, eyes all looking" (*The Sundial* 66): a disembodied eye, uncannily large and darkly shadowed, only partly obscured by a high wooden fence (Harris 112). Images such as these were aligned with the era's broader culture of domestic introversion and its ideological underpinnings. Along with images of whiteness and their connection to quiet, tidy, and sanitary homes, privacy was a rhetorical device within the domestic literature of the time, "a strategy for articulating and asserting specific values that were linked to racial, class, and sexual identities" (113).[22]

Gloria's visions, moreover, suggest an important connection between the interiority of the house and the way in which it manipulates the outside world via the window: only from behind the window can the exterior landscape (and whoever appears within it) be positioned,

[22] For an in-depth exploration of the 1950s shelter press and its ideological concerns, see Monica Penick's 2017 book, *Tastemaker*. As Penick notes, the editors of these publications "were surely not blind to the postwar practices of gender and racial discrimination, suburban segregation, or class divisions…[A]s a group, they perpetuated the idea of a sanitized America" (26). Many of Jackson's stories and humor pieces appeared within the pages of these magazines, including *Ladies' Home Journal*, *House and Garden*, and *Good Housekeeping* (Franklin 169, 172, and 278). Jackson would have had first-hand knowledge of the shelter press and its ideological rhetoric, let alone the pervasive domestic culture promoted by these magazines in general.

framed, distanced, shut out, or visually consumed. This, too, echoes the architectural debates of Jackson's era. When it came to issues of privacy, for example, there was no greater defining nor intensely contested feature of postwar architecture than the picture window — the large, sometimes floor-to-ceiling or wall-to-wall viewfinder that brought the outside in. Adapted from the glass architecture of European masters like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, the American picture window was meant to signal postwar suburbia's forward-looking values via transparency and openness. These same notions, however, created a visual fluidity associated with surveillance and invasion, and for the American homeowner in the postwar suburbs, practical concerns about privacy soon became ideological concerns about spatial purity and racialized identity construction.[23]

In *The Sundial*, Jackson calls attention to the Hallorans's own "picture window," yet another anachronistic feature of the house, which, revealingly, "look[s] out over the sundial" and dramatically shatters during one of the group's incantatory prophecies (100). Her readers would have recognized the term immediately. Not only was the picture window a near-ubiquitous feature of the postwar house, it was also a prominent fixture of popular culture, entering the collective consciousness through films like Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) and novels like Richard Yates's *Revolutionary Road* (1961). It became so synonymous with postwar domesticity, in fact, it even served as a shorthand for suburban life in the titles of two of the era's most famous (and critical) books on the subject — Bernard Rudofsky's *Behind the Picture Window* (1955) and John Keats's *The Crack in the Picture Window* (1956). Jackson's readers would have then associated her fictional mansion with the architectural trends and design debates

[23] Architectural historians Dianne Harris, Andrea Vesentini, Sandy Isenstadt, and Margaret Maile Petty all discuss postwar glass architecture and the picture window as related to racialized anxiety, the gaze of outsiders, and, more specifically, the construction of race via postwar housing design and windows. See Harris, pp. 111-118; Vesentini, pp. 135-167; Isenstadt, pp. 244-268; and Petty, pp. 45-63.

of their own postwar moment. More pointedly, as the Hallorans specifically invoke windows as their means of prophetic vision, and as so many of their prophecies enact a fear of outsiders — with “shadowed” people peering into the house and even attempting to breach its boundaries — her audience would have recognized a set of associations tying together the era’s integration of glass architecture, its anxieties regarding privacy, and the distinctly racialized nature of these fears, especially as they pertained to the segregationist practices of the postwar suburb (itself the subject of new world visions and prophecies).

In the novel, the Hallorans assuage their own similarly prejudiced fears by shutting out the world and burrowing ever further into their private estate. Several characters at various points mention the need to ramp up the house’s “barricades” (115, 142), from heightening the perimeter wall (136) to covering all the windows (100, 212). When Orianna drafts a set of “instructions” for the group, the first two rules are: “No person is to leave the big house, *for any reason whatsoever*…[and]…Under no circumstances is any person from outside to *enter* the house” (171). This increased introversion echoes the architectural evolution of postwar housing design. Rather than having picture windows and window walls look out onto the street or into a neighbour’s yard, architects began to blunt the reversibility of the gaze by building extensive privacy walls, perimeter fencing, and recessed hedges (Harris 137). The home’s interior also changed. As Vesentini writes: “Dining and living rooms were placed in the back to allow for an almost windowless front maximizing privacy…The house was being folded onto itself in a process of introversion…through which the interior was distanced from the exterior” (67).

These changes not only altered what windows framed but also what their new vistas represented and signified. Homeowners now saw only a self-reflecting image of domestic life, their gaze diverted from the world outside and redirected back into the private domain of their

own homes and gardens. It was in this sense that, for many contemporary commentators, the picture window became less a window and more a mirror (Vesentini 140-141; Rudofsky 195). This dynamic speaks to the era's rigid notions about what was permitted inside (and what had to be kept out of) the postwar home and its suburban enclave — which is to say, it speaks to architecture's material incorporation of the era's exclusionary domestic values. According to the domestic guidelines of the time, "the exterior could enter the house only as a projection of one's subjectivity, a mirror of the interior on which the viewer retained full control, as one would on a carefully landscaped backyard with no unplanned intrusion" (Vesentini 141).

In *The Sundial*, Gloria also looks through a window that is in fact a mirror. This window/mirror reflects (and projects) her family's privilege, opening out onto what is essentially a private and "carefully landscaped backyard," a bucolic new world purified and purged of other people; in turn, when this vision is disrupted by the "unplanned intrusion" of so-called "shadowed" others, she merely closes the window, shuts them out, and retreats into the family's introverted house. The window/mirror is then itself a frame through which the novel captures the blinkered vision of the postwar suburb and its architecture, from its process of visually privatizing interior and exterior domestic space to its self-reflecting racial homogeneity. Jackson therefore uses the architectural conceit of the window to develop the novel's broader allegory of "white flight" as itself a planned and projected retreat into a private and supposedly "purified" new world. As architectural historian Sandy Isenstadt writes: "What was looked over was property, which is defined in legal terms as the right to exclude others. Replaying the flight from the city, the landscape view idealized in picture windows was a literalization of social distance" (255-256). A useful distinction here is one Vesentini makes between "open space" and "spaciousness" (60-63). While merchant builders and the shelter press spoke in terms of literal

expansiveness and physical room, the real draw of the suburbs was its erasure of so-called "urban" presences, the way in which the escapist suburban dream freed up "space" for normative identity construction by exporting people of colour and lower-income families from its borders. "Open space" was then a kind of translation or euphemism for what was really being promoted and sold: "voided space" (60). "Color and class were made invisible," Vesentini writes, "…by ensuring that the outer landscape of the new suburban territory was marked by human absence" (61).

By envisioning themselves within the pristine landscape of a post-apocalyptic Promised Land, the Hallorans perform a similar erasure — in their case, one that necessitates the absence of literally everyone else. As several characters remark throughout the text, the coming world they envisage will be "wiped clean and bare," with, as Fanny says, "no sign that it has ever harbored anything living except ourselves" (*The Sundial* 108). The images with which she embellishes this new world — of life "in the fields and woods…under a kindly sun and a gentle moon" (109) — are ones of nature emptied and pacified, and as such they look backward, not forward, to a distinctly American past, to the nostalgia of the New World as "nature's nation" and to the idealized fiction of America's "wide-open spaces." This is not merely a nostalgia for a certain type of American landscape but rather a nostalgia for a certain type of American subjecthood. As critic and novelist Jess Row writes, in a country that has been "shaped by colonization, enslavement, and racialized capitalism…few places remain empty by accident" (105). The mythology of wide-open spaces cloaks a much harsher reality: as Row puts it, if a place is empty or open this often means "[s]omeone was removed; someone was prevented from entering; someone is here but out of sight" (105).

When Gloria demands they shut the window against the "shadowed" people she sees in her prophecy, she is enacting a similar kind of removal and exclusion. Her family pursues the dream of a world purged of difference and otherness, of a world emptied and therefore sanitized. It is a vision that eerily parallels the suburban dream pursued by postwar planners, architects, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Moreover, the Halloran family's millenarian project parallels how "white flight" was similarly tied to the era's own apocalyptic prophecies. Working for or in conjunction with the civil defense community, architects and planners invoked Cold War anxieties and nuclear fears in order to advance their goals of urban dispersal and racialized suburbanization. In yet another echo of postwar architecture and domestic culture, the Hallorans embody the era's bunker mentality and the supremacist visions of Cold War civil defense.

VII. Shelter Craze: Imagineering, Bunker Architecture, and Timeless Continuation

If the Hallorans represent a domestic withdrawal into exurban enclaves mapped along class and racial lines, then their plans and preparations, their visions and predictive thinking, in turn echo the real-life culture of planning that orchestrated the era's own retreat into segregated suburbs. As Ta-Nehisi Coates argues, while the term "white flight" has traditionally implied "a kind of natural expression of preference" — its racialized cartographies somehow chalked up to the whims of the market or the choices of individual actors — postwar urban dispersal was in fact "a triumph of social engineering, orchestrated by the shared racist presumptions of America's public and private sectors" (191). This project involved considerable forethought, organization, and preparation. Andrew Shanken, for example, argues that the racialized nature of suburban expansion was largely the result of ideological projections and systemic planning (12-13); Richard Rothstein in turn argues that these plans were then written into law, particularly by

way of projective and anticipatory policies (vii-xv). The FHA even practised its own form of prophecy, compiling what historian Kenneth Jackson describes as “detailed reports and maps charting the present and most likely future residential locations of black families” (*Crabgrass* 208). They did so in order to realize their own vision of the postwar new world, a vision that would render invisible what the FHA officially termed “inharmonious racial or nationality groups” (qtd. in *Crabgrass* 208).

After the war, these efforts soon became tied to civil defense planning and its own form of prophecy — what David Monteyne calls “imagineering” (2-32). In the wake of the atom bomb, as the American defense community began contemplating not just the possibility but the eventuality of a nuclear attack on American soil, it poured tremendous resources and expertise into nuclear simulations and projections. Many of these projections were uncannily aligned with the government’s long-standing goal of urban dispersal, envisioning a predictable dichotomy between urban disaster and suburban survival (2). The message was clear: the white American citizens of the suburbs were survivors; the minority and lower-income denizens of the city were “expendable casualties” (Vesentini 97). The government even scrapped its own plans for public bomb shelters specifically in distressed urban neighbourhoods, reasoning that the devastation would be so total there was no need to build bunkers in these areas (Monteyne 13). Articulating a widely held if rarely publicized opinion amongst defense experts of the time, Lawrence Halstad of the Atomic Energy Commission characterized these projections and their resultant planning as “nature’s slum clearance program” (qtd. in Vesentini 96).

The defense establishment’s prevalent attitude that only the “worthy” would survive echoes the Hallorans and their own millenarian narcissism. The family envisions a bucolic world “wiped clean and bare” (*The Sundial* 108), a landscape remapped and apocalyptically purified so

as to usher in what Fanny calls a "new race of mankind" (36). Their exurban home, meanwhile, will be the last (or first) house standing, a bulwark of privilege hermetically sealed against the racialized "Other" excluded from the final dispensation. While these visions are certainly preposterous (satirizing the Hallorans and their deluded sense of exceptionalism), they are no more ridiculous than the equally divisive projections circulated by civil defense propaganda of the time. Borrowing a strategy from the shelter press and drawing on the kind of architectural research used to justify urban dispersal, the 1954 civil defense film *The House in the Middle*, for example, explicitly connected tidy streets and well-kept homes with nuclear survival. In turn, it implicitly connected nuclear survival with whiteness. Invoking the kind of risible logic on full display within the Halloran household, the film sincerely advocated "the protective qualities of a fresh coat of white paint" (Monteyne 28), a color which, according to the film, will shield the house from destruction by reflecting the "searing atomic heat wave" (qtd. in Monteyne 28) of a nuclear blast. As Monteyne writes: "It is unclear whether the producers intended to draw a parallel between the whiteness of the paint and the preservation of a segregated U.S. suburban society" (28).

What *is* clear, however, is how propaganda such as this, as well as the predictions and simulations which informed it, could not help but reproduce the inherent biases (and identities) of those involved — namely, the defense planners, architects, and engineers who were almost all white, male, and, not coincidentally, suburban homeowners. In simulations, mock-ups, and technical drawings, the racially coded family type was, for architects and planners, "to be specified just like the thickness of the concrete" (32). The pages upon which these plans and drawings were made, as well as the screens upon which postwar propaganda was viewed, are another set of "windows" both projective and reflective. Like the Halloran family and their own

visions, defense planners were unable to imagine a future that looked any different from themselves.

Most glaringly, the Halloran mansion is an obvious stand-in for the Cold War bunker, a space designed not only to withstand the apocalypse and therefore transcend time altogether but also, in its mid-century context, to safeguard a racialized American identity intrinsic to national belonging and continuity. Although not many families actually built a basement or backyard bunker, fallout shelters appeared ubiquitously throughout the 1950s and 60s in advertisements, magazine profiles, and civil defense propaganda, fueling a "shelter craze" which, as Vesentini writes, "dominated the American mind in the postwar years" (95). To white, suburban Americans, the bunker embodied two Atomic Age ideals: first, the ability to arrest time in the event of an attack; and second, to maintain everyday activities in preparation for their unaltered resumption (Monteyne 19-20; Vesentini 95-105). Bunker architecture reflected these ideals by making the shelter a miniaturized suburban home, not only stocking it with food supplies and survival goods but also decorating it with mid-century furnishings, painted landscape views on the walls, and even hopscotch grids on the floor (Vesentini 93-95). The normalcy of these designs was meant to project the unassailable continuity of the American family, even in the face of nuclear apocalypse. Given the racially coded nature of the suburban home itself, as well as the deeply racialized planning surrounding nuclear attack and fallout, these designs were anything but neutral. As Monteyne writes, the priority of bunker architecture, as well as the rhetoric that surrounded it, was "to maintain the status quo both before and after an attack, making sure that class, gender, and racial hierarchies continued to operate" (19).

These are the same priorities and ideals embodied by the Hallorans and their own fallout shelter. With its stockpile of household goods, its barricaded doors and windows, and even its

landscape murals adorning the walls of the supply hub library (8, 167-169), the Halloran mansion is a bunker that specifically reflects postwar fallout design. At one point, Gloria speculates that future generations will make pilgrimages to the mansion, looking at the "furniture and walls" with the same reverence and awe which, today, "we look at cave paintings" (*The Sundial* 110). Her prediction anticipates a *Life* magazine spread on bunker design that appeared in 1960, two years after the publication of Jackson's novel. Showcasing how easily the creature comforts of mid-century suburbia could be adapted to the fallout shelter, the article includes an illustrated X-ray view of a bunker entitled the "Family Room of Tomorrow." In an uncanny echo of Gloria's prediction, there is a cozy little alcove at the back of the shelter, its "walls and couch…bedecked with replicas of Montignac's cave paintings" (Vesentini 105). Images such as these were meant to reinforce the bunker's timelessness, just as Gloria's prediction reinforces what Darryl Hattenhauer calls the family's sense of "timeless continuation" — that is, their belief that as a chosen people they are immune to time, existing on a continuum of exceptionalism that "reaches back through key events in American and world history all the way to creation" (151). Such transcendence is an unmistakable reflection of bunker architecture and its widespread rhetoric, as well as an indictment of the supremacist imagination behind this culture, an imagination that, quite literally, created spaces for the exclusive preservation of a racialized American subject. As Hattenhauer observes, the Hallorans not only believe their prophecies will enable them to "achieve timelessness" but, more specifically, that their fallout shelter will allow them to "step out of time and be immune to the foul contagions of the Other" (150).

In this sense, the mansion's conversion to a bunker ironically reveals what it has always been: an introverted fortification that immures the family and preserves its status by keeping

outsiders out. As the narrator tells us only a few pages into the novel: "all inside the wall was Halloran, all outside was not" (*The Sundial* 7). Such isolation is tied to timelessness and continuity, insofar as Mr. Halloran's ambition, much like that of his real-life Gilded Age counterparts, was to build a house that not only replicated the European aristocratic tradition but also signalled his rightful inheritance to it, including the continuation of its inherently classist and racist underpinnings. Part of Jackson's satire, then, is to show just how fundamentally anti-social the American domestic project has been, from its turn-of-the-century English manor miniatures to its mid-century suburban enclaves. If the sundial's inscription asks, "WHAT IS THIS WORLD?" (9), then the full quotation from which this question is taken — a translation of some lines from Chaucer — is a kind of response: "What is this world? what asketh men to have?/Now with his love, now in his colde grave/Allone, with-outen any companye" (lines 1919-1921). It is the 'alloneness' of the Halloran mansion, which, in the end, makes it both a satire of the individualist, acquisitive American spirit and a tragedy of these same abiding traits. In this respect, the mansion recalls Henry James's description of Biltmore, a "heart-breaking house" wherein vastness and riches lead only to "desolation" and "solitude," a so-called home that is really an "elaborate monument to all that *isn't* socially possible" (qtd. in Dwight 133-134).

Ultimately, *The Sundial*'s anachronic architecture connects the mansion's regressive forays into the past with this 'alloneness.' This connection illuminates the domestic insularity of Jackson's own time and place, particularly when it comes to the segregated suburb. As Jess Row observes, "white flight" is not only a misguided "search for purity" but also "an extravagance of waste" (157), whereby the individual loses out on the self-knowledge that comes with experiencing and confronting difference — that of others and that of oneself. "When you refuse to allow for the presence of others," writes Row, "you lose the ability to be seen by them. At that

point, a social bond, a human bond, is severed. This is a form of imaginative violence Americans practice so routinely that it has become, in the biopolitical sense, second nature, or just nature" (157). In one of Gloria's final visions, she looks out onto a world where, as she says, there "aren't any…separations….Nothing like walls or fences, just soft green going off in all directions" (*The Sundial* 112). A few moments later, another image comes to her: in the great hall of the Halloran mansion, she sees figures huddled in darkness "barricading themselves in" (115), pushing furniture up against the front door. The juxtaposition of these two visions implies another question, not "What is this world?" but "Which world do you want?"

VIII. Conclusion: "*My* crown now…"

It is no accident that in this final vision the only person Gloria can see clearly is Fancy, laughing in the dark as the others block the door (115-116). Fancy is the character who best represents the continuation of her family's elitist insularity. In a very real sense, she is their legacy, the final Halloran by blood. She is also Orianna's protégé and designated heir, a kind of miniature Orianna who stalks the halls of the mansion casting a possessive eye over everything that will someday be hers. Like Orianna, she has a foil in the house, Gloria, who like her own counterpart, Aunt Fanny, not only accepts the prophecies but becomes their medium, imploring her little cousin to believe. Fancy rebuffs such evangelism, telling Gloria: "[Y]ou all want the whole world to be changed so *you* will be different" (148). Like her grandmother, she knows that utopian visions say less about the future than they do about the seer, that what they reflect is not a perfect world but the imperfect self. For Fancy, as with Orianna, the legitimacy of the prophecies is immaterial, all that matters is how they can be used for one's own elevation and enrichment. She has learned from her mentor all too well: on the eve of the projected apocalypse,

in a repetition of Orianna's own murderous rise to power, Fancy pushes her grandmother down the stairs and seizes the crown for herself (215-216). In Fancy, the novel suggests the future repeats the past, the status quo is maintained, power reproduces power — apocalypse or not. *The Sundial* ends inconclusively, with the Hallorans waiting expectantly indoors and a storm gathering menacingly outside, but the image of Fancy prying the crown from her grandmother's lifeless head — "*My* crown now" (216) — is perhaps telling enough. The cycle begins again, the old order entrenches itself anew. Why would the apocalypse be any different?

This is the novel's eschatological punchline: not even the end of the world can bring about real social change. In making this point, Jackson returns to the miniature one last time, the concept which, perhaps more than any other, brings together *The Sundial*'s temporal and architectural preoccupations. In her book *On Longing* (1984), Susan Stewart teases out the ways in which the miniature at once arrests time and transcends it via spatial closure, a process she likens to that of world building:

> The miniature offers a world clearly limited in space but frozen and thereby particularized and generalized in time—particularized in that the miniature concentrates upon the single instant and not upon the abstract rule, but generalized in that the instance comes to transcend, to stand for, a spectrum of other instances. (48)

This is what the Halloran family has transformed their mansion into — despite its vastness and its many objects of beauty, the house is really a miniature cut off from the rest of the world, the last and first house standing, not a home but the time capsule of a particular moment which the Hallorans refuse to leave. This moment echoes through time across a spectrum of other similar instances, representing the ultimate stasis of privilege and its repeating structures of power.

Again, Fancy and Orianna are the representatives of this cycle. In the final moments of the novel, Fancy leaves her dollhouse, what Stewart describes as "the most consummate of miniatures" (61), to her cousin Gloria (*The Sundial* 221). As she predicted, she does not need it anymore, the house itself is now a dollhouse — that is, a house within a house, a world within a world.[24] As Stewart writes, the dollhouse posits the most interior interiority: "a space within an enclosed space…center within center, within within within" (61). Another way of putting this is to say it posits the most alone aloneness. Inside the mansion, Fancy has discovered a form of interiority that regresses through time and space to achieve such aloneness. Outside, the family has propped her grandmother's body against the sundial, not wanting to look at it slumped over at the foot of the stairs. They have folded Orianna's hands in her lap, "quite as though it were still all her property she surveyed" (*The Sundial* 219). It's an apt resting place. Leaning up against the novel's symbol for the family's regressive distortions of time, Orianna, like her granddaughter, is impossibly alone, fulfilling the image from the poem that lends the sundial its inscription: "now in his colde grave/Allone, with-outen any companye" (Chaucer lines 1920-1921).

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Until recently, *The Sundial* had not received as much attention as some of Jackson's other works. Today it reads more prescient than ever, an ironic realization of its portrayals of prediction and prognostication. This may be the reason why in just the last year alone there have been several critical reappraisals of the novel, a trend that will most likely continue, especially considering our own moment's widespread apocalyptic anxiety and, most obviously, the

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[24] Pascal also makes this point. See "New World Miniatures," p. 87.

housebound introversion imposed by Covid-19.[25] The virus has occasioned a form of social distancing very different from the one depicted in Jackson's novel, and yet it might also occasion a newfound appreciation for the necessity of social bonds in a way that addresses *The Sundial*'s scathing portrait of ideological "aloneness." As we reckon with the increasingly divisive social atomization of our own culture and see how fundamentally at odds it is with the democratic project, Jackson's work may continue to resonate with the current moment in ways that are only now becoming evident. Her indictment of American exceptionalism and its racialized insularity, meanwhile, calls into relief the long-standing and too-long ignored culture of white supremacy which once again has come out into the open, emboldened and embraced by Trump and his followers.

The notion of a "new world" continues to be integral to this ideology. In January 2021, after insurrectionists stormed the Capitol, a *New York Times* investigation delineated how central new world apocalypticism is to the far-right online culture that inspired and organized the attack ("Capitol Riot Puts Spotlight on 'Apocalyptically-Minded' Global Far Right"). At a rally on the morning of January 6th, Donald Trump stoked his supporters by refusing to concede the election, effectively arresting time and renouncing change. A year earlier, in his February 2020 State of the Union, he spoke about America's "manifest destiny" and its "unlimited frontiers just waiting to be explored"; he characterized the nation as "the most exceptional republic ever to exist in all of human history"; he talked about "ancestors" who "carved" a nation out of a vast empty landscape, who "tamed the wilderness" and "settled the New World"; and he described all this as

[25] New essays on *The Sundial* written by Jill Anderson, Julie Baker, and Christiane Farnan appeared in the recent critical anthology, *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House*, released in 2020 and edited by Jill Anderson and Melanie Anderson; an article by Emily Banks on the novel appeared in a special issue of *Women's Studies* devoted to Jackson, also released in 2020; and in another recent anthology, *Shirley Jackson: A Companion*, edited by Kristopher Woofter, my own article on the novel — a version of this dissertation chapter — appeared in 2021.

America's "glorious and magnificent inheritance" ("Full Transcript"). It is hard not to see the Hallorans in this imagery or to hear echoes of their own invocations of exceptionalism and timeless continuation, all encoded in an argot that continues to alienate and divide.

The novel draws other prophetic comparisons to our current moment, from its allusions to climate change and ecological collapse — the "freak snow storms, hurricanes, and hail from the sky" (*The Sundial* 179) that prefigure the apocalyptic storm — to the complacency with which these phenomena continue to be met: "although everyone talked about the weather," Jackson writes, "no one did anything about it" (179). In turn, her depiction of the Hallorans as the butt of their own jokes can be seen in reality TV shows like *Doomsday Preppers* (2011-2014) or *The Colony* (2009-present), in which the earnest survivalism of contestants is turned into tongue-in-cheek spectacle. And her satiric take on the shelter craze and its commodification of apocalyptic anxiety is still as relevant today as it was some sixty years ago. As a recent *New York Times* headline put it, we are living in "A Boom Time for the Bunker Business and Doomsday Capitalists" (Turkewitz, "Boom Time").

