

**“Homespun” Horror:  
Shirley Jackson’s Domestic Doubling**

by

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“All the time that I am making beds and doing dishes and driving to town for dancing shoes, I am telling myself stories. Stories about anything, anything at all. Just stories. After all, who can vacuum a room and concentrate on it? I tell myself stories... They keep me working, my stories.”

—“Memory and Delusion,” Shirley Jackson

The home space exists at the center of Shirley Jackson’s writing, presented to readers as a force of consistent fascination for characters. The domestic setting is one where Jackson manages to (or, attempts to) break free from enforced societal structure. Her work deconstructs the Freudian double, offering sardonically humorous takeaways that give way to liminality and horror alongside happiness. Fear in the everyday through a domesticized setting tangles and blurs the rigidly imposed lines of humor/horror, the mother/writer, housewife/public figure, and demon/angel of the house. As such, Jackson’s writing subverts norms and standards, closely examining and rebuilding certain norms and structures. She embodies the midcentury housewife, an idealized and expected role<sup>1</sup>, with plotlines and characters moving beyond societal expectations into a sinister and magical territory: Themes like murder, witchcraft and alienation appear in a discomfortingly combined setting with casserole laden kitchen scenes, dinner parties, and child rearing. There is a place for everything, and everything is in its outwardly maladjusted place. My argument will begin by situating Jackson’s writing among gender studies (considering the nineteenth century and midcentury), Gothic literature, domesticity, and horror. I plan to address three of Jackson’s novels, *Hangsaman*, *The Sundial*, and *We Have Always Lived in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Franklin remarks that an episode post *Life Among Savages* where Jackson, arriving at a hospital to give birth, is pigeon holed between being a “housewife” or a “writer” continues an illustration on “how great was the pressure on women of that era to assume without protest the ‘happy homemaker’ role society urged upon them,” continuing that Jackson was first and foremost a noteworthy *writer* who was also an achieved *housewife*. Such roles created an “internal and external” tension for Jackson, created in the home space by husband and family, and in the larger public sphere by publishers and readers (5).

*Castle*, through close readings of home spaces in the texts, relying on a term I will establish later in this paper as the “domestic double.”

Whereas some home spaces in Gothic texts are reduced to ruin and fear, Jackson’s novels cloak fear underneath a continual domestic bliss. This emphasis on domestic duties, cooking, cleaning, caring for the home, protecting a sense of morality, calls to mind the nineteenth century “Angel in the House” convention. Coventry Patmore’s idealized wifely figure begins to permeate cultural practices that deemed what womanhood should look like. To Patmore, beauty was grace and simplicity, lightness and power over the home space. Much like the midcentury middle class housewife, the woman was to care for her sphere, softly treading over the home with airy control. Such softness is in direct contrast with much of the Gothic, where darkness, fear, and the grotesque hold power and control. However in Jackson’s writing, main female characters embody the “angelic” figure even after their supposed falls from grace and respective traumas. Her main female characters embody a working connection between two adversarial identities, the domestic double.

My domesticized doubling analysis will be paired specifically within a trio of novels that are not Jackson’s most read or critically valued. While *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* fit within 1960s best seller lists, *Hangsaman* specifically and *Sundial* to a lesser degree experienced mixed reviews when compared to *The Haunting of Hill House*, published in 1959. *Hangsaman* is Jackson’s second novel, published originally in 1951, one which tracks adolescent Natalie’s journey from home to university, with domesticity as a lingering demon alongside isolation, loneliness, and struggling to fit in that ends with a psychological break. *The Sundial*, published in 1958, follows a different emphasis on the domestic: the Halloran family barricade themselves in their homestead after a doomsday apparition from their patriarch deems a split from regular

society. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, Jackson's last published novel in 1962, comes as a sort of fusion between the two previously mentioned texts. In *Castle*, two teenage girls carve out their own home space and domestic power, confining to the midcentury domestic ideal by their cooking and cleaning, but undermining its normalized authority by poisoning and burning their way to achieve happiness. Not everyone reading Jackson's texts when they were first published found her work to be subversive in the ways I argue, an error that I would like to address before deep diving into further textual analysis.