But if Jackson's fiction is sometimes prescient, she herself balked at being labelled a prophet. In her lecture "Biography of a Story," she recounts how one reader mistook "The Lottery" for an actual apocalyptic revelation. In a letter to Jackson, the reader goes off on a tangent about his Aunt Ellise, apparently the priestess of a real-life doomsday cult called the Exalted Rollers. Was Aunt Ellise an early inspiration for Aunt Fanny? He closes his letter by asking, "When will the next revelations be published?" (qtd. in "Biography of a Story" 252). In her lecture, Jackson says that out of the thousands and thousands of questions she received about "The Lottery," this was the only one she could answer fearlessly and honestly: "never" (252).

Chapter Two

"A Masterpiece of Architectural Misdirection": Womb Fantasies and the Heteropatriarchal Imaginary in *The Haunting of Hill House*[26]

"She herself is a haunted house. She does not possess herself."

— Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*

I. Introduction: "Alone in a Dark House at Night…"

The Haunting of Hill House is Shirley Jackson's most quintessentially Gothic novel, as well as her most tightly focused tale of psychological horror. A literary ghost story in the mould of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, it exploits the thin line between sanity and insanity in order to probe the ambiguities of Jackson's signal themes — fear and guilt, family and individuality, estrangement and belonging, dreams and reality. Perhaps even more so than her other "house" novels, *Hill House* explicitly maps these themes onto the space of a family home and its architecture. If *The Sundial* is a broad satire of postwar society and Cold War domestic culture — a bleak and ultimately pessimistic parody of the socially distanced inward turn — then *Hill House* burrows further inward, ever deeper, dramatizing an introversion at once architectural and psychological. The novel includes the most architectural detail of any of Jackson's fictions, developing a multi-layered and multi-directional architectural symbolism. Like the Halloran mansion, Hill House is a gaudy monument to a lingering patriarch, a house that supernaturally reproduces the oppressive and even dissociating structures of the family and its heteropatriarchal order. But unlike the Halloran mansion, Hill House is a living, breathing entity in its own right, a "live organism" (*Hill House* 1) that sentiently taps into the minds and dreams of its visitors.

[26] A version of this chapter appears in *Shirley Jackson and Domesticity: Beyond the Haunted House* (2020), edited by Jill E. Anderson and Melanie R. Anderson.

Haunted by the psychic presence of its original owner and architect, Hugh Crain, the house seems to excavate and even act out the deepest fears and desires, as well as the darkest secrets and insecurities, of anyone unlucky enough to pass through its doors.

When Jackson began working on the novel in the early months of 1958, she hoped it would be the kind of ghost story "you really can't read alone in a dark house at night" (Jackson qtd. in Franklin 402). A few weeks earlier, while visiting New York, she had glimpsed a building at 125th Street so loathsome and terrifying it filled her with dread and gave her nightmares for days. The experience left her with a desire "for learning how people feel when they encounter the supernatural" ("Experience and Fiction" 227). In the months that followed, she read everything she could on ghosts and haunted houses, poring over reports of alleged hauntings and studying nineteenth-century accounts of psychical investigations. She even asked friends at cocktail parties for their own stories of the supernatural (225-228) and spent hours looking through her collection of architectural photographs, in one case believing a postcard of the Château du Loiret was itself haunted, partygoers appearing and disappearing on its balcony from one viewing to the next ("The Ghosts of Loiret" 243-247). In early February, the *New York Times* ran a front-page article about a home on Long Island apparently possessed by a poltergeist. The police were so baffled they called in a team of parapsychologists. Their investigations soon focused on the family's twelve-year-old son, Jimmy, who, they speculated, might have been moving objects unconsciously with his mind (Franklin 405-406). As Jackson would later write: "the minute I started thinking about ghosts and haunted houses, all kinds of things turned up to enforce my intentions" ("Experience and Fiction" 225).

All of these sources found their way into her novel. Like the reports of psychical research she had been reading, *The Haunting of Hill House* recounts an investigation into supernatural

activity at a mansion long considered to be haunted. This investigation is organized by Dr. John Montague, an anthropologist whose true ambition is to scientifically analyze the paranormal. To this end, he rents Hill House for the summer and invites a group of carefully selected assistants, all of whom have some experience with the extrasensory or the occult. Only two show up: the bright, vivacious Theodora and the shy, stunted Eleanor. Theodora is said to possess telepathic powers, while Eleanor — the main focus of the novel — has been chosen because of an incident from her childhood. At the age of twelve and only a few weeks after her father's death, a shower of stones mysteriously rained down on her family's house for several days. The event remains unexplained, and yet, as with Jimmy Herrmann, it is strongly suspected the stones were the work of Eleanor's unconscious, a telekinetic disturbance caused by her repressed grief and anger. Dr. Montague's group is rounded out by Luke Sanderson, the eventual heir to Hill House, who joins as a family representative. Luke complicates the dynamic in the house, particularly between Eleanor and Theo, his ongoing flirtations with both women causing tension and competition. The house, too, seems to drive a wedge between the two women, as if supernaturally throwing them together only to push them further apart.

Increasingly, Hill House narrows in on Eleanor, exploiting her fear and loneliness, dredging up her past, and rupturing her fragile sense of self — all in ways that somehow trigger the lingering effects of her traumatic family history and the entwined systems of space, gender, and domesticity that this history has engraved in her. In this chapter, I consider the specifics of this spatial-domestic system — a gendered mechanism of subjectification and control — as figured by Jackson's representations of "haunted" domestic architecture. Tracing the patriarchal home through architectural history and Gothic studies alike, I connect the very real misogyny of the family home and its discourse to the haunted house and its metaphors for the same. Briefly, I

place the psychodynamics of this home alongside Jackson's own biography and private life. Returning to the novel, I explore the ways in which Eleanor's internalized notions of home and self are entangled with acculturated notions of womanhood and heteronormativity, likening this dynamic to the spatial theories of Gaston Bachelard and his concept of the "oneiric house." In turn, I examine Hill House as itself a "dream house," insofar as it reproduces and imposes the fantasies and dreams of a patriarchal imaginary. As one of the chapter's through lines, this latter argument informs my readings of Hill House and its connections to actual architectural history and design, from theories of the Victorian interior as a dream-like space of (male) self-actualization to the domestic (and markedly gendered) fantasies of Jackson's own postwar architectural moment. In particular, these readings address and reorient Hill House's undeniable maternal associations, redirecting the conventional interpretation of the mansion's consuming, womb-like interior away from the "monstrous feminine" and "toxic mother" and more towards the womb fantasies and matrophobia to be found in architectural history and postwar domestic design. To this end, the chapter ultimately places Hill House alongside a popular movement in mid-century organic architecture known as biomorphism, drawing out the connections between Jackson's fictional mansion and the signature project of Austrian-American architect Frederick Kiesler, a domestic design called *Endless House*.

At one point, Dr. Montague refers to Hill House as "a masterpiece of architectural misdirection" (*Hill House* 78). And indeed, the mansion pulls from a number of architectural influences and styles, its various models including the Château de Chambord, the Winchester Mystery House, the Everett Mansion, and even the gaudy San Francisco piles designed and built by Jackson's own ancestors (Franklin 402-404). These models, along with others, encompass a wide array of periods and movements, from the Renaissance castle to the Elizabethan mansion,

from the Gothic Revival to the Richardsonian Romanesque. Perhaps more so than any other influence, the Victorian Gothic — and in particular its discourse of the domestic interior — leaves a powerful imprint on Hill House and its symbolism. Jackson places this interior on an ideological continuum with her own architectural moment and its experimentations in domestic design, suggesting the historical perpetuation of architecture's long-standing repression and co-optation of the female body in general and the maternal body in particular. Her fictional haunted house, meanwhile, self-consciously references other houses in the genre, winking knowingly at the architecture and interiors of Bly Manor and the House of Usher, as well as, more generally, the garish, even campy mansions of the popular late-nineteenth-century ghost story. In her synthesis and reinvention of these many influences and models, however, Jackson makes Hill House a creation entirely her own. Between its walls, a new kind of "haunting" stalks both its visitors and the Gothic mode itself, one that proliferates the dreams of a cultural imaginary, dispossessing Eleanor of her selfhood, dissociating her from her reality, and driving her to insanity and depersonalization. This is the mansion's ultimate "misdirection," supplanting the dreams of its victims with nightmares of its own.

II. The Family Home: Domestic Architecture and the Gothic House

In his essay, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender" (1992), architectural historian Mark Wigley argues that the family home has always been a technology of control, conceived and designed to perpetuate a patriarchal order. Within this system, the wife and mother is co-opted and the very notion of the family house becomes inextricable from her loyalty and virtue. "The virtuous woman becomes woman-plus-house," Wigley writes, "or, rather, woman-as-housed, such that her virtue cannot be separated from the physical space" (337). It is a telling irony of the

entangled relationship between architecture and the Gothic that Wigley's definition of the family home — "woman-plus-house" — is nearly identical to the much-quoted definition of gothic literature advanced by critics Norman Holland and Leona Sherman in their essay "Gothic Possibilities" (1977) — "woman-plus-habitation" (279). That the normative family home could be so easily confused with a haunting and horrifying narrative formula is revealing. In many ways the story of the family home *is* a gothic story, especially when it comes to the lives of girls and women.

This is the pattern we encounter again and again in *Hill House*, a novel that illuminates the way in which the discourse of the family home to be found in architectural history is stunningly similar to the discourse surrounding the Gothic house and its horrors. In particular, the discourse of the family home which sees the maternal figure co-opted by a patriarchal system of control resonates with *Hill House*'s own portrait of domestic architecture and the parental figures who "haunt" Jackson's titular mansion. The most consistent reading of the novel's architectural symbolism, for example, is that of a consuming motherly force, one that engulfs Eleanor in a womb-like space and effectively suffocates her attempt to break free from the maternal bond and establish an identity of her own. But the novel also reminds us that Hill House's lingering patriarch, Hugh Crain, was not only its original owner but its architect as well, a man who built "his house to suit his mind" (*Hill House* 77). Several critics have therefore pointed out that while the traditional reading of the novel focuses on the mansion's maternal associations, the backstory of Hugh Crain and his domineering treatment of his two daughters suggests a more complicated view of "bad parenting" and "toxic families" in general. Tricia Lootens, for example, expands the novel's horror from the consuming power of the maternal bond to "nuclear families that kill where they are supposed to nurture" (151). Hill House, in this

reading, is a "parental house" that has been "warped" by the mind of a "vicious patriarch" (157). Along similar lines, Bernice Murphy argues that, in addition to the maternal spectre haunting Eleanor, Crain's "malign patriarchal influence" still lingers between the walls of Hill House, and "may well be more dangerous than that of any ghosts" ("Domineering Patriarch" 135). Indeed, near the end of the novel, as Eleanor dances madly through the house, she calls out not only to her mother but to Hugh Crain as well (*Hill House* 170-171). Within her addled mind, these two figures have formed a parental unit. As Richard Pascal writes, these "two presences function as familial despots who are both conspiratorial and competitive, terrible mother and terrible father jostling for possession of vulnerable child souls" ("Walking Alone Together" 473).

These twin presences and the "parental house" which they oversee recall one of the oldest and most fundamental principles in the history and theory of Western domestic architecture — namely, a two-part system of the family home that sees the father as the "head" or "mind" of the house and the mother as its "body" or interior.[27] This schematic appears in some of the earliest and most influential writings on domestic architecture and discourse, from texts by Ancient Greece's Xenophon to treatises by Renaissance Italy's Alberti. In this analogy, the house is anthropomorphized on two scores: the first associates the family home — as both a physical and symbolic space — with the psychic presence of the father, a reflection as well as tool of his beliefs and values; the second conflates the interior of the house with the female body in general and the maternal body in particular. As Wigley writes, the abiding purpose of the patriarchal home is "the chastity of the girl [and] the fidelity of the wife" (337). Only by containing the female body and its sexuality does the patriarch demonstrate his masculinity, with masculinity and control being all but synonymous. The house is a spatial system of surveillance that

[27] What follows in this paragraph relies on Wigley's essay, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender" (1992), in particular pp. 332-351.

functions according to this express purpose, a network of nested rooms, doors, locks, windows, and passageways — all of which serve to physically confine, restrict, and surveil. Within this house, the father knows and controls everything. As its "head" or "mind," he does so through the wife and mother — the "body." In other words, the mother controls the patriarch's house and the patriarch controls the mother. Most especially, the mother is tasked with the policing of the female child, another wife and mother "in training" (338-340). As Wigley reminds us, in Alberti's architectural writing "[t]he word for raising a female child [is] literally 'surveillance'" (338). In service to this system, the mother is what Alberti calls the "keeper of the keys" and the "guardian of the laws" (qtd. in Wigley 340) — in short, the enforcer of the patriarchal home and its architectural system of heteropatriarchal control.

In Jackson's novel, Eleanor's slow absorption into domestic space — what she later calls her "disappear[ance] inch by inch" (*Hill House* 149) into the mansion — has been conventionally read as her reabsorption into the maternal bond. Given the history and discourse of the family home, we might also consider this disappearance as a depiction of Eleanor's assimilation into the spatial-domestic system delineated above — a gothic depiction, in other words, of a female child haunted by the lingering presence of a patriarch and his home, menaced by a mother who enforces this patriarch's laws, and ultimately absorbed by the domestic interior and the phallocentric imaginary it represents and reinforces. Significantly, these same tropes appear at the heart of the Gothic genre. In her essay, "The Gothic Mirror" (1985), for example, Claire Kahane describes a set of recurring motifs inherent to the Gothic: a haunting patriarchal figure who embodies vague sexual threats; an imprisoning, labyrinthine house that leads a female protagonist ever deeper into its interior; a generalized boundary horror where domestic space and subject blur and fuse (334). At the very centre of this structure is what Kahane describes as "the

spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing, a ghost signifying the problematics of femininity which the heroine must confront" (336). In an echo of *Hill House* and Eleanor's own psychic distress, these "problematics" involve separating from the maternal figure and establishing an identity of one's own. For Kahane, the Gothic therefore depicts the maternal figure as "a mirror image who is both self and other," dramatizing the daughter's ongoing struggle to separate from "the intricate web of psychic relations that constitute[s] their bond" (337).

Aspects of Jackson's own life lend themselves to these tropes and themes. For this reason, many critics have read *Hill House* through the lens of her biography, in particular the tortured and at times toxic relationship between herself and her mother, Geraldine. By all accounts, Jackson was not the daughter her mother wanted. While Geraldine was expecting a young woman like herself — a prim and proper lady of country-club conventionality — Jackson was an unruly, wilful child, bucking against her mother's gender norms and expectations. As a result, she was often made to feel out of place and unwanted. She would later tell her own daughter, Joanne, that Geraldine had once said she was the result of a failed abortion (Oppenheimer 14, 257). There is no shortage of cringeworthy stories about Geraldine's spiteful and even poisonous treatment of her daughter, from disparaging her characters as "demented girls" (qtd. in Franklin 37) to continually criticizing her appearance and fluctuating weight. At one point, Geraldine started sending Jackson — then in her 40s and a mother of four — corsets in the mail. In turn, Jackson's fiction abounds with toxic mothers and "cross old ladies," runaway daughters and sinister variations on the changeling narrative, often using the uncanny to scrutinize filial devotion and the culturally accepted bond of mother-daughter love. In her own life, however, she never really stood up to Geraldine, at least not according to her biographers,

with drafts of self-assertive letters left unsent and a co-dependent bond that persisted to the end (Franklin 25).[28] This bond is often read through Jackson's own gothic tropes. Weeks before her death, for example, Jackson wrote in her diary: "Who is looking over my shoulder all the time?" (qtd. in Oppenheimer 15). For one of her biographers, the answer was obvious: Geraldine, a so-called "looming spectre" (Oppenheimer 15).

In the biographies, this "spectre" is often tied to domestic space, and, in particular, a portrait of Geraldine as a mother in the mould of Alberti's "guardian of the laws." Franklin, for instance, reports that Geraldine frequently rummaged through Jackson's things, going through her desk, reading her diaries and private writing, and then punishing Jackson if she found anything "unladylike" (Franklin 32-37). Similar scenes of maternal surveillance appear in Jackson's fiction, most notably in one of the opening sequences of her debut novel *The Road Through the Wall*, in which a mother forces her daughter to burn her diaries and journals in the basement furnace (28-29). These dynamics reveal a complex relationship between house and mother in the raising (and policing) of the female child, whereby a gendered value system merges with domestic space and its designated enforcer — the wife and mother, "the keeper of the keys." Indeed, as Jackson would later say, she spent much of her childhood locked in her room living "in constant terror" of what she called "the maternal knock" (qtd. in Franklin 32). It is perhaps interesting to note that *The Haunting of Hill House* turns a mother's knocking into one

[28] Some of these letters are now available in the recently published, *The Letters of Shirley Jackson* (2021), edited by Laurence Jackson Hyman, in consultation with Bernice M. Murphy. See in particular a letter dated September 25, 1962 (pp. 526-527), in which Jackson responds to Geraldine's many criticisms, and, at one point, writes: "will you try to realize that i am a grown up and fully capable of managing my own affairs? i have a happy and productive life, i have many good friends, i have considerable stature in my profession, and if i decided to make any changes in my manner of living, it will not be because you have nagged me into it. you can say this is 'wilful' if you like, but surely at my age i have a right to live as i please, and i have just had enough of the unending comments on my appearance and my faults" (527). The letter was never mailed.

of Jackson's most terrifying (if unlikely) motifs, representing the porosity of the mother-daughter relation as architecturally figured.

Jackson's husband, Stanley Hyman, once said that his wife's family home had an "incredible psychological hold" on her, one that set her back years as soon as she stepped through the front door (qtd. in Franklin 142). No doubt this reaction was in part due to Geraldine and the restrictive notions of feminine propriety with which she inculcated her daughter. But the home Jackson shared with Hyman also exerted a powerful hold and was itself a frequent source of psychological distress. If Geraldine belittled Jackson both personally and professionally, then Hyman did much the same. Refusing to do any of the housework or childcare himself, he nonetheless found fault in Jackson's homemaking, criticizing and demeaning her. Although a deep admirer and insightful reader of her work, he resented her success, especially in light of his own writing's more modest, even tepid reception. His "encouragement," meanwhile, often took the form of criticizing Jackson for not writing enough, his not-so-subtle way of telling her she was not earning (and therefore not contributing to the household) as much as he thought she could. Finally, his open affairs with students as well as family friends, for which he refused to apologize, hurt Jackson deeply, precipitating extended bouts of depression and anxiety.

It should come as no surprise, then, that some critics have seen in *Hill House*'s domestic horror a gothic analogue for the difficult and strained relations of Jackson's marriage. Franklin, for example, explicitly places her reading of the book alongside Jackson's desire to leave Stanley, a desire that was never tested let alone fully realized, but which nonetheless reached its peak in the summer of 1958, just as Jackson was hitting her stride with *Hill House* (Franklin 407-409). Indeed, the novel's depiction of a voracious house that all but consumes a young woman within its embrace is convincingly framed by Jackson's own anxieties of domestic entrapment —

anxieties, moreover, which also resonate with her wider cultural moment and the burgeoning women's movement of the late 1950s.

In *Hill House*, when Eleanor attempts to break free from her past, she is not merely trying to extricate herself from the clutches of a so-called "monstrous mother" but also from the vast and intricate spatial-domestic order as described above. This order runs through the architectural history and discourse of the family home, as well as the most abiding themes and motifs of the Gothic mode. It is also a prevalent and recurring "spectre" within Jackson's own biography, from her childhood home to her domestic life as a wife and mother herself. In *Hill House*, this order is presented as a spatial paradigm deeply ingrained within Eleanor, one that endlessly reproduces, in the self, the schematics of the heteropatriarchal imagination. Jackson's novel therefore taps into the ways in which the spaces we inhabit come to inhabit us: they teach us how to live and what to think of ourselves, defining and enforcing our so-called "place" in the world. Historically, the family home, as a technology of socialization, has taught a very specific lesson to girls and women like Eleanor, one that Jackson's novel excavates and reimagines as gothic horror.

III. "Interminable Dream": The Oneiric House as a Diagram of Inhabiting

The novel's opening sequence is meant to signal Eleanor's break from this spatial order, her first true attempt to escape from the familial-domestic structure, and yet in many ways the sequence suggests how deeply ingrained this structure is, reproducing in Eleanor a dream-like notion of home that reinforces the patterns of the past like so many unconscious reflexes. Her brief backstory provides insight into this internalized notion of home, describing a cycle of trauma which, for her, is inextricably bound to houses and domestic space. This cycle includes

the death of her father at a young age; the "shower of stones" (*Hill House* 3) that partially destroyed the family home and may have been a telekinetic manifestation of her own grief; the eleven years she spent confined to this same house caring for her mother, "steeling herself to the filthy laundry" and "setting out endless little trays of soup and oatmeal" (4); the vexed relationship with her sister, "[t]he only person in the world she genuinely hated, now that her mother was dead" (3); and her current domestic arrangement, sleeping on a cot in the living room of this same sister's house. This is what the narrator describes as "the whole underside of [Eleanor's] life" (4), and if the entirety of her existence has been defined through the prisms of alienating family and domestic structures, then it is only through these same structures that she believes she can escape the long shadow — or "underside" — of her past. And yet, as the opening sections of the novel ultimately demonstrate, these patterns are stuck on an endless loop, an impossible repetition, with Eleanor going in search of "home" (a phantasmatic object of desire, an imago of self-identity) and finding a haunted house which, in the end, may not be as haunted as she is herself.

Her car ride to Hill House therefore vacillates between a newfound autonomy and what might be called a reactive boundary horror to the same, dramatizing an ambivalent struggle for independence and individuation. After accepting Montague's invitation, she sneaks out of the house and steals the family car, defying her sister and by extension her mother. As her sister puts it: "Mother would have agreed with me, Eleanor" (7). Even this minor disobedience (Eleanor co-owns the car) is met with immediate censure and rebuke. In the parking lot, she accidentally knocks over an angry old woman carrying a bag of groceries, yet another "cross old lady" (4) who clearly stands in for Eleanor's mother. The woman curses Eleanor excessively — "Damn you damn you!" she screams (8) — as Eleanor, cowed and subservient once again, apologizes

repeatedly and bends down to collect the upset groceries. As she contemplates scooping up "a broken piece of cheesecake" that has "spill[ed] out" (8) of the bag and been squashed on the pavement, the image resonates as both a reminder of Eleanor's past and a hint of what is still to come — from the many messes she has already had to clean up to the gothic impossibility of putting what "spills out" back in its place.

Her daydreams on the road enact a similar failure of containment. Each involves a fresh start in a new home, from the woodcutter's hut deep in the forest (11) to the mansion on main street with its stone lions (12). These fantasies revisit Jackson's trope of the "little house" and the dream of female self-sufficiency as realized via domestic architecture. In Eleanor's case, they insist on physical seclusion and protection in the establishment of a separate and unique self. And yet, each eventually reveals how these same spaces (both mental and physical) have already been breached by the recurring dynamics of Eleanor's family history. In the mansion, she pictures a "dainty old lady" who takes care of her, bringing her a "silver tea service" every afternoon and a "glass of elderberry wine" (12) every evening. After passing a ruined gate and a patch of oleanders, she conjures an enchanted palace with sweet gardens and flowering arbors, a vision which, despite its rich and vivid detail, inevitably leads back to an all-too-familiar emotional core: an interior courtyard where a queen sits weeping as she waits for her daughter to return (13).

Reversing the dynamics of care between Eleanor and her mother, these daydreams might just as easily be revenge fantasies as they are cathartic visions of maternal love and reconciliation. On the one hand, they supply a set of potent images for protected space — the stone lions, the oleanders — which linger in Eleanor's mind, galvanizing her burgeoning sense of agency and independence; on the other, they seem to revisit (impossibly and involuntarily) the

affective patterns of the past, with Eleanor recreating her own familial-domestic trauma in almost everything she sees and imagines. Stopping for lunch at a diner, she watches as a young girl refuses to drink her milk without her special "cup of stars" (14). The girl slumps in her seat and frowns as her mother tries to negotiate a compromise: "[J]ust for now, just to be a very good little girl, will you take a little milk from this glass?" (15). This simple scene of maternal coaxing triggers something much deeper in Eleanor. "Don't do it," she tells the girl in her mind, "insist on your cup of stars; once they have trapped you into being like everyone else you will never see your cup of stars again" (15). For Eleanor, the more immediate "trap" is this unconscious reversion to certain inveterate psychodynamics, her inability to escape the emotional maze of repeated trauma. Jackson explicitly uses domestic space, both real and imagined, as a metaphor for this trap, with Eleanor's visions of "home" subtly revealing her subjectification through alienating and necessarily gendered familial-domestic structures. But the novel also suggests how the actual, physical spaces of the home participate in this subject formation, with Eleanor's long confinement to the family house, and her repeated chores within it, instilling a spatial order and habituating a set of recurrent acts which have indelibly shaped not only the ways in which she inhabits "home" but the ways in which she inhabits the self as well.

In these respects, the opening sequence of the novel brings to mind Gaston Bachelard's concept of the "oneiric house," a poetic and dream-like space at once heavily associated with the actual childhood home and phenomenologically connected to the subject's ontological sense of "dwelling" in the world (3-37). For Bachelard, the house is a collection of physical spaces that have been inscribed in the individual through "a group of organic habits" (14), the literal movements through architectural space that linger in the body as muscle memory and reflex. These habits shape a kind of personalized proprioception, both physical and psychological,

orienting the subject in both space and selfhood. In turn, the individual develops an internalized conception of "home" — the oneiric house — which is based on these inscribed movements and memories and which persists unconsciously as a "diagram…of inhabiting" (15). The childhood home and the oneiric house therefore provide what Bachelard calls "the framework for an interminable dream" (15), the dream of self-construction and individuation.

Jackson's "house" fiction often turns this same dream into a nightmare. As Sandra Cisneros and other writers have pointed out, while Bachelard's ideas are compelling and instructive, they make a host of troubling assumptions about domestic space and its allegedly universal inhabitant.[29] Bachelard's almost entirely positive portrait of the house and its psychological construction of the individual reads at times like a glossing over of how these same concepts often lead to equally formative though deeply uncanny and even horrific results, particularly when it comes to gendered and racialized identities. What *Hill House* ultimately proposes, to my mind, is a counter-poetics of space, acknowledging the profound influence of intimate spaces and the ways in which we inhabit them, but shifting the emphasis from an "interminable dream" to an endless nightmare, one that uses haunting and the architectural gothic to depict the uncanny repetitions of the heteropatriarchal home and its restrictive definitions of gender and individuality.

Along these lines, Jackson ties the spatial order of the family home to Eleanor's acculturated notions of womanhood. As Judie Newman insightfully points out, the daydreams that appear early in the novel establish a set of connections that see domestic space bound up with the reproduction of mothering, internalized patriarchy, and heteronormativity (Newman

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[29] See Sandra Cisneros's introductory essay to the 10th anniversary edition of *The House on Mango Street* (1983; 1994), as well as Karen W. Martin's article, "*The House* (of Memory) *on Mango Street*: Sandra Cisneros's Counter-Poetics of Space" (2008).

172-173). From the romance stories Eleanor was forced to read aloud to her mother every afternoon to the fairy tales through which she still interprets the world around her; from the care ethics that have been ingrained in her to her oft-repeated refrain of "Journeys end in lovers meeting" (*Hill House* 25) — Eleanor's fantasies sublimate a swirl of memories and learned behaviour, all but fusing an essentialized and heteronormative conception of womanhood with specific images of domesticity and home. This spatial-domestic system — Eleanor's "diagram of inhabiting," in other words — is what truly "haunts" her, miring her in traumatic repetition and preventing her from change and self-transformation.

Even before its full appearance in the text, Hill House seems to stand in for this same spectral force, exerting a strange, dream-like power over Eleanor. Like the spatial order she has been internalizing since childhood, Hill House draws her closer and inward, steering her movements and scripting her emotions all while estranging her from herself. On the road, she follows Dr. Montague's directions "as though he had been guiding her from some spot far away, moving her car with controls in his hands" (16). The map he has provided — "so carefully charted" (15) — is yet another diagram orienting Eleanor in space and leading her forward as if in a dream. When she stops for coffee in Hillsdale she wonders if by doing so she is "disobeying" (16) the doctor and his commands, already assigning him the paternalistic role he later takes up in Hill House, where he refers to his guests as "willful, spoiled children" (50) and blithely assumes a position of knowing authority. Once again, the sequence demonstrates how easily the family dynamics of Eleanor's past reassert themselves. Either Hill House is supernaturally reproducing these dynamics or Eleanor is unconsciously determined to recreate them herself. In time, this becomes one of the central questions of the novel. For now, it is

enough to consider the ways in which Jackson introduces Hill House as both deeply familiar and deeply alienating.

When Eleanor finally arrives at the house and sees it for the first time, for example, the scene reads more like a horrifying homecoming than a much longed-for escape. The house is immediately “vile” (23) to her, its effect so powerful she begins to shiver and shake, a “sick voice” whispering inside her head: “*Get away from here, get away*” (24). At the same time, the house stirs something visceral and even primordial in her, triggering a recognition so deep as to be on the level of dreams and drives. As the narrator writes, Hill House catches her “with an atavistic turn in the pit of [her] stomach” (24). The scene is one of uncanny recognition, forcing a confrontation between Eleanor and her own traumatized, stunted self. When she steps up to the front door and brings her hand to the iron knocker, it stares back at her in the likeness of a “child’s face” (25), bringing her, as it were, face to face with herself. “Watchfu[l]” (24) and “waiting” (25), the mansion beckons and even seduces her. In these first moments, Jackson foreshadows what will later be confirmed about the house. Inside, Eleanor will confront a chilling repetition of the spatial-familial order already engraved in her — a series of haunted and haunting repetitions, from the dead-undead mother to the absent-present father; from the animus and guilt of sibling rivalry to the loneliness and fear of unbelonging. To use Bachelard’s terminology, Hill House gothically enacts the “oneiric house” already inscribed in Eleanor’s unconscious, the “interminable dream” of her subjectification. For, as we shall see, bound up with the mansion are all of the dreams Eleanor has been taught to imagine about herself, about family, about womanhood, about her place in the world. As she says later on this first day: “I’m sure I’ve been here before…In a book of fairy tales, perhaps” (37).

IV. "Insistent Hospitality": Victorian Architecture and the Vengeance of the Interior

Eleanor's reaction to the house turns on the ambiguity of what might be called Hill House's "oneiric architecture." At once physically sound and supernaturally sentient, the house is both an inanimate structure and (seemingly) a living, breathing, *dreaming* entity in its own right. The novel's opening paragraph establishes this ambiguity. As Jackson writes:

> No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality, even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone. (1)

Significantly, the only definitive attribute this paragraph confirms about Hill House is its date of construction. If the narrator is speaking in Jackson's present of 1959 and the house has stood for eighty years, then it was built in 1879. This places Hill House firmly within the Victorian period and, moreover, at the height of Victorian architecture's influence on nineteenth-century American design.

As the novel progresses, Eleanor's psychological disintegration becomes increasingly tied to Victorian architecture and its discourse. More specifically, her reaction to Hill House as a supernaturally oneiric space — seemingly haunted by its own dreams as well as the dreams of others — becomes connected to Jackson's careful depiction of the Victorian interior, a space historically associated with both dream-like self-actualization and depersonalizing horror. In

researching her novel, Jackson steered away from the New England houses that surrounded her in southwestern Vermont, saying they were too square and neoclassical to be haunted (qtd. in Franklin 402). Instead, she gravitated towards the heavy ornamentation and architectural complexity of Victorianism (Franklin 402-403).[30] In the end, Hill House invokes a number of recognizable if disparate trends from the late Victorian period. The exterior of the house, for example, seems to incorporate design elements from a variety of Victorian movements and schools, its castle-like tower, clusters of rough-cut stones, and decorative woodwork recalling everything from the Richardsonian Romanesque and Victorian Gothic revivals to the Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Stick-Eastlake styles.

While this exterior amalgamates an eclectic mix of nineteenth-century influences, the inside of the house faithfully reproduces (perhaps even to an extreme) the quintessential Victorian aesthetic. Theodora, who owns an antique shop and is design savvy, immediately recognizes it as such, establishing for the reader an important connection between the Victorians and their smothering interiors. "It's altogether Victorian," she says on her first day in the house, already a little horrified. "They simply wallowed in this kind of great billowing overdone sort of thing and buried themselves in folds of velvet and tassels and purple plush" (*Hill House* 36). An atmosphere of numbing, oppressive heaviness persists throughout the house. The walls are covered in heavy wood panelling and lugubrious wallpaper (42, 45); the rooms are painted in moody greens and sombre blues (28, 31); the furniture is "rounded and slippery," with a sinking

[30] In a letter dated January 14, 1958, just as Jackson was beginning to research her new novel, she writes to her mother and asks if Geraldine would forward any information, photos, or even plans of the Victorian mansions which Jackson remembered from her childhood in California, from the Winchester Mystery House to the San Francisco houses designed by her own Bugbee ancestors — what Jackson calls "big old california gingerbread houses" (*The Letters of Shirley Jackson* 356). In the letter, Jackson goes on to write: "the reason for this is my new book; it is to be about a haunted house, and i can't seem to find anything around here; all the old new england houses are the kind of square, classical type which wouldn't be haunted in a million years…i am all wound up in houses right now, and spent yesterday in the library reading old architecture books…it is so exciting; i may end up taking courses in architecture at the college" (356).

plushness (42); the velvet drapes cover the windows and block out the natural light (36); and the lamps are all coloured and beaded, casting gloomy shadows into the corners of the rooms (42). The décor, meanwhile, is gilded and ornate or else cast in waxen marble, cherubic figurines and sightless statuary smiling creepily at their visitors (42, 79). Even the carpets underfoot appear to undulate and glow in dizzying, convoluted patterns (42). The overall effect is hypnotic, if not suffocating, the "quiet weight of the house press[ing] down" (42) on its guests with what Dr. Montague describes as an "insistent hospitality" (48).

This aesthetic is clearly tied to Eleanor's supernatural experience of the house, in particular her feelings of physical and psychic absorption. But it is also an entirely accurate depiction of Victorian architecture and its conception of the domestic interior. As cultural historian Charles Rice points out, the very notion of the interior as we have come to understand it only emerges in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, when a consideration of interior design as specifically architectural coincides with the rise of the social sphere and, eventually, psychology and psychoanalysis (1-5).[31] It is in this context that the furnishings and decorations of the private home come to act as material reflections of the individual and their inner character. The Victorian interior therefore establishes what Rice describes as a distinctive "doubleness" (2), the inside of the house now representing the interdependence between interior and interiority — a physical, three-dimensional space that also functions as an "exteriorized theatre" (43) wherein the subject imagines and even dreams their inner life into being. The supernatural undertones of Hill House's architecture, as described in Jackson's opening paragraph, are then not so far off from the discourse of Victorian design and its domestic interior, a space that was meant to "dream" the individual's inner self into being, at once enacting and embodying it.

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[31] See Rice's *The Emergence of the Interior* (2007), in which he delineates this history through a close reading of architecture and its discourse.

Jackson's novel inflects this space with horror and dissociation. For, as her novel demonstrates, depending on whose interiority is being dreamed and reflected, such an interior might be seen either as a space of protected intimacy or as an oppressive mechanism of control and socialization. Historically, the Victorian home almost exclusively reflected the inner life and values of the family patriarch. Cut off from the rest of the world and stuffed with family heirlooms and items of personal significance, it quickly became associated with temporal stall, regression, normativity, and accumulated trauma (2-3; 37-38). As Anthony Vidler and Sarah Thorne, among other critics, point out, it is partly for this reason that the Victorian house has so often been depicted as "diseased" or "ill," a space variously associated with clutter, congestion, isolation, restrictive identities, repetition, repression, confinement, contamination, and even madness, entombment, and absorption (Vidler 17-44; Thorne 17-21). These are the associations the literary Gothic conventionally exploits in its portrayals of Victorian architecture, and it is not hard to see, in the case of *Hill House*, how Jackson does much the same. When Eleanor arrives at the house, she immediately intuits its "diseased" (*Hill House* 23) and even "maniac" (24) character; as soon as she steps inside, she feels "swallowed whole" (29) by its suffocating design and décor.

If the Victorian interior was meant to reflect the mind and inner world of its inhabitant, then Jackson leaves little doubt as to whose psychic presence Hill House represents. We are told the house's original owner and architect, Hugh Crain, built "his house to suit his mind" (77), an association several characters reiterate throughout the text. This association taps into the Victorian interior as historically delineated above, as well as the discourse of the patriarchal home to be found in classical and Renaissance architecture discussed earlier. As a physical space, Hill House defies conventional scale and organization. The house is "chillingly wrong in

all its dimensions" (28), everything is "on a very slight slant" (77), the stairs are "not level" (77), rooms are "entirely inside [other] rooms" (46), and every angle is "actually a fraction of a degree off in one direction or another" (77). Jackson links these "oddities" (46) to Crain, an apparently obsessive and authoritarian parent who is said to have built the house specifically for his wife and two daughters (54). When Luke finds a book in the library written in Crain's own blood, it becomes clear just how obsessive Crain actually was, especially when it comes to women and female sexuality. Addressed to one of his daughters, the book is a manual on docility and chastity, with Crain describing himself as the "autho[r] of [his daughter's] being" (124). In it, he reminds her of an "unceasing duty" to "preserve thyself" or else face "[e]ternal damnation" (124). The book is the textual equivalent of Hill House's broader architectural project. As Montague reminds us, Crain designed the house himself (77), and as its many peculiarities accumulate and are described in detail, Jackson suggests how the house's warped architecture is both physically and psychically disorienting, particularly for the women in the house. If Crain's "tiny aberrations of measurement" add up to a "fairly large distortion" (77), then what the house distorts is female self-identity, its architecture a technology of estrangement and control, or, in the words of Melanie Anderson, a "monstrous monument to patriarchal parenting" (54).

As a reflection of Crain's mind, Hill House therefore embodies the doubleness of an interior/interiority that functions as a mechanism of physical confinement and subjectification. Out of everyone in the house, Theodora resists this paradigm the most. After all, she embodies everything that the "interior," in its many senses, is not. From her telepathic powers to her ambiguous sexuality, she is a character who represents the breaching of boundaries and the fluidity of categories rather than their rigidity or even necessity. If Hill House imposes Crain's mind on its visitors, then Theo is a psychic entity who symbolizes the fluency of extrasensory

borders; if it monumentalizes Crain's repressive notions of female self-expression, then she is exactly the kind of woman he would have attempted to contain and "correct" — loud, brash, colourful, confident, and sexually ambiguous. Throughout the novel, she openly taunts Crain and his house, perhaps for this very reason, flirting with his spirit, inviting him to dance with her (80), and then telling him to burn in hell (126). She flips the script on him, characterizing his house (and not her) as "filthy" (70, 73) and "foul" (70), the product of a "dirty old man" (126) with a dirty mind. Even the house's hauntings incite a defiant, transgressive thrill in her. "I thought it was exciting" (102), she confesses after the group's first night of terror, not without inuendo. The doctor — himself a stuffy father figure within the house — frowns and wags his finger: "This excitement troubles me" (102). Indeed, what is so troubling about Theo is her perceived excessiveness, the way she keeps evading the repressive notions of femininity which Hill House and its Victorian interior represent. While the house's doors are constantly closing themselves shut (83), as if supernaturally reasserting this interior and its symbolism, Theo eludes the most stultifying interior of all — definition.

In these respects, she brings to mind what architectural historian Katherine Shonfield describes as the "compromised edge," a symbolic source of breach or point of egress that opens up the interior to the outside world. Shonfield outlines this concept in her book *Walls Have Feelings* (2000), in which she discusses 1960s horror films and their depictions of architectural space.[32] She argues that films like *Repulsion* (1965) and *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) depict female characters in the midst of testing their physical, psychic, and/or sexual boundaries, only to be swallowed whole by the domestic interior. As such, these depictions dramatize the reassertion of normative and restrictive notions of female identity, with consuming architectural space

[32] See *Walls Have Feelings* (2000), particularly Chapter 3, pp. 55-74.

gothically reacting against mid-century changes in social mores and gender expressions (57-68). They also dramatize, according to Shonfield, a related anxiety over actual mid-century architecture itself, which physically opened up the interior by way of glass architecture, the open plan, indoor-outdoor living, and other experimentations in design. The horror represented in these films therefore portrays a combined reaction to changes at once social and architectural, a reaction Shonfield terms "the vengeance of the interior" (56).

Shonfield's concepts are helpful in teasing out the complexity of *Hill House*'s multi-layered architectural symbolism. One way to read the novel, for example, is through the above terms, with Eleanor stuck between the opposing forces of Theo's "compromised edge" and Crain's "revenge of the interior." Eleanor's dissolution, after all, is precipitated by the tension between her desire for a new life and new sense of self (as represented by Theo) and the fear and guilt that keep reproducing the affective patterns and restrictive notions of her past (as represented by Crain and his house). Moreover, as the novel progresses and Jackson's symbolism connects more and more with her own cultural and architectural moment, Shonfield's correlation between mid-century design and the postwar Gothic resonates with *Hill House*. As we shall see, Jackson places the Victorian interior on an ideological continuum with certain experimentations in postwar domestic design. In doing so, she suggests how these respective architectural epochs, each in their own way, perpetuates the dreams of a patriarchal culture, enacting "the vengeance of the interior." Increasingly, Hill House is depicted as a womb-like space intent on reabsorbing Eleanor into the maternal relation. On the one hand, these maternal associations gesture yet again to the Victorian era and its cult of smothering Mother Love; on the other, they resonate powerfully with Jackson's own postwar milieu, from the parenting discourse found in the popular culture of the time to specific movements in domestic architecture and

household design. In turn, while the mansion's intrauterine associations are undeniably connected to Eleanor and the haunting presence of her mother, we might also find that they lead us back, once again, to the house's original architect and patriarch. After all, as Montague reminds us, Hill House is indeed "a masterpiece of architectural misdirection" (*Hill House* 78).

V. "Born Bad": Monstrous Moms, "Architectural Transsexuality," and Postwar Womb Fantasies

"It's all so motherly," Luke says of Hill House. "Everything so soft. Everything so padded. Great embracing chairs and sofas which turn out to be hard and unwelcome when you sit down, and reject you at once" (154). By now, the interpretation of Hill House as a consuming, motherly space is something of a critical commonplace. As Richard Pascal notes, any sensitive reading of the novel cannot help but acknowledge the mansion's maternal associations ("Walking Alone Together" 469).[33] At first glance, Luke's comments appear to reinforce such readings, as well as Eleanor's own reactions to the house — namely, her sense that the mansion uncannily reproduces the repressed tensions of her relationship with her mother. Jackson, after all, maps this relationship onto the space of Hill House. Outside the library, Eleanor recoils from the "cold air of mold and earth which rushe[s] [up] at her" from the doorway, saying only "I can't go in there" and "My mother—" before falling silent (*Hill House* 75). A few scenes later, the cold spot felt by everyone outside the nursery is coupled by the "indefinable air of neglect" (87) sensed only by Eleanor inside of it. Afterward, she ascribes a kind of intentionality and even

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[33] What might be called the "maternal reading" of *Hill House* undergirds several approaches to the novel, from a feminist psychoanalytic reading of the book to Jackson's treatment of "monstrous maternity" to the trope of the "house-as-mother." To cite only a few examples that stand out: Newman, "Shirley Jackson and the Reproduction of Mothering: *The Haunting of Hill House*" (1990; 2005); Evans, "Monstrous Maternity in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*" (2018); and Bobiy, "The House as Mother in Jackson's House Trilogy" (2021).

animus to the nursery, a clearly symbolic space representing parent-child dynamics: "It doesn't seem like an *impartial* cold," Eleanor says. "I felt it as *deliberate*" (88).

These associations are reinforced by the novel's scenes of haunting, all of which revisit and even re-stage certain scenes from Eleanor's past. The first sees Eleanor awakened by what she thinks is her mother's voice — "*Eleanor*, she heard, *Eleanor*" (93) — but which turns out to be an unexplained banging that travels along the walls of Hill House and stops at Eleanor's door. Eleanor immediately connects this banging to her mother, in particular her mother's knocking on the shared wall between their rooms when she needed help — "my mother is knocking on the wall" (93), she thinks. Subsequent hauntings similarly revisit the tortured dynamics of care between Eleanor and her mother. When a series of messages appear on the walls of Hill House, not only are they addressed to Eleanor, they also explicitly invoke her filial duty, as well as implying her neglect: "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (107, 114), they read. Bringing these motifs together, Eleanor later confesses to Theo the sense of guilt she still feels at her mother's death, describing the night her mother died: "It was my fault my mother died…She knocked on the wall and called me and called me and I never woke up. I ought to have brought her the medicine…But of course no matter when it happened it was going to be my fault" (156). Between the walls of Hill House, Eleanor's mother is gothically transmuted into a monstrous source of need, haunting her daughter with feelings of guilt and shame.

The novel therefore develops a poetics of haunting undeniably connected to a so-called "toxic mother." But at the same time, it also suggests the haunting nature of certain persistent *notions* of motherhood, the equally toxic conceptions of mothers and motherhood that linger and are passed down as the "ghosts" of patriarchal culture. Luke's complaints, for example, crystallize the contradictions inherent to such notions. To him, "motherly" is shorthand for an

emotional ambivalence at once nurturing *and* withholding — Hill House's "maternal" décor is "soft" and "embracing" as well as "hard and unwelcome." To the postwar reader, these contradictions would have been discernible echoes of the "momism" critiques then consuming popular culture. These critiques were exemplified most famously by Philip Wylie's 1942 best-selling book *Generation of Vipers*, an exaggerated excoriation of the so-called "smothering mother" for which he coined the term "momism." In 1946, the psychiatrist Edward A. Strecker gave professional credence to the term, classifying seven different types of "Mom" and providing a taxonomy of alleged maternal failings he defined as "symptoms." In the process, he transformed Wiley's term of "momism" from what cultural historian Rebecca Jo Plant calls "a raucous satire into a quasi-diagnosis" (103). In both the popular and psychiatric cultures of the time, the American Mom was therefore pathologized along the lines of Luke's comments, with postwar mothers vilified for being either too protective and nurturing or not caring and affectionate enough — or both. Soon the distinction between "good mothers" and "bad moms" — or, for that matter, between motherhood and "momism" — was all but undermined and erased (van den Oever 8). As Plant argues, the rhetoric behind momism became so vitriolic and contradictory it effectively legitimized a phobic response to *any* form of maternal affectivity (12).

At times, Hill House appears to embody these matrophobic notions of motherhood as much, if not more, than any of the actual mothers associated with its history or its inhabitants. As Pascal writes, the home's "décor is deceptive, for the overbearing mother that harasses Eleanor is not fully intelligible as a latter day counterpart of any of Hill House's previous maternal residents, Crain's three wives" ("Walking Alone Together" 470). Instead, like the Halloran mansion in *The Sundial* and many of Jackson's other fictional homes, Hill House at

once gestures toward the gothic past and toward Jackson's own postwar moment. The house, that is, is both a glaring monument to Hugh Crain's obsession with Victorian notions of domesticity and maternalism as well as a terrifying caricature of the American Mom, the spectre then haunting the country's parenting culture.

In particular, the house and its backstory seem to suggest that Hugh Crain is a kind of "mother" to the house, while the house itself functions as a kind of mother to his children. Which is to say, as architect and patriarch, Crain constructs an unhomely facsimile of the maternal, one that stands in for (and imposes) his own notions of motherhood. Along these lines, once his house is complete, the actual mother of his children is suddenly rendered redundant — before she can even step inside, Crain's first wife is killed off in an accident that is never explained (*Hill House* 54). His subsequent wives later follow suit. The house he has conceived and built effectively takes their place. In some sense, his daughters are raised *by* Hill House. Eventually, he leaves them behind, and yet, even in his absence, they grow up in a home so inextricably linked to his mind and values that his presence continues to haunt the mansion to this day.

In these respects, Crain exemplifies what architectural historian Diana Agrest describes as architecture's repression of the maternal body. In her book *Architecture from Without* (1993), Agrest focuses on architects and theorists such as Alberti and Filarete, figures who proved deeply influential in the development of the Western family home both as a built, material environment and as a cultural, ideological symbol. Agrest argues that in their writings these theorists co-opt the maternal body and its sexual functions, perpetuating a pervasive male fantasy of the womb and its reproductive ability. More specifically, the figure of the architect comes to embody what Agrest terms "man's ever-present procreative fantasy" (362), a fantasy that explicitly usurps the maternal body's reproductive power, reassigning the feminine attributes

necessary for conception and birth to the male creator. "Woman is then replaced," Agrest writes, "in an extraordinary operation I call here architectural transsexuality, for which the repression of woman is essential" (364).[34] Within this operation, "[t]he figure of the architect becomes feminized in the act of procreation" (363). Filarete, for example, writes that the architect "conceives" his building within himself and then "carries it," dreaming about his creation, thinking about it, and turning it over in his mind, "just as a woman carries her child in her body for seven or nine months" (Filarete qtd. in Agrest 363). This process apparently concludes with a double transformation: "When the architect has given birth," Filarete writes, "he becomes the mother of the building" (qtd. in Agrest 363).