Released a year before Betty Friedan's groundbreaking feminist text *The Feminine Mystique*, Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* also studies midcentury domestic concerns. While both women wrote for the same women's magazines—publications like *Redbook*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *McCall's*—often encountering the same difficulties as women writers and homemakers, Friedan denounced Jackson as merely a “Housewife Writer” (57). In *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan complains that Jackson's type of writing is funny without addressing true issues of the everyday woman. Yet what Friedan seems to be missing is that Jackson's jokes and critiques rely on the domestic space, reexamining its constructs. As Franklin argues, Friedan does not recognize how “generally subversive” Jackson is in her writing. Such subversion extends beyond Jackson's essays on raising misbehaved children, encompassing novels like *Hangsaman*, *The Sundial*, and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. I am arguing against Friedan's misreading, and suggest that each novel settles on a space that is not entirely separate from the cultural values of femininity that are ascribed to its female characters. Rather, Jackson uses Gothic tropes of entrapment, ruined families, and destroyed home space alongside domesticity as a source for power and happiness. Jackson's women transcend the Gothic as sinister and the angel of the house as salvation, resisting both labels as

divided parts, blending the two concepts into an discomfoting yet socially “acceptable” representation of femininity. To find the fantasy, unreality, imagination in her work is to use biography as a starting point, working outward. Reality exists in the day to day for characters: Natalie heading to her English professor’s house to find his wife Mrs. Elizabeth Langdon drunkenly asleep on a burning sofa, Fancy playing in the barricaded Halloran estate, or Constance Blackwood cooking in the kitchen as Merricat hunts for poisonous mushrooms. This day to day takes a supernatural twist in how Jackson portrays normalcy alongside doom and disaster. The act of writing the novel places Jackson into “fairy-tale world” wandering, striking the uncanny balance between that space and the ghostly.

Such blending between worlds is quintessentially Jackson. But in a larger literary scope, doubled self is also central to Gothic studies. Deeply rooted in psychoanalysis, the Gothic genre exhibits the Freudian “Uncanny” with consistency, and “The connection between literature and psychoanalysis is as old as psychoanalysis itself,” (Massé 229) though “psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism of the Gothic” has experienced interpretation evolution since the nineteenth century (231). While Jackson is not a nineteenth century author, her works are rooted in similar patterns and theories emergent and evident within the Victorian Gothic, just as they are in something like Patmore’s “Angel in the House.” *Hangsaman*, *Sundial*, and *Castle* come a full century after Freud’s studies and doubled self texts like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde*. Jackson’s subject matters build on these texts, locating a blindspot in earlier psychological dives into brain science and split selves, venturing into a sinister and magical territory with domestic aplomb. Murder, witchcraft, overt racism, and alienation appear in a discomfotingly combined setting with casserole laden kitchen scenes, dinner parties, and child rearing, a compelling insertion to the Freudian uncanny and Gothic genre. Jackson’s topic matters and plot

lines offer “[t]he possibility of a different story, for women particularly,” which “leads to the ‘discovery’ in both fields of what was always there and to curiosity about what might remain unseen,” through breaking down “binaries such as male/female, gay/straight, mother/daughter, upper-/working-class are added to the older/young male divide that figured in the Gothic and psycho analysis from the first” (Massé 237, 238) with a midcentury spin.