Jackson's novel positions Crain as an architect in this mould. "Some houses are born bad" (*Hill House* 50), Montague says, implying in some sense that Hill House itself has a mother. "A mother house…housemother" (156), Luke later says of the mansion. But if the house's lingering maternal presence could be traced back to its source, there would be only one person to consider: Hugh Crain. In keeping with Agrest's concept of "architectural transsexuality," the home that Crain conceives and brings into the world is an unnerving co-optation of the maternal. This is perhaps another sense in which Hill House is "a masterpiece of architectural misdirection" (78). Rather than being hospitable, the house has an "insistent hospitality" (48), refusing to let its visitors leave; rather than being nurturing, it is overbearing and suffocating, "swallow[ing]" up its inhabitants like a "monster" (29). The novel's gothic poetics, in other words, advance the house as the realization of a male procreative fantasy,

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[34] While Agrest's concept is a useful intervention within architectural discourse and its near-endless metaphorization of the feminine, I should note my discomfort with the particular term "architectural transsexuality," as it seems to imply that transsexuality or transgenderism is a kind of fraudulent impersonation of gender. Agrest outlined this concept in 1993 and this is clearly not her intention with the term, especially in today's context, but it seems worth noting all the same.

whereby the patriarch/architect replaces the maternal body (as well as the mother herself) with an architectural analogue that stands in for his own conceptions of motherliness.

Significantly, this same fantasy can also be found within the design culture and architectural discourse of Jackson's time. As Caroline Rupprecht argues in her book *Womb Fantasies: Subjective Architectures in Postmodern Literature, Cinema, and Art* (2013), the postwar era held a particular fascination with the womb as a regenerative symbol of security and protection, especially in the context of growing nuclear fears. The apparent desire to return to the womb — a supposedly unconscious and previously taboo desire — began to appear openly in the rhetoric and symbolism of cultural production and popular design. Indeed, such representations testify to a widespread discourse of the era, one that responded to the Atomic Age by investing the womb with "cultural fantasies of protection and shelter" (Rupprecht 7). From architects like Eero Saarinen to filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Rupprecht examines these womb fantasies (and the attendant "womb envy" of their male artists and architects) in order to paint a portrait of an era that was veritably womb-obsessed.

When it comes to architecture and design, the appeal of womb-like spaces proved especially influential to one specific movement — what became known as biomorphism. An aesthetic response to interwar modernism's rectilinearity and a political reaction to the Second World War and its aftermath, biomorphism called on openness and flexibility to inaugurate what it hoped would be a more humane architecture. To do so, it emphasized natural shapes and biological forms which cast back to the earliest spaces of inhabitation, tapping into a visceral sense of protected intimacy. Several architects took this concept to its logical conclusion, designing explicitly womb-like interiors.

In the same years that Jackson was working on her House Trilogy — from roughly 1957 to 1962 — biomorphism's maternal emphasis was foregrounded in popular examples of architecture and design. Eero Saarinen's famous Womb Chair, for instance, was marketed heavily throughout the 1950s, in some cases appearing in the same publications for which Jackson wrote. In turn, his TWA terminal at Idlewild Airport, considered by many to be "the mainstream high-water mark of [postwar] biomorphic architecture" (Filler 130), was universally interpreted as an intentionally womb-like space, its coiling staircases compared to fallopian tubes, its departure tunnel to a birth canal (Lacayo qtd. in Rupprecht 8).[35] Architects like Saarinen not only invoked the womb as an organically protective space. They also invoked architecture as a procreative process in which their designs served as replacements for the womb or they themselves were theorized as surrogates for maternal figures. The design of Saarinen's TWA terminal, for example, recreated the prenatal environment in order to ease the specific anxieties of air travel. According to Saarinen, being launched into the sky was, in some sense, akin to the trauma of birth; as such, his architecture sought to reproduce the security and comfort of the womb in the moments beforehand. In turn, as products like the Womb Chair ultimately suggest, the desire to return to the womb was not merely popularized in cultural production or design — it was also commodified and made available for purchase. In a letter to a happy customer, Saarinen writes that the Womb Chair had been "designed on the theory that a great number of people have never felt really comfortable and secure since they left the womb. The chair is an attempt to rectify this maladjustment" (qtd. in McAtee 18). Whether or not Saarinen knew how closely he was channeling Freud is unclear, but as Rupprecht writes, referring to the

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[35] Idlewild Airport is now known as John F. Kennedy International Airport. Although the TWA Flight Centre (Terminal 5) is no longer in use as part of the airport, in 2017 it was restored according to Saarinen's original designs and repurposed as part of a hotel.

Womb Chair: "To crawl back into the womb and curl up in there loses its monstrous connotations when reified into an object via retail" (7-8).

Jackson's novel reasserts these monstrous connotations. If biomorphism evoked the womb as a protective space conducive to self-development, then Hill House reproduces a near-identical space with a near-opposite effect, depicting male-driven womb fantasies as suffocating architectural horror. In what follows, I place Hill House next to a specific case study in domestic biomorphism — the Austrian-American architect Frederick Kiesler's signal project *Endless House*. By doing so, I hope to show how the oddities and peculiarities of Jackson's haunted house in fact tap into a very specific and very real architectural movement, one that proves eerily representative of the dreams and nightmares that her novel deconstructs. Whereas *Endless House* self-consciously stages a return to the womb as a return to the subject's idealized "home," *Hill House* stages a similar return with horrific results. Jackson's novel therefore uses uncanny horror to debunk her era's intrauterine fantasies, fantasies which saw widespread traction in popular culture, design, and architecture. In turn, the novel also suggests that, far from a groundbreaking avant-garde, certain strands of modernist architecture merely reproduced the same ideological discourse of the family home stretching back through Victorianism to Renaissance Italy and even Ancient Greece, an architectural discourse "haunted" by the male imagination.

VI. Biomorphic Maternalism: Hill House/*Endless House* I

While the correspondences between Hill House and *Endless House* do not necessarily suggest Jackson's personal awareness of Kiesler or of his designs, it seems more than possible (if not likely) that Jackson would have known about biomorphism in general. During the same period in which she was researching her novel — clipping out articles on architecture and

collecting architectural photographs (Jackson, "Experience and Fiction" 227) — features on biomorphism's design tenets and ethos, as well as profiles of its more prominent architects, were appearing regularly in popular magazines and newspapers. Kiesler and his designs for *Endless House*, for example, were profiled in *Life* and *Time* magazines in 1952, and his work was featured in the *New York Times* on several occasions later that decade (Phillips 257). Moreover, between 1958 and 1959, the same years in which Jackson wrote and published her novel, *Endless House* was the subject of a solo exhibition at MoMA in New York, eliciting a number of reviews and write-ups. (The January 1958 trip to New York that Jackson cites as one of the inspirations for *Hill House* coincided with this exhibit, although there is no evidence that Jackson attended.[36]) By then, biomorphism had permeated the postwar zeitgeist, attaining a cultural ubiquity that spanned from major architectural projects to household dinnerware. As one architecture critic puts it, in the 1950s biomorphic design began to appear "with unusual simultaneity in everything from ceramics to town planning" (Filler 122). In terms of Jackson and her novel, Hill House's unique depiction as a womb-like interior resonates powerfully with the movement in general and Kiesler's architectural practice in particular.

In the novel, Jackson presents Hill House as a living, breathing thing, an extrasensory space that physically and psychically responds to its inhabitants, turning them around and around in a seemingly endless environment. While her personal drawings of the house follow a rectilinear floor plan, the novel's descriptions belie such plans, with several characters commenting on the circular and enclosing interior of the house. Montague, for instance, describes the floor plan as a "concentric circle" comprised of inner and outer rings of rooms, the former without windows or a "direct way to the outside" (*Hill House* 73). The house envelops

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[36] For more on this trip and its connection to *Hill House*, see Jackson, "Experience and Fiction" p. 227, as well as Franklin, pp. 400-402.

Eleanor within this interior, its architecture consistently portrayed as coming "around her in a rush" (25), coming "back all around her" (29), or "press[ing] down from all around" (42). Jackson depicts this space as explicitly anthropomorphic and corporeal. According to some critics, her drawings are even unconscious projections of her own physical insecurities and ailments: the front porch is a row of crooked teeth expressing her dental problems; the main hallway is a large intestine representing her struggles with colitis; the library is a gigantic stomach suggesting her obesity (Hattenhauer 164-165). More conventionally, critics have associated the house's body-like interior with the womb. In these readings, the library, the nursery, and Eleanor's room are all variously inflected with a prenatal terror.

By comparison, *Endless House* was also conceived as a living, breathing thing, itself a responsive body that would attend to the bodies of its inhabitants, specifically by "recreat[ing] the sensual environment of continuity with the mother" (Phillips 237). Envisioning a domestic space wherein "all ends meet, and meet continuously" (Kiesler qtd. in Phillips 258), Kiesler developed a structural principle he had been working on since the mid-1920s. In contrast to traditional frame construction, he created a rounded, cave-like interior by "reducing joints [and] unifying walls, ceilings, and floors into one continuous environment" (Phillips 219). Such "tension-shell construction," as Kiesler called it, was meant to respond to the inhabitant's "inherent life processes" (258), enveloping them within the "warm palpable depths" of an "elastic skin" (263-264). The maternal associations are intentional. *Endless House* was to be the realization of Kiesler's own self-confessed "intrauterine fetish" (qtd. in Phillips 237). It was an architectural concept he had been working on for decades. From the beginning, his notion of a warmly comforting and responsively nurturing interior was openly intended to evoke the womb (236). His association between architecture and the female body, however, began much earlier

— according to him, in childhood. In a somewhat disturbing but most likely apocryphal genesis story which both he and his wife repeated several times in interviews, Kiesler claimed he discovered he was an architect as a young boy when, after sneaking under the skirts of his nanny, he lighted a match and looked up (232). The career that followed developed an architectural practice that explicitly pursued what Kiesler called his "obsessive neurotic return to the womb" (260). *Endless House* was the culmination of this obsession. As Kiesler put it, inside *Endless House* "you could womb yourself into happy solitude" (qtd. in Phillips 260).

There is little doubt that Jackson inflects Hill House with an equally powerful set of intrauterine associations, and yet the house produces anything but "happy solitude." Instead, it stages a return to the womb that quickly devolves into nightmarish horror. Tricia Lootens, for example, describes the trajectory of Eleanor's disintegration as a kind of reverse birth, with Eleanor increasingly incorporated into the house and with Hill House representing "the original womb/tomb" (158). Alone in her room for the first time, Eleanor feels consumed by the house, "a small creature swallowed whole by a monster," the monster feeling her "tiny little movements inside" (*Hill House* 29). This "intrauterine fantasy," Judie Newman writes, "immediately associates Hill House with an engulfing mother" (173). Roberta Rubenstein similarly associates Hill House's architectural space with an "externalized maternal body, simultaneously seductive and threatening" (317). By the end of the novel, these associations are unmistakable. Calling out to her mother, Eleanor dances through the house, spinning around and around in circles as the walls and floors hug her body "caressingly" (*Hill House* 171). Arriving at the library — a space already associated with her mother — she brushes aside her earlier fears and enters at will. Along with Lootens and Newman, Lynne Evans argues that "the library operates symbolically as a womb" (7). Whereas earlier Eleanor recoiled from this association, now she seeks it out. In

other words, she conflates Hill House's womb-like atmosphere with a lost, original home. In the library's enfolding embrace, she suddenly feels "protected" and "deliciously, fondly warm" (*Hill House* 170-171). "Here I am inside," she thinks. "I am home, I am home" (171).

Having failed to form another emotional bond outside the maternal relation, Eleanor retreats back into Hill House, confusing it with a nurturing motherly force and ignoring the uncanny and even fatal consequences of this confusion until it is too late. As Eleanor herself admits, she has "never been wanted *anywhere*" (154) and she does not have "a home, no place at all" (177). The novel therefore positions the house as a surrogate womb/home, a representation of Eleanor's desire to return to the womb as a return "home." As the architect of Hill House, Hugh Crain stages this return, creating a house that serves as an unhomely facsimile of the maternal embrace. In this sense, his designs and intentions are in keeping with the tradition of "womb fantasies" and "womb envy" discussed above, a tradition that represses the maternal body and strips it of its reproductive power. This tradition extends throughout architectural history from theorists and architects like Xenophon and Filarete to Kiesler and postwar biomorphism.

In a dynamic comparable to that of Hugh Crain, Kiesler saw his buildings as maternal substitutes and himself as a kind of "architect-mother," as it were bringing to term his progeny within body and mind alike. In a rather poetic essay from 1959 — the same year *Hill House* was published — Kiesler tries to describe the gestation of *Endless House*. "The idea has developed over forty years," he writes, "and it nests deep and wide all-over in my body, grain, muscles, nerves; it is part of my bloodstream, memories — past of past-moments. It's now a matter of timing when to cut loose somewhere the elastic mesh and let it out" ("Hazard and the Endless House" 63). It is hard not to hear, in Kiesler's language, the obvious connection he believed

existed between his own creative process and the experiences of pregnancy and birth. Moreover, his depiction of *Endless House* as fused with his own body and mind parallels the home's "continuous environment" and its desired effects on the individual. This environment, in other words, sought to merge subject and house in a mutually responsive alloplasticity. Kiesler believed that by doing so he could reproduce the ideal home of the prenatal interior; in turn, he would achieve an architectural symbiosis which, for the inhabitant, would be both mentally and physically restorative.

In *Hill House*, Eleanor achieves just such a symbiosis, and yet rather than the curative benefits envisioned by Kiesler, Jackson's own alloplastic mansion only exacerbates Eleanor's mental dissolution. The novel sees Eleanor sensually and consciously fused with Hill House, her body and mind coterminous with its rooms and corridors, receptive to its sights and sounds, even entwined with its memories. As Melanie Anderson writes, the novel tracks Eleanor's "slow deterioration into a merged subjectivity with the house" (45). Eleanor is depicted as "feeling and hearing and smelling" everything that happens on its grounds and between its walls, from the scent of a "flowering bush" in the garden to an "eddy of wind" in the nursery (*Hill House* 179). "I can feel the whole house" (170), she thinks at one point. At another, she simultaneously senses the kitchen stove "settling and cooling," a rabbit moving "through the bushes near the summerhouse," the "dust drifting gently in the attics," and even "the [house's] wood aging" (165). By her own admission, she "disappear[s] inch by inch into [the] house" (149). Ultimately, the distinction between her own perceptions and those of the house simply dissolves. As Jackson succinctly put it in a manuscript note: "The house *is* Eleanor" (qtd. in Franklin 415, emphasis added).

In the end, Eleanor is forced to acknowledge that her assimilation into the mansion's architectural space signals the ultimate disintegration of her fragile identity. In one of the novel's later scenes of haunting, she thinks to herself: "No; it is over for me…It is too much…I will relinquish my possession of this self of mine; abdicate, give over willingly what I never wanted at all; whatever it wants of me it can have" (*Hill House* 150). As Judie Newman writes, for Eleanor the novel's final sections illustrate how, between the walls of Hill House, "ego dissolution has become primal bliss" (180). The novel's architectural figures suggest in turn how such dissolution is occasioned by a house in which male self-representation consumes female subjectivity. Much of Jackson's novel, that is, concerns a young woman's struggle for identity while trapped in a spatial and architectural paradigm that does not acknowledge sexual difference.

A similar paradigm emerges in Jackson's own architectural moment. Like her fictional mansion, biomorphic experimentations such as *Endless House* co-opted the maternal body in service to a male fantasy of reproductive power. For architects like Kiesler, such fantasies not only imbued their designs with notions of nurture and protection, they also elevated the architect's creative power via the endless metaphorization of the feminine. Jackson's novel debunks such fantasies, reasserting the monstrous connotations of a return to the womb and depicting essentialized notions of the maternal as extensions of the patriarchal imagination. Haunted by a cultural imaginary that estranges female identity, Eleanor struggles to distinguish between her own reality and the fantasies she has been taught to dream. This is yet another connection between Jackson's haunted mansion and Kiesler's *Endless House*. Like the novel, Kiesler's architectural writing advanced a near-supernatural theory of domestic space and its dream-like power. Which is to say, the dream motif that runs throughout Jackson's novel (as

well as my reading of it here) also runs through postwar biomorphism. To use a phrase of Kiesler's, *Endless House* was a "machine for dreaming" — and so, too, is Hill House, a sentient and nearly psychic home that taps into the unconscious. In what follows, I pursue this dream motif in Jackson's novel and biomorphism alike, exploring the ways in which Hill House and *Endless House* respectively call to the surface the inhabitant's deepest desires and darkest fears.

VII. Machines for Dreaming: Hill House/*Endless House* II

More than any other trope, dreams permeate Jackson's novel. This motif destabilizes Eleanor's sense of reality as well as the reader's sense of narrative perspective. From the opening paragraph to its repetition at the very end, the porous boundary between reality and dream produces an ambiguity that pervades the uncanny and disorienting atmosphere within Hill House and Eleanor's mind alike. As the novel progresses, Eleanor's daydreams seem to blur into waking life and the narrative present, while her nightmares become all too easily confused with the house's supernatural phenomena. Jackson even gleefully plays with suggestions of telepathy and psychic exchange, the conscious and unconscious minds of her characters interpenetrating such that her own narratorial reliability is thrown into question.[37] "The entire novel could be read as a series of waking dreams," writes Melanie Anderson, "transforming the house and its occupants into metaphors for Eleanor's disturbed mind. Once [Eleanor] joins her consciousness to Hill House, she has permanently severed ties to her old life, the present, and even reality itself" (47-48). Indeed, by the end of the novel the only "reality" to which Eleanor still clings is the joined consciousness, or psychic continuity, that now exists between herself and Hill House.

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[37] See Jodey Castricano's article, "Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and the Strange Question of Trans-Subjectivity" (2005), in which she theorizes a reading of the novel's narration based on Theo's telepathic readings of Eleanor's mind.

Again, there are echoes here with Kiesler's *Endless House*. Kiesler, for instance, believed such continuity would foster the subject's dream-like self-actualization. For him, domestic space was meant to serve a therapeutic and psychoanalytic purpose. By providing protection and solitude from the outside world and by fusing subject and home, the house performed a kind of psychic maintenance for both the conscious and unconscious minds. These restorative effects would be achieved through a relation Kiesler describes as "correalism," a founding principle of his architectural theory by which reality itself is an ever-changing reciprocal dynamic between house and occupant. Within this schema, the house is a "germ cell" or organism that can only survive by sharing its life and reality with the so-called "coordinating forces" inhabiting its environment — in other words, the residents of the house (Kiesler, "Pseudo-Functionalism" 29). The house, Kiesler writes, "puts forth myriad threads of its own in order to entangle itself in life. It cannot live without *others*. Its life is community. Its reality is a co-reality. Its realism is a correalism" (29). According to Kiesler, the access point through which subject and home achieve this co-reality is the permeable border between waking and dreaming life. As Stephen Phillips writes, adapting a famous phrase from Kiesler, *Endless House* was "a machine for dreaming, a sort of living organism that could be inhabited" (264). It tapped into the subject's most visceral and unconscious desires and experiences. It dreamt *with* and even *for* its inhabitants. Kiesler designed this "dream machine for curative effect" (264). The house itself was meant to probe the depths of the psyche through shared dreams of protection and safety.

Jackson's novel presents a similarly oneiric house, one that explicitly fosters a merged subjectivity or "co-reality" between itself and its occupants. Whereas Kiesler theorized such correalism as psychologically curative, Jackson realizes it as horrifically invasive and gothically dissociating. Hill House, as several critics have pointed out, seems to excavate each visitor's

repressed trauma or deepest insecurity, delving into the unconscious and then using the house's interior space as a setting or stage upon which to act out whatever horrors it has found. As Ruth Franklin writes:

> Hill House is itself a living force that adapts to its inhabitants and responds to their personalities and their histories…What Eleanor Vance [finds] inside is not a haunting from another world, but a confrontation with the reality of her psyche—the world of her own secrets and fears. (410)

When placed alongside Kiesler's theories of domestic architecture, Franklin's reading sounds eerily similar to "correalism" and its effects. Jackson's fictional house is then not so far off from the actual architecture of her time, its hauntings and supernatural phenomena inflecting Kiesler's biomorphism with a gothic edge. The synergies between Hill House and *Endless House* therefore call into relief the ways in which the novel refocuses certain movements in postwar design and discourse through the lens of gothic horror.

More pointedly, Jackson's novel might be read as an intervention within postwar architecture itself, in particular its claims of an altogether new form of domestic design. Rather than breaking with the past, projects such as *Endless House* suggest the "haunting" repetition of architecture's ties to the male imaginary and its endless metaphorization of the feminine. Indeed, what might be called a "correalist" reading of *Hill House* brings us full circle with the novel, from its original inspiration to its opening paragraph. Jackson's introductory description of the house, for example, might be read as a warped, gothic inversion of Kiesler's "correalist" theory. "No live organism," the novel starts, "can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within" (*Hill House* 1). According to Kiesler,

Endless House was also a “live organism” unable to exist under conditions of “absolute reality,” a domestic space that needed the realities of others to survive and in which dreams provided the necessary psychological catharsis to maintain sanity.

Kiesler’s dream metaphor is seductive until one remembers the fantasies to which the culture and architecture of Jackson’s time were subjecting women and their bodies. Throughout this chapter, we have encountered a number of such “dreams” — the coercive fantasies and controlling visions, which, throughout the history of domestic architecture and theory, have permeated house and home. From Alberti’s conception of domestic space as the projection of the *paterfamilias*’ mind and psyche to the Victorian interior’s similar embodiment of patriarchal interiority; from Gaston Bachelard’s “oneiric house” to biomorphism’s “machine for dreaming” — the origins and history of the family home are rooted in the male imagination, with the house the physical and symbolic stronghold of a phallocentric imaginary. It is in this sense that Hill House is a “dream machine.” Rather than an oneiric space that facilitates identity formation, Jackson depicts a gothically-rendered patriarchal home that “invad[es] human consciousness…[and] preys on Eleanor’s lonely hopes” (Anderson 48), causing her to lose her grip on reality. As Jackson writes in her lecture on the novel, the final sections of the story see Eleanor “so far lost in fantasy that reality cannot touch her anymore” (“Garlic in Fiction” 406). In the end, Eleanor dreams herself out of existence.

More specifically, her own dreams and desires are completely supplanted by those of the mansion and the cultural imaginary it represents. This imaginary not only hijacks Eleanor’s agency in the final moments of the novel; it also appears to trap her in a perpetual time loop, the conclusion’s multiple repetitions suggesting circularity and infinite recursion. After being asked to leave by Montague and the group, Eleanor drives her car into a tree, killing herself. Whether

this is meant to be taken as a defiant assertion of self or as a tragic expression of her powerlessness is left to the reader. “I am really doing it, I am doing this all by myself,” Eleanor thinks while driving toward the tree, “this is me, I am really really really doing it by myself” (*Hill House* 182). At the last second, however, she suddenly wonders: “*Why* am I doing this? Why am I doing this? Why don’t they stop me?” (182). As Judie Newman writes, Eleanor’s final thoughts “reveal a fatal connection between female self-assertion and annihilation” (180). Her suicide-by-car, moreover, might be read as a literal enactment of Freud’s “death drive.” A twisted inversion of her original car trip to Hill House and its promise of independence and freedom, it consummates Eleanor’s wilful regression to an earlier state. As she herself remarks, moments before her departure: “I would always come back here. It would be simpler to let me stay” (*Hill House* 177).

This recursion is reinforced by the scene’s symbolic repetitions. Eleanor’s suicide, after all, is a repetition of two earlier deaths in Hill House’s driveway: the death of Crain’s first wife, whose carriage was overturned just as she was arriving at the house, and the death of the house’s last, unnamed visitor eighteen years earlier, whose horse bolted and crushed him against a tree as he was trying to escape (54 and 48). These repetitions suggest Hill House’s own hopeless regression to certain inveterate patterns, its cycle of temporal stall and recursion. For Eleanor in particular they imply her Möbius-like entrapment within the male imaginary, the spatial and architectural paradigm of male self-representation that keeps her stuck in a continuous loop of dreams and fantasies — an “*economy of the Same*,” to borrow a phrase from Luce Irigaray (74). That Jackson ends her novel with the same paragraph that begins it reinforces this sense of perpetual repetition and entrapment. Like the library tower that turns Eleanor around and around and around, the novel itself is structured circularly. This is another sense in which Hill House is

an "endless house," a continuous environment that keeps Eleanor dizzy with other people's fantasies, trapped in the nightmare of an "interminable dream."

VIII. Conclusion: "The Demon in the Mind"

In the end, *Hill House* exemplifies the psychic distortions of a patriarchal culture and its architectural imaginary. From classical architecture's two-part conception of the family home to the Victorian interior and its projection of the *paterfamilias*; from womb fantasies and "architectural transsexuality" to biomorphism and its intrauterine fetish — Jackson's most overtly gothic novel is haunted by none other than the dreams and acculturated notions that co-opt, essentialize, and repress the feminine. These male-driven fantasies end up, quite literally, taking Eleanor's place, colonizing her mind and body until all that is left is the house itself, the "machine for dreaming" that proliferates such fantasies on an endless loop. This is in part what Mark Wigley means when he writes that domestic architecture has traditionally rendered "the feminine position…precisely not a position [at all]" ("Untitled" 385). For, in the discourse of Western architecture, a "woman's place" is not simply in the home. Worse, she *is* the home. Consumed by the space that physically and symbolically "houses" her, she has no place at all. That Jackson should overlay this historical reality with a gothic valence is apt. As Angela Carter, in one of her own interventions within the genre, says of a character: "She herself is a haunted house. She does not possess herself" ("The Lady of the House of Love" 102). It is exactly this kind of dispossession that Jackson's novel depicts. Between the walls of Hill House, Eleanor's self is corroded by a cultural imaginary that supplants her identity with dreams and visions of its own.