Before applying Freud’s theory to Jackson’s texts it is necessary to analyze “The Uncanny.” As the previous paragraph notes, Freud’s work has been consistently used to explicate Gothic literature. His writing lends itself to studying patterns throughout the larger Gothic literary corpus with ease. For analyzing Jackson’s domestic doubling and larger sense of “uncanniness,” Freud’s writing will be applied in two pointed ways: Through his description of liminal spaces and connection to the home. Initially, Freud describes the uncanny as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (1-2), representing the liminal space between what is capable of being understood as outward in the world and what is hidden. Though we may get a sense of the familiarity, its true connection to the past is never quite in our reach. Through repression or burying, the uncanny is never able to be fully comprehended— it can, however, be sensed or felt. This pervasive sense of the unknowable but omnipresent horror creates the exact same atmospheres within Jackson’s novels and their domestic spaces. Freud continues his argument on “the uncanny” through various definitions, which have all their root in “home.” The German word “unheimlich,” or “uncanny,” is described as the opposite of “heimlich,” of which one example is “belonging to the home.” Freud later contrasts these terms with an English dictionary definition of the “uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted” (2). In another definition, Freud connects the uncanny to something that is, “[F]riendly, intimate, homelike; the enjoyment of

quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of peaceful pleasure and security as one within the four walls of his house” (3). In just these examples alone, the home space is vital. Freud is not discussing public spheres as a basis of the uncanny— not just labyrinthine city streets— reaching instead for the comfort found in home and an individual’s personal “peaceful pleasure and security” (or its absence) in the private sphere.

As this essay will continue to illustrate, Jackson uses Freudian techniques in her novels to instill a sense of fear and uncanny. Her writing is that horror “when one wanders about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch, and collides for the hundredth time with the same piece of furniture...” that Freud connects to Mark Twain’s “irresistibly comic” writing (15). Her characters’ interactions with rooms, objects, and common things also use comic value and unfamiliar wandering. Though Freud’s case study notes will be dispersed throughout this essay to further illuminate Jackson’s enacted uncanny, I will closely analyze one more connection between individuals and the things/spaces they inhabit. The textual support I provide to Jackson’s writing will follow a similar analysis pattern. Freud recounts a story involving married couple with a “curiously shaped” table decorated with crocodiles inside their apartment, who complained about a strange smell inside their home and other unexplainable crocodile apparitions. In his retelling, it as if the crocodile carvings on the table have come to life, and the uncanny is “the presence of the table” which “causes ghostly crocodiles to haunt the place.” He concludes the case study by writing that though thought is ridiculous and humorous, “the uncanny feeling it produced was quite remarkable” (Freud 15) to analyze. Again, through horror arises humor. Besides the blend between horror and humor, most suitable to Jackson’s texts with the crocodile case study as an analytical basis is the connection between examining people’s realities and non realities through the lenses of their homes and belongings. The table

begins to take on a liminal meaning as an object in the couple's house. Their sense of liminality is similar to Jackson's objects and their functions in the text. More about objects in a liminal sense will be explicated later in this text, after describing how Jackson displays the "domestic double" as a foundational concept for the space between two worlds and realities.

Just like Freudian and Victorian psychological case studies, Jackson's application and use of the double does not take the same shape in each text. Whereas in *Hangsaman* the individual must invent a psychological alter ego and then return to normalcy, symbolized in the college campus and eventual suburban home, and in *Sundial* there is a lack of individual and instead an investment in the self as group mentality—those within the Halloran house walls, those without—Jackson's last novel transcends the binaries set in place by those texts which came before it. Though her set patterns of ideas and symbols are in tact from *Hangsaman* to *Sundial* to *Castle*, her means of composing satisfactory endings for her characters shift. Themes like trauma (Natalie's rape at the garden party in *Hangsaman*, Lionel Halloran's largely hinted at murder at the hands of his mother for property inheritance reasons in *Sundial*, the arsenic patricide/matricide/family murder in *Castle*) repeat in each work. Jackson's keen sense of horror, though firmly rooted in the domestic, takes shape in different means throughout each text: One could compare the experience to walking through houses on the same street. Each home contains its own cast of characters, items, things, or rooms that make up its overarching atmosphere, and weight of its owners. Though each building exists on the same block, forcing a commonality in geography and some similarity in unified area, each must be considered as an individual space before being grouped together with its neighbors. The same principle carries over into *Hangsaman*, *The Sundial*, and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. At the heart of each novel

exists a central locus for dispersing atmospheric horror (for the characters as well as the reader), essential components to the domesticized double.