Like nearly all of the House Trilogy's central characters, Eleanor conflates her search for a sense of self with her search for a home. As Nora Caplan-Bricker writes, the "canon of haunted-house novels is full of this conflation," a genre populated by people like Eleanor, "who don't know who they are at bottom, and [who] go seeking a home in the hopes of meeting themselves there" ("House Hunters"). In this respect, *Hill House* takes up the dream of female self-sufficiency that runs throughout Jackson's trilogy, a dream which, more often than not, takes the form of an idealized or even fantastical domestic dwelling — a gingerbread house, a woodcutter's hut, a home on the moon. Perhaps more so than her other novels, however, *Hill House* dramatizes how easily these same dreams can become entangled with the fantasies and expectations of a dominant culture, making it difficult (if not impossible) for girls and women to distinguish between their own desires and what they have been taught to dream. What is truly terrifying about the novel is the alienating insecurity that this imaginary breeds in a character like Eleanor, exacerbating her neuroses, dissociating her from reality, and annihilating her very identity. *Are these thoughts my own? Are these actions my own? Am I really really really doing this, or is something or someone else acting on my behalf?* As Zoë Heller observes, the novel marks an important shift in Jackson's work. Whereas her earlier stories "are often about people being oppressed and persecuted by closed-minded communities, in her later work she focus[es] increasingly on the 'demon in the mind'—the evil that afflicts its victims from within" ("The Haunted Mind of Shirley Jackson").

The "demon in the mind" is a notion that recurs throughout Jackson's personal papers and private writing. Ruth Franklin describes it as the "fundamental obsession" (63) of Jackson's life. In a private document written just a year after completing *Hill House*, Jackson returns to this concept yet again:

> that demon finds guilts where it can and uses them and runs mad with laughing when it triumphs; it is the demon which is fear…we are afraid of being someone else and doing the things someone else wants us to do and of being taken and used by someone else, some other guilt-ridden conscience that lives on and on in our minds, something we build ourselves and never recognize…then it is fear itself, fear of self that I am writing about…fear and guilt and their destruction of identity…why am i so afraid? (qtd. in Franklin 63 and 407)

Here, guilt and fear are the work of "someone else" as well as "something we build ourselves." This paradox *is* the demon: the "destruction of identity" precipitated by outside forces and by ourselves. Embedded in *Hill House*'s architectural symbolism are all the external forces — cultural, social, political — which pursue Eleanor, marring her search for independence and personhood. In its nuance and complexity, however, the novel also suggests how Eleanor brings about her own disintegration and destruction — the guilt she fails to address or overcome, the fear she allows to shred her identity. Jackson seems to suggest that, in the end, we all must reckon — on our own — with the demon in the mind. Like *The Sundial*, the novel ends on a note of profound "aloneness." As its final sentence says of Hill House: "whatever walked there, walked alone" (*Hill House* 182). In *The Sundial*, Jackson depicts such "aloneness" to posit the impossibility of social change; in *Hill House*, she uses it to posit the difficulty of individual self-transformation — both in the face of the patriarchal house and its structures of thought. It would take Jackson's final novel to remake this house and to rethink these structures. In the process, she moves from isolation to solitude, from "aloneness" to independence.

*

The Haunting of Hill House was one of Jackson's most critically successful novels. While some initial reviewers could not help but revisit the same tired and predominantly misogynistic readings that followed Jackson throughout her career — that she was a "housewife writer" who somehow managed to write scary stories; that she was a woman who somehow managed to thematize Freudian ideas — most critics acknowledged it was not merely a scary ghost story but a legitimate heir to the sophisticated psychological horror of the American Gothic tradition, comparing her to writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Henry James (Franklin 424). Today, with the possible exception of "The Lottery," it is still the work most often associated with her name.[38] Although not a bestseller upon its release, it enabled Jackson to pay off her mortgage. When she sold the film rights later that year — for what Ruth Franklin describes as "an astronomical fee" (425) — she was also able to remodel her house, buying all new appliances, furniture, and even drapes and sheets. There is something twisted and also amusing about such a disturbing tale of domestic space funding the redecoration of Jackson's own home. For readers familiar with Jackson's biography, there is something poignant and sad about it, too.

In the coming years, Jackson began to suffer increasingly debilitating bouts of depression and agoraphobia. By 1962, in an eerie echo of Eleanor's incorporation into Hill House, Jackson was completely housebound, unable to leave her home at all. Her youngest daughter, Joanne, would later say that when she came home from school she could simply "listen to the house" in order to "gauge her mother's mood" (qtd. in Franklin 166), as if Jackson, like Eleanor, had become physically and consciously fused with the house. Jackson's next novel — her last — tells the story of not one but two shut-ins, the eccentric Blackwood sisters, both of whom, in their

[38] This is perhaps even more so the case following the 2018 Netflix adaptation of the novel, though the series diverges considerably from Jackson's original.

own ways, embody and even anticipate some of Jackson's own traits and experiences. In some respects, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* sees Jackson burrowing further than ever before into the structures of the family home. While working on it, she wrote to a friend: "I have written myself into the house" (qtd. in Franklin 427). In other respects, the novel literally and figuratively burns down and tears up the house as we know it, deconstructing our notions of architecture and domesticity altogether. Concluding the House Trilogy, the novel does not imagine an escape from the house or its haunting legacies — in other words, it does not involve anything as simple or as easy as "a way out." Instead, it suggests what Jackson would later call "a way through."

Chapter Three

"Altering the House":

Patriarchal Capitalism and Deconstructive "Anarchitecture"

in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*

Ghosts hate new things.

— Zora Neale Hurston, *The Sanctified Church*

I. Introduction: Burning Down the House

As the final novel in the House Trilogy, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* takes up and extends the signal themes of the previous two novels, developing a gothic allegory involving patriarchal capitalism and its haunting of the family home. In particular, it revisits what Dara Downey calls "the problem of enclosed domestic space" (290), becoming Jackson's most concerted, as well as radical, attempt to solve this problem. If the earlier novels suggest the inescapability of patriarchy, using the house as both the site and source of this power, then *Castle* endeavours (quite literally) to take this house apart, realizing that escape is neither fully possible nor fully desired. Instead, the novel posits a deconstruction of the family home and the patriarchal power structures it represents, advancing architectural "unbuilding" and "decreation" as potent forms of female power and transformation, not unlike the destructive and yet transformative processes of magic and witchcraft to which the novel explicitly alludes. In the end, *Castle* is the trilogy's most uncompromising if not anarchic response to the house and its perpetuation of male power, heteronormativity, internalized patriarchy, and capitalism, culminating in a totally original, albeit ambiguous, portrait of female self-sufficiency and domestic independence.

The novel is narrated by Merricat Blackwood, the trilogy's only first-person narrator and a wild, untamed presence from start to finish. On the surface, Merricat's life appears simple,

even quaint. She lives in isolation on a Vermont farm with her older sister, Constance, and their uncle, Julian, who is senile and infirm. This simplicity is quickly belied, however, by Merricat's many eccentricities, which run from the merely odd to the utterly deranged. She is an eighteen-year-old woman who regrets not being born a werewolf, who spends her afternoons digging in the dirt and burying treasure, who believes in sympathetic magic, and who nails to the trees around her house the charms and totems necessary for her spells and rituals. One moment she is daydreaming about her ideal home on the moon, the next she is sharing the graphic details of violent revenge fantasies. As the reader slowly pieces together, she also happens to be a mass murderer. Six years earlier, the rest of her family — her mother, father, younger brother, and aunt — were all poisoned to death at dinner when the table sugar was laced with arsenic. Suspicion fell to Constance, who was charged and eventually acquitted of the crimes, but by the end of the novel there is no doubt as to the murderer's real identity. Like Harriet Stuart in *The Sundial*, Merricat speaks to a form of female resistance, which, having no place within the heteropatriarchal order, can only be expressed through extreme violence and rage. Although marketed (successfully) as a murder mystery, the novel's real intrigue lies in the baffling lengths to which women must go in order to carve out some semblance of domestic freedom and sovereignty.

As with *The Sundial* and *Hill House* before it, *Castle* restricts nearly all of its narrative action to the isolated world of a family estate, in this case a sprawling Carpenter's Gothic house nestled in an expanse of still-fertile Vermont farming land. From the black rock at the edge of the property to the kitchen at the heart of the house, this estate is a world unto itself, one specifically created to keep out what lies beyond its gates and wire fence — what Merricat calls the "rotting hearts" (7) of the nearby villagers. In this, it resembles the Halloran mansion, which also stood in

stark contrast to the homes and lives of a nearby town and its residents. But whereas the Halloran mansion was the gaudy attempt of an American parvenu to ape the trappings of Old World rank and lineage, the Blackwood home is the long-standing residence of a land-owning family, more associated with the New England Brahmins than the merchant *nouveau riche*. A symbol of wealth and status that has always incited resentment in the village, in the wake of the murders it has taken on an air of scandal and superstition fueled by malicious rumour. Constance's agoraphobia apparently stems from her fear of this gossip, and the home she keeps — spotless, cheerful, and always smelling of something fresh and delicious — is clearly meant to cast its own kind of spell, her domestic arts a form of protection rite just as powerful as the sympathetic magic practised by her younger sister.

Nonetheless, as always in Jackson, the house is a deeply ambiguous symbol. The only source of protection still left to the sisters, it is also a glaring reminder of the family they hated and so definitively rejected. If it is a magical fortress, it is also a prison. Still brimming with family portraits and heirlooms from the past, it is completely cut off not only from the rest of society but from the present as well. As Allison Douglass writes, the Blackwood house stands as an uncanny emblem of near total "isolation and stasis" (206). This, too, echoes the other houses in the trilogy. At first, this temporal inertia suits Merricat's domestic ideal just fine. Constance, however, is neither as fragile nor as committed to her housebound existence as her younger sister might think. If one of Merricat's implied motives for the crime was to save her sister from the Cinderalla-like servitude imposed on her by the rest of the family, then it is not lost on the reader that now Constance merely serves Merricat, whose fear of losing her sister is so visceral and desperate it is not always clear where her protectiveness ends and her possessiveness begins. When Charles, a long-lost cousin of the sisters, suddenly shows up banging on the door, he calls

these tensions to the surface, threatening Merricat's routines and rituals while tempting Constance with romantic attachment, escape, and a much more normative domestic-familial arrangement. To Merricat, Charles is a "ghost" (*Castle* 69) — the spectral double of the father she murdered; a gothic visitant from the patriarchal world outside. To the reader, he is also something more ambiguous and complicated — an uncomfortable reminder of Merricat's own possessiveness and need for control, a reflection, in other words, of the ways in which she, too, in part embodies the ghost of the patriarch and what it represents.

In this chapter, I consider this ghost and the family home it haunts. Of all Jackson's "house" novels, *Castle* includes the least amount of architectural detail and description. And yet, more so than the other novels, it pursues the trilogy's preoccupation with patriarchal capitalism and its insidious ties to the family home. In the novel, capital and private property are the means through which patriarchal power reproduces itself, first in the form of Merricat and her perpetuation of her father's elitism and insularity, and then in the form of Cousin Charles as a "ghostly" embodiment of these same values and their "haunting" return. As in *The Sundial*, the novel therefore develops an ambiguous portrait of female empowerment via the adoption of male power structures and their economics. Unlike *The Sundial*, however, the novel eventually evolves beyond this ambiguity, instantiating a form of female recalcitrance at once radical and entrenched. From Merricat's domestic witchcraft to Constance's food magic, the sisters embody certain forms of female power which historically resisted patriarchal capitalism and its seemingly endless flexibility and omnipotence. Not only is Charles presented as an uncanny personification of these same systems and structures, he is also depicted as a manifestation of the Blackwood house itself, his "spectrality" a metaphor for the way in which the patriarchal home cannot help but reproduce the *paterfamilias* and his economic legacies. As such, he occasions a profound

disillusionment in Merricat regarding both the family home she cherishes and her own complicity in the power structures she abhors. Using Sara Ahmed's concept of "queer orientation," I suggest that Merricat's "alterations" of her father's house are a way to reorient the heteronormativity of the family form and its patriarchal economics, a "realignment" of the patrilineality that continues to haunt the Blackwood home. When Merricat finally understands that she must destroy this home in order to realize her own uncompromising vision of domestic independence, Jackson suggests it is only by burning to the ground and taking apart the symbols and institutions of male power that the sisters (and women in general) can find an "outside" to patriarchy and its determinism.

By the end of the novel, the Blackwood house is nothing short of the House Trilogy's culmination and fulfilment — a family home that has been turned literally "inside-out." Part bunker, part ruin, part hut, it is a deeply unsettling image of "home." Building off the themes of *The Sundial* and *Hill House*, it stands as a disturbing rejoinder to architecture's inherent ideologies, assailing its disingenuous prophecies and regressive forays into the nostalgic future, while also deconstructing its grasping patriarchal power. Before its time, Merricat's new home anticipates actual movements in art and architecture which would later emerge in the early 1970s and which were themselves deeply critical of the architectural establishment and its ties to capitalism and patriarchal power. In what follows, I therefore place Merricat's "creative destruction" of her father's house alongside deconstructive architecture and its embrace of disjuncture, disorientation, fragmentation, and collage. I also place her alongside the artist and architect Gordon Matta-Clark and his practice of "anarchitecture," which saw him literally deconstructing family houses, removing their facades, cutting large holes into their walls and floors, or, in one famous example, chain-sawing an entire suburban house in half.

Although the Blackwood house at the end of the novel is deeply uncanny, it also suggests the related mode of the "weird," as defined by Mark Fisher, allowing us to expand the critical lens so often applied to Jackson's depictions of domestic space. For not only does this house deconstruct the domestic dream before our eyes, exemplifying the burnt-out shell of the American house and its promises and ideals, it also gestures towards something new, challenging our conventional notions of architecture and domesticity. As Fisher writes, the weird is often "that *which does not belong*" (10) and as such it signals "the presence of the new," the emerging suspicion "that the concepts and frameworks which we have previously employed are now obsolete" (13). Whereas the other homes in Jackson's House Trilogy suggest the impossible recursion of patriarchy's ghosts, the Blackwood house ultimately embodies a notion of futurity. If this vision is an unnerving dislocation of the domestic, then this is because it is a "weird" reorientation of the heteropatriarchal home, a deconstructive "outside" to the normativity and dominant order which we all internalize, an anarchic architecture still in the process of becoming.

II. "Steady Against the World": The Blackwood House and the Village

On the opening page of the novel, Merricat tells us that she and her sister live "steady against the world" (*Castle* 1). This independence is most often read as a rejection of male society and patriarchal capitalism, especially considering the Blackwood murders and what they represent. Ruth Franklin, for example, writes that the novel involves "two women who metaphorically murder male society and its expectations for them by insisting on living separate from it, governed only by themselves" (442). In turn, Lynette Carpenter contends that the novel depicts "a cataclysmic confrontation between the forces of the male power structure and the

forces of female self-sufficiency" (206). These readings are astute, and yet the novel's depiction of female self-sufficiency is perhaps more complicated than they suggest. Undeniably, the Blackwood sisters are subjected to the open hostility of the villagers, who use the murders as an excuse to channel their pent-up anger and class resentment. Bullying and misogynistic, the villagers contextualize the domestic existence carved out by Constance and Merricat as one of female recalcitrance and autonomy. At the same time, however, if the sisters live "steady against the world," then they do so in large measure because of inherited wealth and class privilege. As Honor Wallace writes, narratives like *Castle*, in which female protagonists achieve economic self-sufficiency, are "fraught with ideological implications": on the one hand, these narratives "act as a fantasized compensation for the way capitalism fixes subjects, particularly female subjects, into place"; on the other, since this self-sufficiency is often reliant on accumulated wealth and property, "the question of whether [these women] simply reiterat[e] the patriarchal, heterosexual, and capitalist ideology of conventional narrative make[s] determining the extent of their achievement difficult" (177).

At the start of the novel, for instance, it would seem that the patriarchal domestic structure set up by John Blackwood, Merricat's father, is still more or less intact, embodied by none other than Merricat herself. In its opening sequence, as Merricat ventures into town on one of her dreaded supply runs, the reader is given an unsparing portrait of her elitism and insularity, inherited traits which explicitly suggest the perpetuation of her father's legacy. In this way, Jackson suggests how easily patriarchal power reproduces itself, even after it has been ostensibly repudiated, or, in the novel's terms, "murdered." This same opening sequence also demonstrates the spiteful and at times menacing behaviour of the villagers, with the sisters clearly a pair of outcast if not persecuted social pariahs. The Blackwood house comes to embody this

ambivalence, the ambiguity of the sisters and their outsider status. On the one hand, it represents the ostracism faced by Constance and Merricat — a house on the outskirts of town inhabited by two "weird" sisters. On the other, it represents the values and structures of a dominant and decidedly patriarchal culture — a family home that physically and symbolically enshrines accumulated capital, social privilege, private property, and class hierarchy.

As always in Jackson, these tropes and themes are explored through domestic and architectural symbolism. In particular, the opening sections of the novel dwell on examples of boundary-setting and border-controlling, on images of domestic withdrawal and social isolation. These spatial metaphors ultimately suggest the inherent insularity of class consciousness and private property, the way in which capitalism itself is a kind of "poison," a form of imaginative violence which, at root, is divisive and anti-social. The Blackwood estate, for example, sits outside of town at the end of a private path and behind a series of padlocked gates, all of which are affixed with signs reading, "PRIVATE NO TRESPASSING" (18). Originally, this path, which cuts through the Blackwood property and provides a shortcut in and out of town, was open to the villagers. Merricat's parents, however, decided to close it off. More specifically, they disliked the sight of the villagers — whom they referred to as "common people" (18) or simply "trash" (10) — walking past their front door, and it was Merricat's father who put up the wire fence that now encircles the property, as well as the gates and signs (4, 18). Jackson makes explicit how formative these changes were to Merricat, both in terms of her consciousness as a Blackwood and her sense of domestic security and "home":

> They can't get in, I used to tell myself over and over, lying in my dark room with the trees patterned in shadow on the ceiling, they can't ever get in; the path is closed forever. Sometimes I stood inside the fence, hidden by the bushes, and

> watched people walking on the highway to get from the village to the four corners. As far as I knew, no one from the village had ever tried to use the path since our father locked the gates. (18-19)

Having internalized the elitism of her parents, Merricat perpetuates it in the present. Ironically, this means preserving the memory of the same people she murdered. She keeps her parents' house exactly as it was, rarely moving any of the family heirlooms or household objects and always making sure to "put things back where they belonged (1). This sense of "everything in its right place" extends to the villagers as well. Like her father, she sees them as a pack of lowly interlopers who must be cordoned off and kept at bay. As she describes them, they are a bunch of "ugly people with evil faces [who] were brought from some impossible place and set down in the [village] to live" (11). Her ritualistic policing of her father's fence is one of the many ways she embodies and maintains his legacy:

> Always on Wednesday mornings I went around the fence. It was necessary for me to check constantly to be sure that the wires were not broken and the gates were securely locked. I could make the repairs myself, winding the wire back together where it had torn, tightening loose strands, and it was a pleasure to know, every Wednesday morning, that we were safe for another week. (41)

For their part, the villagers maintain and reinforce their own boundaries as well. The murders have given them a pretext for looking down on the Blackwoods, reversing the power dynamic between themselves and one of the oldest and wealthiest families in the area. The more unsavoury among them relish this newfound privilege to no end. In town, Merricat is subjected to their taunts and stares. In the grocery store, the women step aside and whisper behind her back. When she places an order for sugar, a "little horrified laugh" (8) rises from somewhere at

the back of the shop. “The Blackwoods always did set a fine table” (8), someone jokes. The men of the village are more direct, even aggressive. Outside the general store, where they often loiter, they make mocking and insinuating remarks whenever Merricat walks past (10). At Stella’s, the local diner, where Merricat makes it a point of pride to stop, she is accosted by the village fire chief, Jim Donell, her main antagonist. Blocking the door, he repeats knowingly false rumours about the Blackwood estate being up for sale, clearly trying to run her and her sister out of town: “You just say the word, Miss Mary Katherine, and we’ll all come out and help you pack” (15).

This behaviour — the taunts and whispers, the stares and jibes — is a form of boundary-policing not unlike John Blackwood’s fence. Indeed, Donell makes clear that the village’s resentment of the Blackwoods predates the murders and, perhaps more so than the crimes, has to do with the Blackwood house and grounds, the privilege and status the estate not only symbolizes but, quite literally, demarcates as well. As he puts it, shaking his head and trailing off: “The way they live up there in their fine old private estate, with their fences and their private path…” (14). Even the children play their part in policing these social boundaries. On her way out of town, Merricat passes a group of boys who begin reciting one of the local rhymes inspired by the murders:

> Merricat, said Connie, would you like a cup of tea?
>
> Oh no, said Merricat, you’ll poison me.
>
> Merricat, said Connie, would you like to go to sleep?
>
> Down in the boneyard ten feet deep! (16)

Shelley Ingram describes these taunts as a form of folkloric “border-controlling,” with the children using play to “becom[e] adults” (67), mimicking and perpetuating the ostracism they have learnt from their parents. The scene is ironic given that Merricat, too, uses ritual and play

(her sympathetic magic), not only to reinforce the boundaries of her family property, but also to perpetuate the prejudice she has similarly learnt from *her* parents. Tellingly, the boys hide behind a fence as they repeat their rhymes (*Castle* 16); in turn, Merricat retreats into her inner world, hiding behind interior walls: “It was strange to be inside myself,” she says, “I was hiding very far inside” (16).

Indeed, in this opening sequence Jackson places us in a world of enforced enclosures and bitter boundaries, of introversion and insularity. These divisions always come back to class consciousness and privilege. Although Merricat contends “[t]he people of the village have always hated [her]” (4), it often seems the other way around. The vehemence of her hatred and the sneering condescension of her disdain exemplify the dehumanizing effects of inherited privilege and internalized prejudice. To her, the villagers are a “blight” on the surrounding land, the source of a “black rot” (6) that eats away at the town and their own “rotting hearts” (7). And yet the novel’s true “poison” — the “black rot” that eats away at both Merricat *and* the villagers — is exactly this kind of close-mindedness and class animus, the divisions created by privilege, property, and capital. From Joe Dunham’s claim he was never paid for the broken step he fixed (14) to Merricat’s claim on the Rochester house, the maternal family home which should have been hers “by rights” (3)[39] — money, land, and status seep like toxins through all the dealings and interactions between the Blackwoods and the villagers, corroding communal bonds and building up venomous resentments. The spatial metaphors and “border-policing” of these early sections exemplify how entrenched both Merricat and the villagers have become within these grievances, closed off within their literal and figurative insularity — “hiding very far inside,” as Merricat says.

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[39] This home is discussed at length later in this same chapter.

This is an important context in which to understand the novel's evolving depiction of female self-sufficiency and domestic independence. Although Merricat never fully relinquishes her snobbery or tempers her sneering condescension, she does eventually see how the family home she cherishes is necessarily implicated in the same power structures she abhors. To a large extent, the House Trilogy's preoccupation with the problem of domestic space becomes increasingly a preoccupation with the ways in which male power simply reproduces itself within the space of the home, suggesting the impossibility of self-transformation and social change. As Jackson's final novel progresses, her portrait of female empowerment evolves from one still entwined with patriarchal capitalism to one that radically breaks from it, marking the culmination as well as fulfilment of the trilogy on the whole. As we shall see — and as Honor Wallace writes — *Castle* eventually depicts Merricat's "successful retreat from capitalism" and "its insistent forward drive" (186). In the section that follows, I look to the novel's use of witchcraft as itself a form of historical resistance to this "insistent forward drive" — specifically capitalism's process of "primitive accumulation" — seeing in Jackson's domestic symbolism an analogue for female-coded forms of power and their opposition to heteropatriarchal forces.

III. "MELODY GLOUCESTER PEGASUS": Domestic Witchcraft and "Primitive Accumulation"

Several commentators have remarked on the similarities between the Blackwood sisters' domestic rituals and witchcraft, as well as the way in which their ostracization from the village revisits historical examples of witches and their persecution. Lynette Carpenter, for example, describes witchcraft and magic as central to the novel, what she calls a "rendering of a modern confrontation between witches and witch hunters" (200). Dara Downey, in turn, points out that

the sisters' domestic rituals explicitly "associate[e] housework with witchcraft" (300), while Alissa Burger writes that "domestic witchcraft is particularly significant" to the novel's treatment of "protective magic" (104). In particular, Merricat and Constance's land-based protection rites and food magic recall historical forms of female resistance to male economic power. As activist historians like Andrea Dworkin and Silvia Federici have argued, witchcraft and its traditions are largely rooted in the harvest rites and food practices of matriarchal agrarian societies. In its modern form, witchcraft was a reaction to the phasing out of these food cultures and their politics, in particular as expressions of male power and female suppression, a process intimately tied to what Marx termed "the primitive accumulation of capital."[40] As Jackson's symbolism suggests, much of the novel allegorizes this process, as well as the attempt — on the part of two "weird" sisters — to transform the domestic structure into a bulwark against patriarchal capitalism and its inexorability.

Merricat's routines, for example, explicitly allude to witchcraft, and their purpose is almost always to preserve the purity of the domestic domain, tidying it ritualistically and keeping outsiders away. On Mondays, when she cleans the house, she describes herself and Constance as "a pair of witches" and imagines she is "hovering busily in space looking down at [her] broom, weightless and flying" (*Castle* 69). When she fears the house might be in danger, she divines a series of protection words — "MELODY GLOUCESTER PEGASUS" (*Castle* 51) — and forbids herself from saying any of them aloud, thereby casting a kind of "silent spell." Her superstitions echo land-based protection rites and harvest rituals long associated with witchcraft and protective magic. All across the Blackwood property, for example, she has buried totemic

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[40] See Andrea Dworkin's *Woman Hating* (1974) and Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* (2004). In particular, see Dworkin, Chapter 7 (pp. 118-154) on the "gynocide" of European witch-hunting, and Federici on feminine food politics and their later suppression by patriarchal capitalism. Much of what follows in this section relies on these sources.

objects, what she calls “safeguards” (41) — silver dollars, baby teeth, blue ribbons, marbles, and coloured stones. These totems recall similar objects, such as corn dollies and other handmade charms, which were also buried during harvest season in order to protect the land and crops. Merricat associates her own “treasures” with similar purposes: “All our land was enriched with my treasures buried in it,” she says, “thickly inhabited just below the surface…held together under the ground in a powerful taut web which never loosened, but held fast to guard us” (41).

These protection rituals go hand in hand with Constance’s food practices. These practices subtly allude to the traditions of pre-industrialized food economies, in particular women’s central roles in food production and the recognition of the land as sacred, as well as the spiritual and folkloric customs surrounding food that would later be associated with magic and witchcraft as specifically gendered forms of “dangerous” power. As Merricat says, “food of any kind [is] precious to Constance” and as such she handles it with reverence, “always touch[ing] foodstuffs with quiet respect” (20). If Merricat gains power by safeguarding the land, then Constance gains power by tending to it. She is most often seen in the garden, not merely looking after the plants and vegetables but communing with them as well. As Merricat says one afternoon while watching her sister: “Constance knelt in the dirt, both hands buried as though she were growing, kneading the dirt and turning it, touching the plants on their roots” (46). Constance insists that whatever comes from the land must not be wasted: it “can’t be permitted to stay there and rot,” she tells Merricat, “*some*thing has to be done with it” (42).

Jackson echoes this respect in her tone and style, reserving some of the novel’s most lyrical passages for descriptions of food and its preparation. This is especially true of the rows and rows of preserves stored in the Blackwood cellar, a living legacy of the Blackwood women’s connection to the land, not as property but as sustenance. Although this legacy has been

relegated to the basement, it nonetheless persists and even thrives, vibrant and potent. As Merricat tells us:

> All the Blackwood women had taken the food that came from the ground and preserved it, and the deeply colored rows of jellies and pickles and bottled vegetables and fruit, maroon and amber and dark rich green, stood side by side in our cellar and would stand there forever, a poem by the Blackwood women. (42)

These preserves are a salient symbol for Constance and Merricat's respective visions of female resistance. For Constance, they represent the reclamation of the domestic sphere as a source of empowerment, especially in light of her ostracization from the village. If the village is motivated by a "black painful rot" (6) that turns children's songs into cruel, taunting rhymes, then the Blackwood sisters are sustained by these multicoloured preserves and the "poetry" they make of female expression and domestic labour. For Merricat, the preserves and their "poetry" suggest a more violent and even deadly power: aside from Constance's more recent contributions, most of the jars have turned to poison. As Ruth Franklin writes, in Merricat's eyes they stand for "[f]emale power and creativity" and how, when "bottled up too long" (450), these things can turn lethal.

Significantly, the preserves also represent the accumulation of a different kind of "capital," what Honor Wallace calls an "alternate economy," one that stands in direct contrast to John Blackwood's "economic legacy" of hoarding wealth and private property (179-180). In this respect, the cellar's most obvious symbolic foil is John's safe, with its rows and rows of cash. After all, John represents the family's transition from wealthy farmers to wealthy capitalists, from living off the land to living off accumulated wealth and interest. We are told he made no "profitable use" (*Castle* 19) of the farm, choosing instead the passive incomes of capital and

debt. Such income is evidenced by his ledger, the little notebook where, as Merricat says, "he used to record the names of people who owed him money" (53). An embodiment of capital's forward drive, he ushered in a way of life increasingly disconnected from the land and detached from the means of production. We might think of the preserves, then, as a symbol for a future that harks back to a time of female economics and empowerment, an earlier time, that is, still waiting to be restored. As Emily Banks writes, the preserves represent an "investment in a different kind of future…independent from men and masculine institutions, including capitalism" (182).

Indeed, much of Constance and Merricat's "witchcraft" stands in opposition not only to patriarchal capitalism in general but to the kinds of domestic future it determines for women in particular. In the novel, the flexibility of the capitalist system is demonstrated in its often-insidious reach. When Helen Clarke comes to tea, for example, she not only tries to convince Constance to re-enter social life but to consider married life as well, reminding her she is too "young" and too "lovely" to be denied her "right to be happy" (*Castle* 27). Wielding heteronormativity and its conventional notions of female happiness, she tempts Constance with a future that would see her and her sister dispossessed of their family land and money. As Lynette Carpenter writes, such a marriage would inevitably bring the Blackwood inheritance "back into the realm of masculine control" and "patrilineal[ity]" (205). To women like Helen Clarke, this is the only way to save the Blackwood sisters from their status as female pariahs, to recuperate them and bring them back into the community's fold. Her true aim, however, is not to ameliorate the isolation of the sisters, but instead to resolve her own anxiety about their fundamental "weirdness," an "Otherness" she cannot square with her own sense of female identity and its circumscribed place within the community.

Tellingly, these same notions lurk behind the hectoring remarks of the village men outside the general store:

> 'Nice farm out there,' they [say to Merricat], 'nice land to farm. Man could get rich, farming the Blackwood land. If he had a million years and three heads, and didn't care what grew, a man could get rich. Keep their land pretty well locked up, the Blackwoods do.' 'Man could get rich.' 'Too bad about the Blackwood girls.' 'Never can tell what'll grow on Blackwood land.' (*Castle* 10)

The scene is one of many suggesting the villagers shun the sisters not because of the murders but because of their way of life. The men, for instance, make no mention of the crimes. Instead, their resentment focuses on the removal of the Blackwood farm from the local economy, specifically as a consequence of Constance and Merricat's refusal to marry. It would therefore seem that, to the men of the village, a pair of women with financial independence is much more terrifying than a pair of mass murderers living free. Moreover, the men imply such female independence is freakish and unnatural, if not downright grotesque. As they put it, a man would have to have "three heads" to work the Blackwood farm, and even then the land might produce all manner of monstrosity: "Never can tell what'll grow on Blackwood land," they mutter.

The sisters are therefore "weird" precisely because they refuse to circulate their wealth and property within a patrilineal system. From the seemingly friendly solicitations of the women to the taunting remarks of the men, the villagers consequently attempt to bring the sisters round or simply banish them altogether. By adopting their own form of domestic witchcraft, Constance and Merricat guard their home against exactly these kinds of forces — namely, the incursions of patriarchal capitalism and its "insistent forward drive." When her cousin Charles shows up, Merricat realizes just how insistent these forces really are. In Charles, the everyday intrusion of

the villagers is transmuted into something bordering on the occult, with Jackson's symbolism magnifying the power of patriarchal capitalism and its insidious ties to the house. Not only does Charles embody the same patriarchal and capitalist values as Merricat's father, he bears a striking resemblance to him as well, leaving Merricat convinced he is some kind of uncanny repetition of the past — a "ghost." The ease with which he spreads through the Blackwood home — just like the fog that settles "over the stairs and the kitchen" (51) in the days leading up to his arrival — makes it seem as if the house itself has conjured his presence. This whole time Merricat has been guarding her home from outside forces; now she must exorcise it from within.

IV. The "Demon-Ghost": The Heteropatriarchal House and the Family Line

As outlined in previous chapters, the history and discourse of domestic architecture suggests that the family home has always been a site and source of patriarchal control, specifically when it comes to female sexuality and identity. Jackson's "house" novels revisit this discourse through gothic tropes and conventions. From the spectral voice of Mr. Halloran exhorting his daughter to lock herself up in her father's house to the lingering presence of Hugh Crain and his voraciously consuming mansion — the House Trilogy examines the family home's historical ties to male power via patriarchy's "ghosts." In particular, the trilogy suggests that the house itself manifests the patriarchal figure, that the home cannot help but reproduce his haunting presence and the recursion of the male power structures he represents.

We Have Always Lived in the Castle is perhaps Jackson's most explicit treatment of this theme. From the outset, Charles is presented as a traumatizing echo of the past. He shows up at the Blackwood home and pounds on the door, peering through its windows and shouting Constance's name (55-57). Merricat understandably mistakes him for one of the people who

came round hoping to catch a glimpse of Constance in the wake of her trial, and his maneuvers around the house are a triggering repetition of this harassment, as well as an embodiment of what she fears most: the breaching of her home and the failure to protect her sister. When she turns around to find him already inside, sitting in the kitchen no less — "the heart of our house" (55) — his sudden appearance is meant to be ghost-like. Jackson makes it clear who this visitant is supposed to be. "I knew him at once," Constance says, "he looks like Father" (57). Uncle Julian confirms the likeness: "You are Arthur's son," he says, "but you resemble my brother John, who is dead" (63).

Julian later comes to recognize a kind of spiritual likeness as well, confusing Charles for his dead brother not so much because of any physical resemblance but because of the vanity and greed that so remind him of John, an avaricious bully who kept an exacting command over his household. And indeed, it quickly becomes clear that Charles' visit is motivated by the Blackwood wealth and property, which he openly covets. Early in his stay, he confesses that his own father, Arthur, has recently died and "left nothing" (63). His presence in the Blackwood home is then a transparent attempt to correct the loss of one inheritance with the appropriation of another. More specifically, his obvious designs on Constance seek to restore a male line of inheritance as well as the continuation of the family line via marriage and reproduction. His increasingly uncanny transformation into John is then not merely spectral but demonic as well, insofar as his obvious desire to "possess" the Blackwood house and nearly everything it signifies plays on several senses of the word. As Merricat refers to him, he is a "demon-ghost" (87).

This designation is a metaphor Merricat uses to articulate the very real effect that Charles' presence has on her and her sister's domestic arrangement, a metaphor in short for the family home's inextricable ties to patriarchal economics and legalities. As Charles becomes the

fulcrum of the novel's plot, complicating and problematizing the lives of both sisters, Jackson transmutes the historical figure of the *paterfamilias* into a spectre that haunts Constance and Merricat's domestic vision of female independence and self-sufficiency. Like Jackson's other "house" novels, *Castle* suggests that the family home quite literally clears a space for this spectre. After all, the *paterfamilias* is not merely the father or head of household; he is what historian and sociologist Maria Mies describes as the "house-father" (78), a figure in whom the physical space of the home is conflated with the physical presence of the father himself. Moreover, the house enshrines this figure's legal authority over the family and any other residents of the house, who for all intents and purposes become his property. As a matter of law, this conflation extends to his male descendants as well, whereby the house becomes entwined in the legal traditions and symbolism of the family line and male inheritance.[41]

Charles steps into this role as easily as he steps into the Blackwood home. This is the point — as a symbol of male power, the house extends this role to him and him alone. Jackson therefore suggests the family home and *paterfamilias* are so inextricably bound together it is impossible to have one without the other. The Blackwood house, like all family houses, compels its patriarch. As soon as Charles walks through the door, the house literally enhances his physical stature. "He was taller now that he was inside," Merricat says, "bigger and bigger as he came closer to me" (*Castle* 57). Whenever he looms near, Merricat is driven "further into [her] corner" (63), sheepish and cowed. At the same time, the house appears to distort him, making him a figure not only of authority but of obfuscation as well. Like the "fog" (51) that announces his arrival, he spreads through the Blackwood home maintaining an amorphous indeterminacy. "I

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[41] See Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (1998), pp. 78-81.

still could not see him clearly," Merricat admits the morning after his arrival, "perhaps because he was a ghost, perhaps because he was so very big" (63).

As Charles settles into this new role, he takes on more and more of John's traits and power, all but transforming into his familial doppelgänger. As a man, he is offered John's room and bed (61), as well as his symbolic place at the head of the table — "He has a perfect right to sit there" (70), Constance says. He even asks to "look over" (82) John's clothes with an eye to his own wardrobe, and as Merricat discovers he secretly riffles through John's drawers and jewelry boxes (76), eventually donning the dead man's pocketwatch (80) and signet ring (87), resonant symbols of male authority, the latter explicitly associated with patrilineal descent. Within a very short time, Charles feels so comfortable in the house he does not think twice about being openly cruel to Uncle Julian (67, 71, 80); forbidding certain topics from being discussed (66, 92); threatening Merricat (70, 80, 94); asking questions about the family money (72, 88); or dictating the daily routines of the household (72, 81, 85). Constance refers to him as a "guest" (70), but the deference accorded to him and the liberties he takes suggest the kind of male entitlement that is so automatic and unconscious it recalls the original meaning of "entitlement" — a legal right, a just claim. And of course, as a Blackwood male and potential heir, this is exactly the sort of legally enshrined power a man like Charles *could* have over the space of the home. To echo Constance: "He has a perfect right" (70).

Merricat is already acquainted with this kind of entitlement and legal power. The patrilineal appropriation of female wealth and property via marriage has been made plain to her, as evidenced by the multiple generations of dowry goods which now fill her home in the form of china sets and silver and which are prominently featured throughout the novel. An even more pointed example is the Rochester house in the village. Originally her mother's childhood home,

the house should have been hers "by rights" (3), she says. Instead, it was passed down according to a male line of inheritance, only to slip permanently from the family's hands. These are precisely the outcomes Merricat fears, especially as Charles grows closer to Constance and his true intentions begin to emerge. As Emily Banks points out, Charles enters "the text through the structure of inheritance" (174); and as Darryl Hattenhauer writes, he is a "Gothic intruder, the would-be usurper of the sisters' inherited estate" (175). After all, as Merricat knows, if Charles is a ghost, then like all ghosts his appearance is in part a claim of rightful ownership on the space he haunts.

In turn, Jackson increasingly likens Charles' presence to that of a spiritually disfiguring evil, his consuming greed and vanity "possessing" the house. Like John, he transforms into a bully whenever financial matters or material goods are involved, berating the sisters for their handling of money and criticizing their indifference to the family's heirlooms, from the gold watch chain Merricat destroys (*Castle* 77) to the silver dollars she buries (88). Using money as a gendered pretext to take further command of the house, he endeavours to amass and appraise these valuables, as well as the extent and worth of the sisters' property in general. As Honor Wallace argues, these endeavours are an explicit attempt to "reenlist the household" within a patriarchal economy (180-181).

Indeed, if Charles embodies the encroachments of patriarchal capitalism and its "insistent forward drive," then Jackson places him in symbolic opposition to Constance and Merricat's domestic witchcraft. As if to diminish their power as sites of female creativity and resistance, he specifically haunts the rooms and places most associated with the sisters and their protective magic — the kitchen, the garden, and the land. In the mornings, he takes up residence in the kitchen, usurping Merricat's place and "eating hugely" (*Castle* 81) of Constance's cooking. In

the afternoons, he sits in the garden (68, 79) and then walks "among the vegetables" (68), his proximity to the bounty of the land "ugly" (68) in Merricat's eyes. Later, when she sees him standing in her orchard, his presence seems literally to warp the landscape itself: "Even the garden had become a strange landscape with Charles' figure in it; I could see him standing under the apple trees and the trees were crooked and shortened beside him" (79). When he rips up the long field in search of Merricat's treasures — as if "systematically digging up every inch of our land" (88) — he further desecrates what is most sacred to the sisters.

Although Charles is a "ghost," what is perhaps most terrifying about him is not the past he embodies, but the future he represents. In him, Merricat sees not only the spectral return of her father and the family order he personified, but the perpetuation of this family order as well. In her book *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006), Sara Ahmed argues that the "family form" is itself a kind of inheritance, passed down by the father who embodies this form and its continuation through the "family line" (125). As a Blackwood male, Charles represents the ability to "follow this line" and assume its "inheritance." More than any other physical or symbolic structure, the house recognizes and legitimates these legacies. Charles understands this, as well as the precarity it necessarily signifies for his little cousin. "[C]ome about a month from now," he sarcastically asks Merricat, "I wonder who *will* still be here? You…or me?" (*Castle* 80). To rid herself of Charles and the patriarchal "ghost" he represents, Merricat eventually understands that she will have to "alter" her father's house, cutting off the family line it protects (and which she thought she had already "murdered") and "reorienting" the family home she still cherishes — reconceiving it, reimagining it, or, in the end, simply remaking it altogether.

V. "Alter[ing]" the House: Reorienting the Heteronormative Home

The idea of "altering" the house only occurs to Merricat once her attempts to rid Charles using domestic witchcraft and magic have all failed. Her battery of such rituals and superstitions includes holding her breath to make him disappear (67), using talismans to ward him off (70), smashing his mirror for bad luck (80), and taunting him with threats of poison (72, 90). As a last-ditch effort, she enlists Constance in a purification rite, the two of them "neaten[ing] the house" (68) until every trace of him has been "erased" (69). But by then Charles is "everywhere" (78); his presence has metastasized throughout the house. The smell of his "pipe and shaving lotion" wafts through the air; the "noise of him echoe[s]" down the halls; his gloves, tobacco pouch, and matches are "scattered" (78) from room to room. Slowly, Merricat comes up with a new plan. As she explains:

> Eliminating Charles from everything he had touched was almost impossible, but it seemed to me that if I altered our father's room, and perhaps later the kitchen and the drawing room and the study, and even finally the garden, Charles would be lost, shut off from what he recognized, and would have to concede that this was not the house he had come to visit and so would go away. I altered our father's room very quickly, and almost without noise. (87)

This notion of "altering the house" becomes the novel's (as well as the House Trilogy's) most radical intervention within the history and discourse of the family home, signalling both Merricat's profound disillusionment with her father's house and her creative remaking and eventual destruction of it as well.

In the passage above, Merricat implies that Charles derives his power from the Blackwood house itself. This is because, quite simply, the house is "oriented" and configured for

him to begin with. Built *for* him as a Blackwood male, the house enshrines his right to perpetuate the family line. In this sense, while Merricat's plan is most immediately a strategy to rid Charles from her house, it is also a tacit admission that this same home will always be a source of familial and patriarchal power, impossibly reproducing the same structures as represented by her father. Only by disguising and transforming the house, room by room, can she disorient and disarm the "demon-ghost" who currently embodies these structures and their "haunting" repetition. "Altering the house" is then a *reorientation* or *realignment* of the family home, one that specifically redirects the normative "family line" and future that Charles envisions and embodies.

Here, I am thinking once again of Sara Ahmed and, in particular, her concept of "queer orientation." As Ahmed writes, "Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world 'slantwise' allow other objects to come into view" (107).[42] Queer desire in women, Ahmed argues, is a particular kind of "not lining up" or "falling out of line," given that such desire challenges the internalized notion of the family form and what it demands of the female child — namely, reproduction and the continuation of the family line (74). What I want to suggest here is that, in Jackson's novel, the Blackwood house itself is an "orienting" structure in Ahmed's sense, one that socializes normative desire and familial expectation. As a spatial and symbolic system representing the father and the family form he embodies, the house orients and directs bodies and their desires through the world. Moreover, in a thematic that is consistent with Jackson's other works in the House Trilogy, the novel's poetics of haunting suggest that the house itself compels the impossible repetition of these expectations and their determinism,

[42] It should be noted that I am relying here on Emily Banks' extensive use of Ahmed and "queer orientation" in her own recent readings of Jackson. Although I put Ahmed's writings to somewhat different use, Banks' insights have been formative to my reading of *Castle*, and this section in particular is indebted to her scholarship. See Banks' article, "Insisting on the Moon: Shirley Jackson and the Queer Future" (2020).

specifically through the "ghostly" return of the patriarchal figure. Merricat's willingness to alter her father's house — a house she otherwise cherishes and fiercely protects — therefore demonstrates her changing understanding of what the family home ultimately "orients" and represents. As she attempts to expel Charles from the house and as she watches him take further control of it all the same, it occurs to her that the Blackwood home is not an enchanted castle or fortress meant to facilitate her wild imaginings or magically protect her from the outside world; instead, it is an ordinary family home more obviously associated with traditional visions of married life and male authority.

In *Castle*, Jackson explicitly ties such conventional visions to the symbolic structure of the house. Take, for example, what Merricat says one afternoon while watching Constance interact with Charles:

> She was not at all awkward or uncomfortable; it was as though she had been expecting all her life that Cousin Charles would come, as though she had planned exactly what to do and say, almost as though *in the house of her life* there had *always been a room* kept for Cousin Charles. (64, emphasis added)

The passage uses the "house" as a spatial metaphor for Constance's internalized notions of femininity and heteronormative expectation. Watching her sister, Merricat understands that the "house of her life" is itself an organizing structure, one which, increasingly, appears to "line up" with her actual family home, another structure that organizes and orients desires, expectations, and futures.

Most distressing to Merricat is the way in which, under Charles' influence, Constance appears to reinforce these structures. Constance, for example, begins to question her and Merricat's unconventionality, expressing regret at "hiding" away for so long (79, 82) and not

living "like other people" (82). More specifically, she worries that her own reclusiveness has negatively affected Merricat's socialization, especially when it comes to gender norms and female propriety. She asks, for example, how long it has been "since [Merricat] combed [her] hair" (79), and when struggling to articulate the apparently damaging effects of their seclusion, all she can say is: "You should…you should have boy friends" (82). The notion is so ridiculous both sisters immediately burst out laughing. All the same, as Charles transforms into the house's patriarch, Constance in turn transforms into his bride. While tidying the upstairs bedrooms, she turns to Merricat and asks: "I wonder if it would be right for me to wear Mother's pearls" (68). The scene is clearly meant to parallel Charles' appropriation of John's pocketwatch and ring. As Darryl Hattenhauer writes, Constance is "cast" as the "dead father's wife" in the "dead mother's jewelry" (176). These changes portend the reinstitution of the parental unit and the family form it perpetuates. As Charles succinctly puts it, speaking of himself and Constance: "We've got plans" (*Castle* 85). "Altering the house" is Merricat's response — in short, her own plan to "queer" the family home. In this, she re-envisions the heteropatriarchal structures around her; or, to use Ahmed's terms, she sees them "slantwise." Again following Ahmed, the house Merricat creates via her "alterations" is a "new object" which, for us, "comes into view" as a representation of female futurity beyond the patriarchal-familial structure.

It is therefore appropriate that these "alterations" should begin with John Blackwood's room. This room, as Jackson suggests throughout the novel, is a closed off space, itself a system of enclosures representing the imprisoning structures of the family order. Its door is almost always closed, with Merricat often having to sneak inside, only then to encounter a series of compartments and nested boxes which house her father's most symbolic possessions. John's watch, for example, is kept "in a small private box of its own," itself kept in a "leather box,"

which, in turn, is stored in a dresser drawer (76). Also in the same compartment is John's ring, an explicit symbol for the constrictive nature of the family form and, in particular, marriage. As Merricat says after finding it: "I would not touch the ring; the thought of a ring around my finger always made me feel tied tight, because rings had no openings to get out of" (76).

When Merricat "alters" her father's room, she not only breaches its enclosures but seeks to dismantle them as well, remaking the room as an opened and even "outside" place. More specifically, she remakes it in the image of her own private refuge, her "hiding plac[e]" (53) by the creek, strewing the room with "leaves and broken sticks" and "pour[ing] a pitcher of water onto [the] bed" (87). Similarly, her hiding place has its own floor of leaves and branches and a body of water nearby. This hiding place is a countervailing image of intimate space and protection. Sheltering but not enclosed, it stands in contrast to John Blackwood's room and house. By bringing this space inside her father's house, Merricat begins to create the kind of "opening to get out of" which neither his room nor his ring nor his wire fence nor the family line allows. Such an "alteration," in other words, signifies a rupture or breach within the home's "orientation" of enclosure and entrapment. Moreover, the hiding place is also where Merricat goes with her cat Jonas to listen to his "stories" (53). Which is to say, it is a site of female creativity and imagination, where Merricat dreams up alternative narratives for herself and Constance. We might think of these storylines as just that — alternative *lines* reorienting the vectors of heteronormativity, familial reproduction, and female futurity. In fact, Jonas's stories are not merely retellings of family genealogy; rather, they explicitly assert the entirely new beginning of a matriarchal fantasy. As Merricat tells us, they all "start with the statement: 'My mother, *who was the first cat*, told me this…'" (53, emphasis added).