*Hangasman* is perhaps the most literal and outright act of doubling in Jackson's trio, between Natalie and her imagined friend Tony. The Natalie/Tony personality split is one of the most uncanny and confusing divides in Jackson's novels. Many readers missed that Tony was a figment of Natalie, projecting a sort of lesbian relationship onto the girls. Considering Tony as an imaginary friend presents the reader with a puzzling textual crux, akin to Franz Kafka's short story "The Judgment." Tony may be considered as Natalie's idealized self, the one she would like to be but cannot fully become. In *The Sundial*, doubleness is not so much found in individual characters with others in text. Instead, the pairing comes in how each character interacts with wealth, time, and the doomsday. Aunt Fanny's experience in the house pre-wealth and elaborate construction is against her old age spinster status without claim to the property, Orianna's pre-marital self is not her self-proclaimed queen identity, Fancy's childhood gleam is opposed to her devilish delight in hurting other characters... Extended beyond the individual, the collective Halloran household is foiled against the villagers, and the house's "old" Mr. and Mrs. Halloran contrast with the "new Hallorans," the inept Richard Halloran and domineering Orianna Halloran. *Hangasman* places inerrant and imposed duplicities onto the individual, whereas *Sundial* remains in the larger abstract double than the clean cut self and other. *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* keeps the villager and family divide, combining a fictionalized sisterly sense of Jackson's own domestic witchery. Constance and Merricat are not quite the Natalie/Tony split, but are parts to the larger connection between the militant homemaker's cooking and cleaning and the Earthly spellcaster. I will go novel by novel to illustrate how the splits between

selves are formed, beginning with *Hangsaman* and ending with *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*.

*Hangsaman* creates a contrast for Natalie based first in the suburban home and college setting. As the narrative— and Natalie’s mental stability—unravels, doors become a way to evoke “double world,” used as a repeated symbol that I will connect in closer detail to Jackson’s use of liminal spaces later in this essay. After Natalie first arrives to college, her new dorm space door “somehow resembled, in some mystic, impossible way, the door to her own room, far away at home” (91). Natalie, whose initial concern when escaping her suburban household to the new college setting is in finding privacy, cannot find a way to keep others out of her spaces. At home, her mother offers ominous marital omens to Natalie (her mother’s marriage to Mr. Waite is described as being with “the ponderous sympathy of a Victorian household” (6) and her attachment to home is in the kitchen preparing for various houseguests, with Natalie by her side) and her father offers up armchair writing critiques. Life among casserole family meals and cocktail laden social hours break up when Natalie escapes into the garden by her house, a space belonging solely to her, yet this space, too, is disrupted when the man from the party rapes her. Jackson pays close attention to how Natalie perceives this trauma the morning after the party, mixing acute normalcy with shock and horror inside the girl’s bedroom:

Natalie awoke the next morning to bright sun and clear air, to the gentle movement of her bedroom curtains, to the patterned dancing of the light on the floor; she lay quietly, appreciating the morning in the clear uncomplicated movement vouchsafed occasionally before consciousness returned. Then, with the darkening of the sunlight, the sudden coldness of the day, she was awake and, before perceiving clearly why, she buried her head in the pillow and said, half-aloud, ‘No, please no’ (44-55)

In this passage, all as brightness and cleanliness, the “gentle” movements as the curtains sway in the breeze, light from the sun creating pattern on the floor, reflects the room’s atmosphere as one misaligned with Natalie’s emotions. The space may feel welcoming and still, and the terms Jackson selects to describe this morning after are alarmingly pleasant. Yet, as the passage continues, a sudden jolt from the established comfort moves the room to darkness and coldness. Like storm clouds obstructing sunlight, the room changes its atmosphere. Natalie’s waking up is the moment when which the room changes: Not only does the girl wake up from her dreams, crossing the divide from the unconscious to conscious, but she also begins to encounter the precipitating moment of trauma. There are no doors for Natalie after this trauma, an inability to exit or enter into a space that is not somehow associated with control or defined roles. Her desire for a cleansed and hollow home, ready to be filled in and cared for manifests in the dorm room setting, a space where Natalie attempts to control her surroundings.