In turn, Merricat's most extreme "alteration" — the act of arson that all but destroys her father's house — is her own way of starting an entirely new family story(line). Having reached her limit with Charles, she realizes she will have to sacrifice her house in order to be rid of him. She takes his pipe and sweeps it into her father's wastebin, purposely setting the fire that "purifies" her home (99-100). The fire is a new beginning. Like Jonas's apparent myth making, it turns the sisters into local legends. And yet, unlike the bullying gossip that previously swirled around Constance and the murders, these new storylines transmute the sisters into fearful figures — witches, ogresses, ghosts — who are nonetheless integrated into the village and its self-conception in a way they never were before.

Indeed, the destruction of John Blackwood's home oddly brings the sisters and the villagers closer together. After all, this destruction is something of a collaborative effort, in part the work of Merricat's fire and in part the work of the villagers, who show up and all but demolish the place, first by pelting it with stones from the outside and then by trashing it maniacally from the inside (105-107). This act of creative destruction is ironically the only time when Merricat and the villagers work together towards a common purpose. The fire is both transformative and revealing in ways that end up being important to how the sisters and the villagers understand themselves and each other. If it turns Merricat into the terrifying witch she has always wanted to be, then it also turns the villagers into fearful figures themselves, with Jackson's imagery on the night in question showing them descending into chaos and near-madness. Dancing in a circle around the sisters and chanting with their faces flashing in the light of the dying fire, it is as if they, too, have been transformed into witches (108-109).

In other words, the fire "alters" what it means to be a Blackwood — certainly for Merricat and Constance, but also for the villagers as well. Indeed, Merricat's fire is a strangely

apt reclamation of her family name: her new house is, quite literally, a pile of "blackened wood." And as off-putting as this new house is to the villagers, they show up anyway, not only turning it into a local landmark and picnic place, but also a kind of shrine to their own fear and guilt, the part of themselves they glimpsed on the night of the fire. In short, the house is a way for the sisters and the villagers to see themselves "slantwise" and anew. We might think of the fire, then, as a kind of alchemy, an act of architectural alteration and transformation, a form of "constructive-destruction." This is Merricat's real "magic." The house it produces is jarring at first, and yet it leads to the realization of Merricat's domestic vision. This vision is the House Trilogy's most radical statement on architecture, domesticity, the family form, and the legacies of patriarchal power and capital.

VI. "A Great Ruined Structure": Deconstructivism and "Anarchitecture"

In the wake of the fire, the Blackwood house is what Merricat calls "a great ruined structure" (146), the burnt-out husk of its former splendour. The sisters approach it tentatively, "trying to understand its ugliness and ruin and shame" (113). But while the fire's literal destruction of the house is unnerving, its symbolic deconstruction of the patriarchal home is auspicious. Having transformed the male power structures of the past into rubble, it affords the opportunity to build something new, if still uncertain. As suggested above, I therefore take the fire as kind of architectural alchemy, a form of "unbuilding" or "decreation" which, in its transformative properties, might be read as an extension of Merricat's "magic." These qualities, in turn, resonate with later movements in art and architecture which also sought to deconstruct the house and its historical ties to power through similarly destructive and even violent forms of making and creation. In my reading of the Blackwood home, Merricat's "alteration" of the house

symbolically anticipates these movements, with her fire and subsequent rebuilding of the house constituting not only a critique of architecture and its past but an exploration of its possible future as well.

For, even amid the ash and destruction of the Blackwood house, there are telling signs of new life for the sisters. As Merricat says, “I am thinking that we are on the moon, but it is not quite as I supposed it would be” (133). Conveniently, the fire has destroyed only the upstairs of the house, leaving intact Merricat and Constance’s symbolic sites of power — the kitchen, the cellar, and the garden. Looking up from the foot of the stairs, Merricat feels “a breath of air” on her cheek and sees “tiny spots of sky” (120) where the bedrooms of her family members used to be: like her hiding place, the house is now sheltering but open, and the dwelling places of her parents and brother have been replaced by a view of the firmament, in some sense bringing the “moon” to her. Her house is now a “castle,” she says excitedly, at once “turreted and open” (120).

Many commentators have trouble with this representation of the house, in particular what they see as Merricat’s increasingly positive depiction of it. Richard Pascal argues that Merricat is all but delusional, giving us an “imaginative impression” (“Conjugal Narcissism” 196) of the house in order to prettify her successful entrapment of Constance. Ashleigh Hardin writes that Merricat “terms the burned-out house ‘the moon’” precisely to cover up her own “inability to contain her rage” (119) or live with its consequences. And Allison Douglass contends that Merricat’s isolationism and sense of routine are so ingrained she beautifies the house in her mind’s eye just so she can go on living in it, “even though it is in charred ruins” (208). James Egan puts it bluntly: in spite of Merricat’s descriptions, the house is clearly “a total, horrific inversion” of the domestic ideal (23).

And yet, to my mind, part of the novel's overarching point is that, for some people, the "domestic ideal" is already a "total, horrific inversion" of their own models of happiness and domesticity. Negative readings of the novel's ending, that is, tend to take the Blackwood house literally while also relying on conventional notions of architectural beauty and domestic normativity, arguing that the sisters must be either unhappy or delusional since their house does not match the definition of "happily ever after" or its corresponding images. It would seem to me, however, that Merricat's new home is exactly the kind of provocation that forces us to question our own conventional notions of domesticity, intimate space, and architecture which the House Trilogy has been driving toward all along. After all, it stands as the literal fulfilment of Jackson's original ambition with the trilogy, a family home that has been turned "inside-out," and which, in the process, exposes the structures inherent to this same house.

The result is hardly "normal" or "pretty," and despite what the critical reception implies regarding Merricat's blinkered outlook, she is the last person to shy away from reporting the home's obvious devastation and disrepair. When she sees it for the first time, she can only marvel at what she calls the "nightmare of black and twisted wood" (*Castle* 113) that now reaches up from the kitchen doorway into nothing. When she and Constance try the door, the whole house "shiver[s]" (113), "seemingly solid but really made only of ash" (114). Once inside, she is "shocked" (118) several times over: by the destruction in the kitchen, the disarray in the dining room, and the spoilation of her mother's drawing-room (114-115, 117, 118-119). Everything in the house, she says, is "grotesque [and] unrecognizable" (117). This is because the house breaks entirely with the past, disavowing the internalized (and "recognizable") notions of domesticity and self which we attach to "home." At the same time, it also breaks with any idealized or utopic visions of the future, instead standing as a decidedly transitional object.

Exemplifying at once the profound discomfort and possibility of the new, it exists somewhere in the in-between, embodying the processual nature of change and self-transformation.

These same associations resonate powerfully with two specific movements in architecture and art which would not emerge until the early 1970s — namely, deconstructivism and "anarchitecture." What I want to suggest here is that Merricat in some sense anticipates these movements, and, in turn, that she is the House Trilogy's first and only active (if not activist) architect. Like Merricat, deconstructivism and "anarchitecture" used respective forms of creative destruction and disorientation in order to produce process-based objects that explicitly questioned and reimagined the conventional domestic structure and its ties to power, suggesting transition, transformation, and change. Deconstructivism, for example, came out of an increasing preoccupation with Derridean "deconstruction" among young architects of the late 1960s already looking to move past what they saw as the dead ends of architectural modernism. As a movement, it sought an altogether different approach to architecture and its discourse, one that would finally address the field's misguided utopianism and inherent reliance on structures of power, specifically by destabilizing its univocality, questioning its claims to universal truth, and dislocating its conventional notions of self, place, and home.[43] Deconstructive architecture might then be considered a political reorientation of built space, intended to excavate architecture's historical ties to structural power and to confront these structures with their own alterity, a displacement of place itself — what architect and theorist Peter Eisenman has termed the "atopia

[43] For more on deconstructive architecture and theory, see Peter Eisenman, *Eisenman Inside Out: Selected Writings, 1963-1988* (2004); Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (1997); and Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (1996). And for a critical exploration of "Otherness" and Derridean philosophy in architecture and their intersections within feminist theory and practice, see Mary McLeod's essay, "Everyday and 'Other' Spaces" in *Architecture and Feminism* (1996).

within topos" ("Second Language" 237), or, elsewhere, "the continuous dislocation of dwelling" ("Rhetorical Figure" 18).

Also in the early 1970s, the artist Gordon Matta-Clark began carrying out the large-scale sculptural works that would later be associated with his practice of "anarchitecture." Known as "cuttings," these works saw Matta-Clark using a chainsaw to splice into buildings and homes slated for demolition, cutting large circular holes into the walls, removing structural supports, or, in the case of his most famous work, *Splitting* (1974), simply splicing a suburban home in half right down the middle. These works have been widely interpreted as attacks on the architectural establishment and the real-estate industry.[44] Trained as an architect at Cornell in the mid 1960s (only a few years after Eisenman's time there), Matta-Clark was deeply influenced by architectural history and theory but also deeply critical of the field's ties to capitalism, private property, and homeownership. In particular, as Pamela Lee argues, his residential "cuttings" might be read as violent interventions within the "longer narrative of the house," one in which the family home is an "ideologically embedded" object whose very "constructedness" often reinforces and "idealizes the nuclear family and its hierarchy" (21-23).

By placing the Blackwood home alongside "anarchitecture" and deconstructivism, we not only see how Jackson critiques architecture's ties to patriarchal power but also the way in which she anticipates and dramatizes architecture's own anxieties about both its past and its future. Based on the descriptions above, for example, we might consider Merricat an "anarchitect" *avant la lettre*. After all, her destruction and later re-assemblage of the Blackwood home is itself a violent intervention in precisely what Lee calls "the longer narrative of the house," grappling

[44] For more on Matta-Clark and "anarchitecture," see Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (2000); *Gordon Matta-Clark* (2003), edited by Corinne Diserens; Stephen Walker, *Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture, and the Attack on Modernism* (2009); and Mark Wigley, *Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation* (2018).

with her own family home's "constructedness" as a deeply embedded ideological sign and taking it apart. Indeed, after the fire, the Blackwood house stands as a deconstruction of patriarchal power and the family ideal. The house's male representatives have either been excommunicated (Charles) or killed off (Julian);[45] in turn, its symbols of patriarchal capitalism have been destroyed and shut away — the dowry goods have been smashed by the villagers; John Blackwood's safe is locked away forever, never to be used again. Meanwhile, the continuation of the family order, as spatialized by the front rooms of the house — where the *paterfamilias* ruled over his table and where his wife's portrait still glowers over the mantle — is also closed off for good. As Merricat says, the sisters "clos[e] the drawing-room door behind [them] and never ope[n] it afterwards" (*Castle* 120).

The closing of these doors — and of the "family lines" they represent — also means the opening up of alternate possibilities, new forms of creation, and new futures. As Merricat says, the new house produces "new landmarks" and "new magical safeguards" and a "new pattern for our days" (145). Slowly, the sisters make this house their own, however jarring and strange. Constance tidies up, cleaning up the kitchen and salvaging what still can be of use. Merricat wanders through the fire's debris and detritus, gathering items and cobbling together new structures, solidifying her role as an architect of fragments. Still, the sisters now eat from broken plates; they wear rags and tablecloths for clothes; their home is constructed out of rubble. In other words, Jackson refuses to imbue the futurity the sisters represent with any naïve utopianism or easy idealism. This is in stark contrast to the projected futures and "new worlds" posited by

[45] After joining the villagers during the fire, Charles briefly returns to the house in its aftermath. Inside, Constance and Merricat huddle silently in the dark until he leaves for good (*Castle* 141-145). Uncle Julian, meanwhile, has died in the fire, finally killed off by Merricat. As Elizabeth Nollen argues, his death symbolizes Merricat and Constance's reclamation of their family history. "By killing Uncle Julian," Nollen writes, "Merricat ensures that Julian's 'book' — a history of, or inspired by the murder he obsesses over, but never really writes — will be replaced by a new herstory of the remaining Blackwoods" (107). Indeed, Constance says she will keep Julian's papers in the cellar, alongside the preserves, as if they were now being absorbed into the sisters' own personal mythology.

actual postwar architecture, the utopian visions which, in *The Sundial*, Jackson pillories as regressive forays into the past. Here, she again disavows these visions, narrowing in on the Blackwood house as an embodiment of the uncomfortable growing pains attendant to real transformation and change. This, too, might be read as an anticipation of movements like deconstructivism and "anarchitecture," movements which similarly critiqued postwar architecture and its utopianism, not only redressing architecture's past but excavating an anxiety about its future as well. Both movements, for example, were self-consciously preoccupied with process and transformation, foregrounding an anxious architecture still uncertain of what the future holds or should look like.

Take, for example, Eisenman's descriptions of *House VI*, a weekend home he designed between 1972 and 1975 for a Connecticut family. In his words, the house would be a "juxtaposition of solids and voids," with parts of the home simply missing and others blocked off, the overall effect being one of "warping, distortion, [and] fluctuation" ("House VI"). The house, he writes, is "not an object in the traditional sense — that is, the result of a process — but more accurately a record of a process" ("House VI"). In the same description, he calls the house "a manifestation of the transformational process [itself]" ("House VI"). In turn, Matta-Clark similarly emphasizes the transformational and processual nature of his works, "present[ing] the work of art as a continuously unfinished, fragmented, and ever-changing experience" (Thompson 110). As critic Thomas Crow writes, Matta-Clark was in fact profoundly influenced by alchemy and magic himself, using fire extensively in his early works and seeing these practices as representative of both self-transformation and social change, whereby the destruction of one thing leads to the creation of another (22-37). After all, as Pamela Lee points out,

anarchitecture's "mode of production is bound up with the work's destruction" — the creation of the object is necessarily "contingent on its ruination" (xiii).

The Blackwood house at the end of the novel is a deconstructed edifice transformed through the alchemy of fire, "a great ruined structure" (*Castle* 146), as Merricat says, which might be read as a symbol for both self-transformation and social change. It is an object whose creation is contingent on its ruination; a house that is less the result of a process than a record of one; a home which juxtaposes solids and voids, warping and distorting the very notion of "home" itself. It is in the ruins of this house that Jackson's trilogy finds its fulfilment. Having explored the family home's historical ties to power in her two previous novels, here she literally takes this home apart, exorcising patriarchy's ghosts and reconceiving its imaginary. Moreover, the arc of her trilogy, when situated in the arc of postwar architecture, rebukes the fraudulent futures and utopic visions of domestic architecture itself. In contrast to these visions, she forces us to look at the Blackwood home as a deeply disturbing transitional object, training our gaze on the necessary discomfort of real change, radical change, anarchic change.

This context allows us to reconsider what the Blackwood house might signify in the final sections of the novel, how it constitutes a new form of life for the sisters, even a new form of "happiness." Such a reading, in turn, reframes much of the critical reception surrounding Merricat's new home and its significance. Later, when the sisters learn that vines have started growing over the burnt-out roof of their house (140), blending it into the landscape and creating a canopy of foliage overheard, the reader cannot help but notice how this new home visually mirrors Merricat's hiding place by the creek. This time, however, it is not a hiding place at all, insofar as it is no longer an ancillary, annexed, or subsidiary place on the fringes of John Blackwood's estate — instead, it is Merricat and Constance's new home. And indeed, this new

home legitimizes the very notion of the "outside," in more senses than one. A fundamentally "weird" inversion of the family home, as well as an "Othered" space necessarily entangled with the nearby village, it is an "outside" that gestures toward the strangeness of the new as well as the potentiality of a future still in progress.

VII. "Barely Recognizable as a House": The Outside and The Weird

In her book on deconstructive spatial theory, *Architecture from the Outside* (2001), Elizabeth Grosz begins by describing the concept (and position) that defines her title:

> The outside is a peculiar place, both paradoxical and perverse. It is paradoxical insofar as it can only ever make sense, have a place, in reference to what it is not—an inside, a within, an interior. And it is perverse, for while it is placed always relative to an inside, it observes no faith to this inside. It is perverse in its breadth, in its refusal to be contained or constrained by the self-consistency of the inside. The outside is the place one can never occupy fully or completely, for it is always other, different, at a distance from where one is. (xiv)

The domestic and architectural symbolism of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* might be said to track the Blackwood home's transformation from an "inside" to an "outside," as defined by Grosz above. In this reading, the house at the beginning of the novel stands for the "inside" of a dominant and decidedly patriarchal culture, a family home that physically and symbolically enshrines accumulated capital, private property, class hierarchy, and patrilineal inheritance. By the end of the novel, Merricat's "altered" house has turned these values "inside-out": her new home is the "outside" of both John Blackwood's former house *and* the nearby village, existing in necessary relation to these "interiors" but "observing no faith" to them. Neither contained nor

constrained by these "insides," the house sits on the edge of town as a near-legendary site, an evocative ruin both open and enclosed, a place that will always be different. As Merricat says, it is "barely recognizable as a house" (*Castle* 146).

This progression "inside-out," as Jackson herself suggested, is also the movement of the House Trilogy on the whole. Merricat's new home, that is, marks an important culmination in Jackson's depiction of domestic architecture, especially as it is conceived and realized by women. Unlike the trilogy's other heterotopic spaces representing female independence and solitude — from Orianna's gingerbread house to Fanny's attic apartment, from Eleanor's woodcutter's hut to her mansion on main street — the Blackwood home is an "outside" which, all the same, is neither ancillary nor annexed, neither the shadow-side to a patriarchal home nor haunted by this home's shadows. Moreover, whereas the trilogy's earlier novels present homes which are polysemous but recognizable — from the Gilded Age mansion to the Victorian interior, from the postwar house to the biomorphic avant-garde — Merricat's new house is an entity altogether new and entirely its own. Disavowing architecture's past and assailing its postwar present, it gestures toward a strange and even grotesque future. This strangeness speaks to the heart of Jackson's project with the trilogy, as well as its gothic poetics.

While the earlier houses — including Merricat's before the fire — explore patriarchal power through haunting and the uncanny return of the repressed, her new home reimagines what the very notion of a "house" might be once its ties to patriarchal capital have been severed and its male structures have been dismantled and turned to rubble. Rather than uncanny, this new house is fundamentally "weird," in the sense that Mark Fisher uses the term to designate a visceral feeling of *wrongness*: "the conviction that *this does not belong*" (13). One hears this conviction in the critical reception itself, with many commentators, as noted above, perturbed and horrified

if not downright disgusted by Merricat's home after the fire. This revulsion often underpins interpretations of the novel's ultimate pessimism, disavowing Merricat and Constance's claims of "happiness" and suggesting instead their stagnation, insularity, and continued entrapment.

And yet, as Grosz and Fisher remind us, both the "outside" and the "weird" are critical positions and registers, allowing us to glimpse the new as a re-evaluation of our own conventional thinking and categories. As Grosz writes, there is an ambivalent power to the perversity of the "outside": "Something is lost—the intimacy of an inside position; and something is gained—the ability to critically evaluate that position and to possibly compare it with others" (*Architecture* xv). In turn, Fisher identifies in the "weird" a particular kind of disturbance which forces the subject to reconsider their own taxonomies of knowledge:

> [A] weird entity or object is so strange that it makes us feel that it should not exist, or at least it should not exist here. Yet if the entity or object *is* here, then the categories which we have up until now used to make sense of the world cannot be valid. The weird thing is not wrong, after all: it is our conceptions that must be inadequate. (15)

The Blackwood house after the fire challenges the reader and their own notions of what "home" is or should be. A viscerally "weird" object, it situates us in the peculiar position of the "outside," allowing us to view the "inside" anew and askance — or, in other words, it confronts us with our *own* strangeness and "Otherness," reflecting back our alterity. This new house appears to have a similar effect on both the Blackwood sisters and the villagers, forging new (albeit ambivalent) forms of self-recognition and even connection.

For although Merricat and Constance spend most of their days and much of their energy quite literally shutting themselves inside, both their new home and their new way of life are, in

many respects, more open than ever before. John Blackwood's wire fence is down, and with Merricat no longer patrolling its borders, the family's much-contested path is once again accessible to the villagers (*Castle* 134). They roam through the estate and loiter on the front lawn. On summer afternoons, they even picnic with their children (140-141); on summer nights, thrill-seeking lovers can be heard in the "warm darkness" (146) surrounding the house. The Blackwood sisters incorporate these visitors into their daily routine. During the day, they take up places "one on either side of the front door" (140), watching the people outside as if they were a form of home entertainment. The "glass panels" (140) through which Constance and Merricat peer out even suggest a kind of television being beamed in.

In turn, the villagers incorporate the Blackwood sisters into their schedules as well. One evening, a man from the village shows up with a roast chicken and a blueberry pie, addressing the sisters through the door and apologizing for breaking one of their chairs on the night of the fire (138). Soon, other villagers begin leaving baskets of food and notes of apology on a daily basis (139). These offerings are clearly motivated by fear and guilt, but they also signal the way in which Constance and Merricat now occupy a place in the day-to-day lives (as well as homes and kitchens) of others. In this sense, as Shelley Ingram writes, the sisters "are firmly part of the everyday" (71). Lynette Carpenter goes further, arguing that the baskets are a "means of communication" signifying a "new relationship" (208-209) between the sisters and the village. Saliently, Honor Wallace compares the offerings to those of precapitalist gift economies and the symbolism of feudal tributes (182), marking the shift toward a new system of exchange that does not involve capital, one of the long-standing sources of tension between the Blackwoods and the villagers.

These examples provide opportunities for the kinds of connection and self-recognition that were impossible at the start of the novel. If Jackson's opening sequence established the failure — on both Merricat's and the villagers' part — to recognize themselves in the other, then these concluding scenes suggest the opposite. Constance can see herself in the women who cook for her and her sister, singling out their individual culinary tics — too much ketchup, too much molasses (*Castle* 139) — and comparing their recipes to her own. Merricat can see herself in the passers-by on the path, men and women who, as she says, now "pu[t] their feet down where once only my feet had gone" (134).

This is not to suggest that the sisters and the villagers live in idyllic, empathetic harmony by the end of the novel; nor does it advance the Blackwood house as the shining symbol of a feminist Utopia. Merricat makes plain her still-lingering animosity, mentioning the "defiant [and] hating" (134) children on the lawn and the adults with their "evil open mouths" (140). When she wonders aloud if she could eat one of the children, Constance briefly indulges the idea, in turn wondering if she could cook one (146). For their part, the villagers seem genuinely terrified if not disgusted by the sisters and their new house. They weave Constance and Merricat into a new set of scarifying local legends and despite turning the Blackwood house into a local landmark and picnic spot, they still warn their children not to get too close (140-141).

But these legends, like Merricat's antipathy, are reciprocal constructions, suggesting the ways in which, for better or worse, the villagers define themselves *through* the sisters, and the sisters vice versa. Each has folded the other into their own self-conception, discovering something about themselves in the process. As Shelley Ingram observes, by the end of the novel Merricat and Constance are "important to the town's knowledge of itself," given that they "challeng[e] the boundaries of what the villagers thought the world is or should be" (71-72). This

is the power of the "outside" and the "weird." As Fisher writes: "There is no inside except as a folding of the outside; the mirror cracks, I am an other, and I always was" (11-12).

More than anything, Merricat's new home is an "outside" in this sense — what Grosz calls an "architecture from the outside" or what Diana Agrest similarly terms "an architecture from without."[46] The deconstructive nature of this "outside" occasions in Merricat a set of profound changes regarding both her conception of self and her notion of home. In the wake of the fire, she gives up her domestic witchcraft, no longer nailing totems to trees along the estate's boundaries or burying treasure in the long field; she also gives up her hiding place by the creek (*Castle* 140). Both were sources of profound feminine power, and yet at the same time they were also ambivalently coded throughout the text. Merricat, for instance, often invoked her magic as a means of maintaining her father's boundaries (rather than setting her own), and her hiding place by the creek was a stark reminder that the Blackwood house was neither her true refuge nor her true home. The house as it stands now renders these practices and spaces redundant.

Indeed, these concluding scenes make explicit Merricat's new form of "witchcraft" — that is, the "magic" of architecture itself, a similarly creative process of transformation, protection, and self-construction. In these final sections, Merricat goes on in great detail about her reconstruction of the house, fixing the broken step, boarding up the windows, and designing a set of barricades that flank its sides (120-121, 125-127, 133). We might compare these barricades to those of the Halloran family in *The Sundial*, calling into relief two strikingly different forms of domestic withdrawal. Whereas the Halloran barricades were a shoring up of the patriarchal home in order to perpetuate the privilege of its spatial and temporal insularity, Merricat's are explicitly cobbled out of the ruins of the patriarch's house, turning over the

[46] These phrases are taken from Grosz's *Architecture from the Outside* (2001) and Agrest's *Architecture from Without* (1991).

fragments of old structures in order to assemble the new. Moreover, while these structures appear only to entrench the Blackwood detachment from the village, their symbolism might in fact suggest how Merricat and Constance incorporate the village into their new life and home. The image of Merricat picking through debris and scavenging for materials — "turning over broken trash" (120), as Jackson writes — is a direct parallel to the Harler family and the heaps of junk on their own front lawn, as seen in the novel's opening sequence (5). In fact, Merricat's sneering fantasy of the Harlers' domestic life from that first chapter now appears as a prescient vision of her and Constance's daily existence, with the sisters themselves eating off of half-broken plates and their home literally turned inside-out. Jackson emphasizes this point by having Merricat discover the "pile of junk" (133) which, comically, Mr. Harler collected on the Blackwoods' front porch during the night of the fire. Now, "piece by piece" (133), Merricat integrates these items into the construction of her new home, one of the many ways in which this final section symbolically entwines the domestic lives of the villagers with that of the sisters.

Only by fully deconstructing the family home and the heteropatriarchal order it represents are Merricat and Constance able to imagine a new future for themselves, however "weird" or "outside" the norm. It is this newness which makes their deconstructed house at once so off-putting and so powerful. In descriptions which resonate with what might be called Merricat's architectural practice, Fisher associates the weird with montage and juxtaposition, the conjoining of fragments which do not belong (10-11). He also associates it with the "in-between" (28). For, as he argues, the weird signals the emergence of the new (13), and as such it takes on the inchoate and jarring appearance of a future still taking shape. Merricat herself is an architect of fragments, conjoining disparate odds and ends through collage and juxtaposition, assembling a

weird and in-between home that radically "unbuilds" the past only to move forward into the still shaky future.

In the end, it is the promise of just such a future — one that truly breaks with the old — that wards off the "demon-ghost" who possesses and haunts not only *Castle* but the House Trilogy on the whole. As Zora Neale Hurston writes, "Ghosts hate new things" (qtd. in Gordon xix). Avery Gordon explains:

> The reason why is because ghosts are characteristically attached to the events, things, and places that produced them in the first place…Ghosts hate new things precisely because once the conditions that call them up and keep them alive have been removed, their reason for being and their power to haunt are severely restricted. (xix)

As the House Trilogy demonstrates time and again, the house itself — as a symbolic structure for the family order and its line, as a physical embodiment of the patriarch and his genealogical claims — has always been the primary condition that keeps the ghost of heteropatriarchal power alive. This ghost continues to attach itself to the house precisely because the house was integral to its production in the first place. *Castle* therefore exorcises this ghost by taking apart the house and producing something entirely new, however unnerving. After Charles finally leaves for good, Constance turns to Merricat and bursts into tearful laughter (144). "[W]e are so happy" (*Castle* 145, 146), both sisters keep repeating. It is a strange and uneasy ending. But perhaps we should take them at their word, while also remembering, as Ruth Franklin writes, that this ending "requires a new definition of happiness" (450), one that rewrites the past as much as the future; one that removes the conditions which keep certain structures (and their

"ghosts") alive; one that rejects the pat and tidy maneuvers of traditional "happy endings" altogether.

VIII. Conclusion: "Immense Piles of Wickedness"

One such happy ending, for example, is that of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), a novel that shares many striking similarities with *Castle* as well as the House Trilogy on the whole. Not only does Hawthorne's novel entwine a family home's contested history with an avaricious patriarch, it also alludes to colonial land theft, interfamilial murder, spectral haunting, and the New England witch hunts. As the reader eventually learns, the missing deed to an expansive swath of stolen Native American land is found behind the portrait of the Pyncheon family's founding patriarch, mouldering in a hidden compartment literally built into the house; this house, in turn, only fell into the hands of the Pyncheons when this same patriarch successfully accused its original owner, Matthew Maule, of sorcery, a man who was then stoned to death by the Salem villagers. The present-day occupants of the house, siblings Hepzibah and Clifford Pyncheon, now roam its rooms and garden, haunted by their family's past deeds and condemned to a similar isolation and stasis as that experienced by the Blackwood sisters at the start of Jackson's novel.

Like Jackson with her trilogy, Hawthorne therefore collapses the haunting legacy of the past into the space of the family home, in many ways depicting this house not only as the site of a haunting but as its source as well. Near the end of *Seven Gables*, Clifford launches into a curious and lengthy diatribe against houses in general, wondering why anyone should make themselves — as he puts it — "a prisoner for life in brick, and stone, and old worm-eaten timber, when [they can] just as easily dwell, in one sense, nowhere" (Hawthorne 199-200). His attack

alludes to the greed and covetousness both embodied and triggered by fine homes and grand estates, what he terms "immense pile[s] of wickedness" (201-202) and "great, gloomy, dark-chambered mansion[s]" (202). But his polemic cuts deeper, grasping at something more visceral and fundamental to the human project, lamenting a kind of existential shift occasioned not merely by the built environment but more specifically the *architectural* environment. He rails against "the heaps of bricks and stones, consolidated with mortar, or hewn timber, [and] fastened with spike nails" which, to his mind, are the "greatest possible stumbling blocks in the path of human happiness" (200) and which represent so-called "real estate" (201), what he calls "the broad foundation on which nearly all the guilt of this world rests" (201). By contrast, his speech keeps returning to the image of the archetypal hut, those "bowers of branches" which, according to him, were "constructed as easily as a bird's nest" and were not so much "built" by human hands as they simply "grew" (199) from the land itself. To Clifford, the shift from the vernacular hut to architecture proper constitutes man's fall from innocence, a shift that reconceives the values of intimate space and forever entwines the lived environment with the divisive ills of property and capital.

It is a stirring and persuasive speech, and in many ways it sums up several of the House Trilogy's own guiding themes and ideas, from the divisive greed and covetousness embodied by the family home to the ways in which these same legacies are transmuted into the haunting spectres of transgenerational fear and guilt; from the entrapping inwardness of domestic culture and its severing of social bonds to the violence — both imaginative and real — of such insularity and prejudice. And yet, curiously, the ending of Hawthorne's novel sidesteps these insights. Hawthorne, that is, tidily resolves the novel's many loose ends, abandoning them just as quickly as the Pyncheons abandon the house of the seven gables itself. In a happy ending that could not

be more conventional, there is a marriage (between a younger Pyncheon relative and, conveniently, a descendant of Matthew Maule) and a move to the country (where Clifford and Hepzibah live out their days in bucolic happiness). Not only does this ending re-establish the viability of the Pyncheon family line, it also simply exchanges one house for another. And yet, earlier, Clifford had insisted in the most vehement terms that the very idea of the house needed to be reconsidered, deconstructed, and rebuilt in order for humankind to confront and exorcise the ghosts of its violent past. As he himself says about his family home, it would be a relief to see it "torn down, burnt up, and so the earth be rid of it, and grass be sown abundantly over its foundation" (201).

The House of the Seven Gables does not realize this vision, but Jackson's final novel does. At the end of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, the Blackwood home is the eerie realization of Clifford's "burnt up" and "torn down" house, with "grass sown so abundantly over its foundation" as to suggest the house itself has been returned to the land. Jackson, in other words, does not shy away from what it would mean to truly reconsider and reconceive the house, to reimagine domestic happiness after it has been divorced from our internalized notions and images of "home." Her trilogy therefore takes up the American Gothic tradition's interrogation of the house, from Poe to Hawthorne to James, and pursues this line of questioning to its difficult and disturbing end. The Blackwood house brings us full circle with this trilogy. Like the Halloran mansion in *The Sundial*, Merricat's family home starts off as an "immense pile of wickedness" (to use Clifford's phrase), a house that embodies and enshrines the divisiveness of patriarchal capitalism and private property; and like Hugh Crain's Hill House, it also exemplifies the gothic return or "ghostly repetition" of the *paterfamilias*, a home that insidiously reproduces male power through internalized patriarchy. Significantly, these earlier houses remain pointedly

unchanged by the end of Jackson's narratives. In *The Sundial*, the same power structures simply repeat themselves, with the "apocalypse" on the edge of the horizon perhaps only a thunderstorm that will change nothing; in *Hill House*, the novel's final paragraph is the same as its first, Jackson's titular mansion seemingly stuck in a perpetual time loop. The Blackwood mansion repudiates these endings, breaking with the past and dismantling the patriarchal home via the alterations of what might be called a "deconstructive anarchitect," a young woman who burns up and tears down her father's house, forging a strange, certainly defiant, perhaps even hopeful form of female domestic independence.

When Jackson started the House Trilogy, she joked that by retreating inside the house and locking the door behind her she had inevitably precipitated the "end of the world" ("About the End of the World" 374). She was referring to *The Sundial* and how the domestic withdrawal and introversion of its characters necessarily meant the destruction of everything and everyone on the outside. In one sense, this kind of solipsism is indeed apocalyptic, dramatizing insularity as a form of imaginative violence that severs social bonds and dehumanizes everyone but oneself. In another, *The Sundial* is not really an apocalyptic novel at all. Rather than depicting the revelation of a new world, it depicts the perpetuation of this one, in particular its forms of power and their impossible repetition throughout history, ultimately suggesting recursion and stasis. Perhaps it would be more accurate, then, to describe *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* as Jackson's true "apocalyptic" novel. After all, it is here that Jackson, in some sense, brings the apocalypse home, taking apart the patriarchal house, dismantling its structures of power, and banishing its ghost. As opposed to destroying everything on the outside, here she destroys almost everything on the inside. This is the movement "inside-out" that Jackson suggested when she first began the trilogy, a forward movement that not only dismantles the physical structures of

the house but its temporal ones as well. Etymologically, apocalypse means “to uncover.” In the end, this is what the House Trilogy does, turning the American house “inside-out” in order to “uncover” both its inherent ties to structural power and Jackson’s critique of these same structures. The ruined house with which she leaves us is an apocalyptic “outside” to these sites of power and their legacies, a disquieting and unsettling vision of home that nonetheless gestures towards something new — as Merricat says, “new landmarks” and “new safeguards” and a “new pattern for our days.”

Conclusion

Writing Is the Way Through:

Dream Homes and Lost Futures

In the months following *Castle*'s publication, Jackson's agoraphobia and depression grew increasingly worse, confining her to her North Bennington house and preventing her from doing nearly any writing at all. During the following winter of 1963-1964, she began keeping a diary, more or less the only piece of writing that survives from this period.[47] In it, she begins to describe "the glorious world of the future" where she will be "alone [and] safe" (qtd. in Carpenter 211) — in short, a life of independence and self-sufficiency. According to her journal, Jackson saw writing as the only means of realizing this life: "only way out is writing please god help me" (qtd. in Hattenhauer 27). And later: "writing is the way out, writing is the way out, writing is the way out" (qtd. in Carpenter 210). She says she is "at home" in the pages of her diary and thinks of them as "a refuge, a pleasant hiding place" (qtd. in Hattenhauer 27), her language explicitly recalling Merricat and her sanctuary by the creek. And yet, like Merricat, she soon begins to rethink these places and projective visions as safe havens: "this is not a refuge," she eventually concludes, "but a way through, a path not charted; i feel my way, but there *is* a way through" (qtd. in Hattenhauer 27).

Reading these passages, I cannot help but think of Jackson's conception of writing here as a process akin to Merricat's "alterations," the confining space of the page a kind of home or hiding place that nonetheless needs to be reimagined, remade, and "unbuilt," every sentence a spell or protection ritual, every turn of phrase a fire or a barricade cobbled out of fragments. Writing is an alchemy and an architecture, one that transforms and builds just as it destroys and

[47] For an in-depth discussion of this diary, see Franklin, pp. 476-479.

creates. And the page is a kind of house, one that will never be a true refuge until it is turned to rubble and pieced back together. There is no escape in the sense of a "way out" because there is no "outside" except as a "fold." Writing "a way through" therefore means "altering" the structures that we have known up until now, folding them, turning them inside-out, burning them up, and tearing them down. It is only in this way that we remove the conditions which keep the "ghosts" of the past alive in the present, disorienting them as Merricat disorients Charles. In this way, we glimpse the "glorious world of the future," a future that is not merely the impossible repetition (or spectral return) of the past.

After all, for so many of Jackson's characters, this "glorious world of the future" is pre-empted by exactly these kinds of spectral returns, the repetition of past structures both external and internal, from the sociological "ghosts" of a dominant culture to the "demons in the mind." This dissertation has pursued these ghosts and spectres as they appear in Jackson's House Trilogy, arguing that her poetics of haunting and her gothic poetics of space advance the American home itself as not only the site and source of spectral rupture, but as a sociological ghost in its own right, a physical and symbolic structure that embodies and enshrines the abiding myths and divisive ideologies of a normative national culture. In these novels, Jackson's characters are most often haunted by domestic space itself and the complex and interwoven histories it literally "houses" and carries forward into the present. Staging encounters with broken time, Jackson's haunted houses entrap the women of her trilogy not only within the spatial enclosure of the home but its temporal regressions and repetitions as well, with the signature time structure of the trilogy being recursion and "ghostly" return. The women who inhabit these houses are in some sense inhabited by them as well. In Jackson, domestic space is internalized, teaching women how to live. A dream-like "diagram of inhabiting" deeply

ingrained in the subject, the house reinforces gender norms and scripts, habituating the social repetitions in the construction of gender, and, for all intents and purposes, defining a woman's "place" in the world. Exploring these themes through the gothic and supernatural modes, the House Trilogy most often connects the family home to the spectral presence of a domineering patriarch. From the bellowing voice of the first Mr. Halloran to the lingering psyche of Hugh Crain to the uncanny return of John Blackwood in the form of Cousin Charles — Jackson depicts the family home as inextricable from its patriarch, suggesting the house itself produces and perpetuates this figure and his values. In this way, she excavates the house's historical ties to patriarchal power and the male imaginary and calls into relief the ways in which the family home often functions as an internalized spatial paradigm, one that defines and restricts female identity and sexuality as much as it reconceives and remakes the female body itself.

But if Jackson's houses are oppressive and repressive sites of patriarchal control, they are also deeply seductive and enticing symbols of status and potential power. In the trilogy, houses and homes are the only structures through which women can gain a sense of empowerment, a notion of individuality, or a glimpse of domestic enfranchisement. From Orianna to Eleanor, from Aunt Fanny to Merricat, the women of the trilogy rush to these houses, seeking them out even when they know they are haunted, refusing to leave despite the troubled histories that lurk behind every door and around every corner, staking their claims, in short, on the same spaces, which, for years and even decades, have facilitated their own oppression. After all, these houses embody the values and signifiers which a dominant culture espouses and rewards — from power, wealth, and status to seclusion, protection, and even selfhood. As such, they offer the women of the trilogy everything that the outside world denies them. In turn, nearly all of these women seek to instrumentalize the house, seizing control of the domestic domain in order to seize some

semblance of power and personal sovereignty for themselves. This is another sense in which the trilogy depicts domestic space as a "trap," with Jackson exploring ambivalent and even compromised forms of female empowerment and self-sufficiency, the way in which, for example, Orianna reproduces her father-in-law's tyrannical reign over the Halloran mansion or Merricat carries forward her father's elitism and insularity. It is also another form of "haunting," with the women of the trilogy at once menaced and pursued by patriarchy's ghosts, and, at the same time, personifying these same ghosts themselves, taking up their lingering structures of power and perpetuating their legacies in the present.

Jackson therefore uses the ghost and the haunted house to suggest how easily systems of power reproduce themselves. In turn, her House Trilogy ultimately suggests how the spatial and temporal structures of the family home delimit if not pre-empt both self-transformation and social change. This is the abiding message of Jackson's gothic poetics of space, as well as that of her extensive architectural symbolism. In short, the "house" novels depict the spatial and temporal retreat within the family home as a regressive foray into the past and its oppressive systems of power, a form of social violence at once imaginative and real that both forecloses and forestalls the possibility of progressive change and individual transformation. In *The Sundial*, these dynamics are explored through interlinked depictions of domestic introversion and prejudiced insularity, nostalgic prophecy and temporal stall. The apocalyptic prophecy handed down by Fanny's father is a vision of the nostalgic future that confines the house's inhabitants to its walls and grounds, utterly destroying everything and everyone beyond the Halloran property line. The millenarianism of this New World vision is merely a means to perpetuate the Hallorans' own class and racial privilege — in short, a spurious utopianism that allows them to renounce change altogether and in any form. As such, the novel begins and ends in more or less

the same fashion, with the house's recent heir murdered and a new successor simply taking their place, the cycle beginning all over again. In *Hill House*, Jackson adopts a much more narrowed focus, shifting registers from social satire to psychological horror. And yet, the overarching dynamic of pre-empted change, specifically due to physical isolation and spectral repetition, is carried through in Eleanor's inability to escape the patterns of the past and formulate an identity of her own. A reflection of Hugh Crain and his obsessive mind, Hill House stands in for the male imaginary and the dreams and visions which it proliferates throughout architectural history and spatial discourse. For Eleanor, these dreams constitute a spatial paradigm intimately tied to the family form and her own acculturated notions of womanhood and gender expression, preventing her from moving forward. Turned around and around within Crain's mansion, she is eventually consumed by the house itself, her own identity assimilated into the surrounding space. In the end, the novel suggests the inescapable logic of the patriarchal home, with Eleanor stuck in an endless house and a perpetual loop of male fantasies. Like *The Sundial*, *Hill House* begins and ends in the same way — this time with the first paragraph repeated as its last. Only the trilogy's final novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, breaks with these repeating structures and forges something new. But even here Jackson suggests the haunting legacies of patriarchal power, beginning with an ambivalent portrait of female self-sufficiency that is still reliant on the wealth and privilege, as well as elitism and insularity, of Merricat's father, John Blackwood. Eventually realizing that her own family home is complicit with the power structures she abhors and has already ostensibly repudiated, Merricat sets fire to this home, and, amid its rubble and devastation, begins to piece together a defiant "castle" that reorients and recontextualizes the kinds of domestic withdrawal and introversion depicted elsewhere in the trilogy. Her new home, in other words, is a jarring and even distressing inversion of the domestic ideal, an instantiation

of female domestic independence and recalcitrance that posits "a way through," embodying a possible notion of futurity.

In many respects, the dream of female domestic independence is itself a notion of futurity that haunts the House Trilogy from start to finish. In each of these novels, this dream is tantalizingly in view and yet impossibly out of reach — from Orianna finally gaining control of the Halloran mansion to her lifeless body at the foot of its grand staircase; from Eleanor stealing her family car and going in search of "home" to that same car wrapped around a tree in Hill House's driveway. In Jackson's work, female domestic independence is often a future that fails to arrive — a "lost future," a "not yet." In this sense, it is not only haunted and haunting but *hauntological*, insofar as it instantiates a gothic displacement that spectralizes the present. More often than not, Jackson represents these lost futures through the image of a woman's dream home or personal refuge. In *The Sundial*, Orianna pictures "a little small house" deep in the woods where there is only one chair and one plate and one cup and where, as she says, "no one can ever find me" (101); in *Hill House*, Eleanor has a similar fantasy, imagining "a tiny cottage buried in a garden" where she is all alone and surrounded by roses and protective oleanders and where, echoing Orianna, "[n]o one would ever find me" (15). These fantasies are strikingly similar to Jackson's own, her descriptions of that "glorious world of the future" which we find in her private writing, the sense she describes of one day being "safe [and] alone," of finding her own "refuge" — yearnings and images to which she returns again and again.

All of these fantasies, from Orianna's to Eleanor's to Jackson's, share certain telling traits — solitude, silence, the conspicuous absence of childcare and domestic labour. But perhaps their most salient connection is that they remain unrealized, condemned to the fleeting daydream and the afternoon nap, relegated to the back of the mind and the optative life. In their place, the

actual houses in which Jackson's women live (and in the above cases die) are all dreamt, designed, and controlled by male patriarchs (Mr. Halloran, Hugh Crain), in itself a comment on how much more fluently the world translates male ideation into lived reality. These hauntological sanctuaries and refuges — the shadow places over which these women dream and pine —not only speak to how female imagination is so often forced to remain hidden and repressed, illegible to a male world, but also to what Rebecca Munford has termed "spectral femininity," the representation of female "social invisibility and historical dispossession" through ghostly representation, with the construction of feminine identity "sharing the ghost's paradoxical position" as an absent presence and present absence (121). As Mark Fisher notes, hauntology — Derrida's portmanteau of "haunting" and "ontology" — is a *state of being*, whereby the subject is haunted as much by what could have been as by what *has* been. It is a sense of both individual and historical alienation peculiar to the modern experience, a feeling that the present is haunted "not so much [by] the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate" (Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?" 16).

My thesis has placed the narratives of Jackson's House Trilogy alongside a narrative of postwar architecture, one that explicitly sees the postwar house and its own projective visions as themselves "lost futures" which the twentieth century taught us to anticipate. From the utopian visions of the suburban home and its Edenic enclave to the intrauterine fantasies of biomorphism and its allegedly curative domestic spaces, postwar architecture could be both deeply conventional and wildly experimental. And yet what so many of its designs and theories share is a vision of the utopian future, a new beginning and a "new world" that would right the wrongs of the past, a "revolution" in living and design that not only made broad claims about a new, ascendant America, but also promised to instill within the built environment egalitarian

principles and democratic values. This revolution, of course, never fully arrived, with postwar architecture to a large degree reproducing the power structures and regressive values of the past, perpetuating the old under the guise of the new. Its failure to deliver on its own promises and idealized visions constitutes its own "lost future," a kind of historical dispossession marked as an absent presence and present absence.

My reading of Jackson's domestic architecture sees her own examination of the American house, as well as her attempt "to solve the problem of enclosed domestic space" (Downey 290), as an interrogation of this "lost future," a way to explore and probe the "haunted house" of American domesticity and to wonder why, at a moment of both profound anxiety and historical change, the American house was not able to break with the past and move forward as it had promised. I see her explorations of the Victorian Gothic pile and the Gilded Age mansion as tracing the modern American home to its ideological roots, finding there a set of deeply entrenched power structures and restrictive values which not only stretch back through the entirety of Western architecture, but are also carried forward into her own postwar present. For, within Jackson's Victorian houses and Gilded Age mansions, we glimpse the uncanny echoes of postwar architecture itself — its prophecies and visions, its dreams and nightmares, its design features and debates, its ideologies and divisions. In the end, the "hybrid historicity" of Jackson's houses and their architectural symbolism gestures both backwards and forwards through American architecture and discourse, using a gothic poetics of space to suggest how the houses of the present are haunted by the houses of the past.

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In her final months, Jackson began writing again, starting a new novel about a woman who leaves her old life behind and starts all over again. Jackson did not live long enough to finish it. And yet, in many ways, this unfinished novel realizes the kind of new beginning and self-transformation that eludes many of her characters in the House Trilogy, if not also Jackson herself. The novel concerns Angela Motorman, a clairvoyant, who, in the wake of her husband's death, fulfils a long-held dream of reinvention:

> So that was how I started out. I'd thought about it for a long time of course…and everything went the way I used to figure it would. I sold the house, I auctioned off the furniture, I put all the paintings and boxes in the barn, I erased my old name and took my initials off everything, and I got on the train and left. (*Come Along with Me* 4-5)

Mrs. Motorman's personal reinvention is also a reinvention of her domestic environment, stripping it down to the bare essentials all the better to reflect and accentuate her newfound individuality. As she says: "I wanted the barest rock bottom of a room I could have, I wanted nothing but a place to sleep and a place to sit and a place to put my things; any decorating done to my environment is me" (17). Her descriptions of such a place — a room of one's own if there ever was one — recall the unrealized daydreams and fantasies of Orianna and Eleanor, as well as Jackson's own images of refuge and sanctuary.

Mrs. Motorman's dream, however, quickly becomes reality. As she says, "[E]verything went the way I used to figure it would" (4). When she arrives in her new city, she finds exactly the kind of place she has been looking for, renting a small room with only a bed, a dresser, a desk, and two chairs. Following a logic by now familiar to Jackson's readers, the room turns out to be haunted. When Mrs. Motorman steps inside, she can feel the presence of the dead: "[T]he

air [is] very alive," she says (11). And yet this haunting could not be more different than that of Jackson's earlier work. Whereas the ghosts in her other novels so often pursue and menace her female protagonists, entrapping them within the past and condemning them to repeat its structures of power, here they occasion an opportunity for reconciliation and closure. Soon, Mrs. Motorman has organized a séance, giving voice to the dead and allowing the living to confront the past.

Although only a fragment of thirty or so pages, this unfinished novel not only extends the House Trilogy, it also seems to redress it in some sense. On the one hand, Mrs. Motorman's new beginning is a heartening vision of female independence and self-determination, a story of breaking with the past while also embracing its ghosts, a story that clearly countervails the horror and impossible repetition depicted in the trilogy. On the other, this new beginning, and the ease with which Mrs. Motorman moves into it, might be read as a compensating fantasy, a vision almost too good to be true, perhaps even, in its own way, idealistic and utopian. It was the last thing Jackson ever wrote, and perhaps, after more than two decades of dissecting and cataloguing a variety of everyday horrors and anxieties, she can be forgiven for some wishful thinking. After all, it was a new beginning and a new future to which she was inviting if not imploring us — her working title was *Come Along with Me*.

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