In terms of surroundings, Natalie’s dorm room is not one of Jackson’s more extravagant settings. Unlike the grandiose estates in *The Sundial* or *Castle, Hangsaman*’s collegiate setting is sparse and stark. Natalie’s room is described in cell block simplicity:

The room was almost square, perhaps a little longer than it was wide, with only one window that filled almost the entire far wall. So far, completely blank and empty, it was expectant, almost curious, and Natalie, standing timidly just inside the door, in the walls opposite the window, looked at the bare walls with joy; it was, precisely, a new start. (63)

Square, one windowed, blank and empty, Natalie’s space is not quite the lavish palace setting one might hope for in a new start. Yet, this clinical style space is perfect for the girl “standing timidly” right at the threshold. Natalie’s apprehensive joy is mirrored in the room, personified in

its “expectant, almost curious” reaction to its new owner. The space’s barrenness can be filled with Natalie’s belongings, thoughts, and feelings. Repeatedly, Natalie’s Her “joy” comes from staring at the bare walls, and a projected potential. Newness creates safety. Though the walls are tan, the ceiling decorated “in the proper institutional bad taste, so uninspired as to be almost colorless, and the dark-brown woodwork and the smallness of the room made it seem cell-like and dismal” (63) with one single bulb hanging over Natalie’s head, her impression is of comfort. Though the “bad taste” and “uninspired” decor should be confining and “dismal,” Natalie’s first gaze into the room leaves her feeling satisfied and content. Her new space gives the impression of “setting her in a sort of package, compact and square and air and water-proof, a precise, unadulterated, fresh start...a new clean box to live in” (64). This insular, sectioned off aesthetic equivalent of a jail cell instills contentment in entrapment. Natalie’s previous life in her stifled suburban space becomes a distanced version of her self (and, by extension, trauma) escaped through creating a sense of new and explorable setting. The other side to Natalie’s expectations is a sense of dread that the room enforces. Not only does Natalie have her ideas for the room, but it is as if the room has always been waiting for her entry. Its personified expectancy and curiosity lead into its “setting her in a sort of package,” coming alive to meet its new occupant. The room is as sentient as its new owner.

Natalie’s discomfort, loneliness, and isolation become apparent as the text continues. Though she perceives her room (number 27, a “good number”) to be separate from the rest of the house and larger campus, her sense of security can be supplanted at any moment, as other people living inside the house can unlock her door at any moment (in one scene, a college companion reveals this inter-floor ability to access other spaces in the dorm, revealing that at any moment someone could break in, disrupting not only Natalie’s pink bedspread, but gaining access to her

journalized thoughts— representing a deeper layer of self that even Natalie has trouble confronting and never fully revisits until Tony manifests). While she initially believes that the room “belonged to only her” with “her own dear possessions surely inside,”(65) the house still belongs to the college and her newfound freedom is still subjected to the norm; kept inside the system of orders and doors there is no way to avoid the “outside.”

The struggle between what belongs in and out manifests in Jackson’s attention to small architectural symbols. Doors are a means to access the space in between, a threshold that creates the eerie connection between reality and non reality. Freud’s theorizing consistently describes scenarios where the supposedly fixed boundaries between real and dream blur, and “[A]n uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality,” exemplified “when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes, and so on” (Freud 15). Realistic scenes are Jackson’s strength and staple. Her kitchen moments, family dynamics, and drawing room decorum are not far into the fairytale realm. They exist as Norman Rockwell stylized moments, encapsulated by normalcy. Jackson’s works exhibits Freud’s sense of the uncanny in how they *play* with reality. There is always a shadow lurking in the near peripheral of the frame, a figure slightly out of place and some sense of unease. Jackson creates an unsettling reality/nonreality for Natalie through her surroundings throughout *Hangsaman*, repeating door scenes to set a space for the in between. The door is an enacted “uncanny” object, as it is a gateway to the shadowy part of self reserved for the double:

A knock on her door was a strange thing to her as the fact of the door itself... as she looked at the inside, and meant to mark the next day whether the panels outside were the same as those inside; off, she thought, that someone standing outside could look at the

door, straight ahead, seeing the white paint and the wood, and I inside looking at the door and the white paint and the wood should look straight also, and we two looking should not see each other because there is something in the way...(84-85)

The knocking figure lurking behind the door, somatically signaling its presence but unknowable until the door is opened, is exactly the fear Freud describes in the uncanny. Natalie's attempts to understand the odd situation relies her ability to "look" at the inside, to "mark" the day, to observe panels from various angles, to "see" the paint, wood, and otherwise *normal* harbingers of reality. To decipher what is happening, Natalie attempts to reassert the concreteness of her room and the door. Jackson's paragraph instills the fear in not knowing where the boundary between the real and the unreal lays, and leaving the uncertainty open after establishing the obvious. The "we two looking" are Natalie and Tony, not yet able to meet due to that "something in the way," whether it be logic, reasoning, perception, or simply, a locked door. Beyond the locked door is the distance between two selves and mental activities. To look at each other would be to finally confront the shadowy other, an act that Natalie cannot fully confront. What is beginning to emerge in this passage, though, is an inability to separate the real world self from the non reality. It is unclear who the "I" in the passage is, whether Natalie or Tony, real self or shadowed visage.

Much later, once Tony appears and Natalie's full break occurs, her movement from the campus to the outside world also plays into stability and order. Doors make a triumphant symbolic return appearance in text. While leaving a house on campus to make what becomes a grand escape beyond the college walls, "Tony let the door slam behind them in a gesture calculated to awaken every sleeper within hearing, and, followed by Natalie, ran down the path..." (233). Tony is the leader and Natalie the follower. Tony exists in the double door space

as an enticing escape, able to leave behind culturally enforced control in a way that Natalie cannot. Doors in houses and dorms are meant to conceal what may be behind them. They are passages from one space to another, the divide between the entertaining area in dining rooms and living rooms and privacy found in bedrooms. Tony purposefully disrupts this ordered normalcy. In leading Natalie from one space to another, she alters Natalie's connection to the outside world (both in how the girl must relate to her own spaces, the spaces of others, and even to herself). Tony overtaking Natalie beings opening the individual to alternate realities, though they, too, are not static points. In the end, Natalie returns to the college campus world. She is unable to live in her imagined reality alongside Tony, never fully able to synthesize the two selves and worlds. She does not control the locking or unlocking door between reality and the liminal uncanny.

*The Sundial* is not as forthright in its doubleness. The Halloran estate's plans and set up are meant to be symmetrical, but the badly placed sundial disrupts this sense of stability. Like the door symbol in *Hangsaman*, the sundial is an inescapable presence: "Intruding purposefully upon the entire scene, an inevitable focus, was the sundial, set badly off center and reading WHAT IS THIS WORLD?" (10). It is a narrative intrusion, a guiding force for characters as they encounter what they perceive to be the end of the world. While a whole paper could be written on the double senses between old and new, before and after, pre and post, this section will focus on the divide between normalcy and disaster in the Halloran house. The cast of characters is confined in its scope, separated between the Halloran family and the outsider villagers. Playing out like a game of Doomsday Clue, Jackson's novel crafts a looming sense of danger paired with simple daily activities in the library or dining room like cards or lavish meals. After Aunt Fanny receives her vision from her dead father, the reader questions reality at each page turn. Who is the most reliable narrator? Why are these characters so drawn into the vision? Madness is turned

on its head, and the reader must go along with the visions. As in other texts, Jackson traces the thin duality between fact, fiction, horror, and humor.

*Hangsaman*'s text and horror relies on Natalie's inconsistent psychological perspective. Though presented through reality, Tony is a nonexistent figure and a fragment of her imagination. *The Sundial* includes inconsistencies in mental faculty as well, but in a softer means. Aunt Fanny's doomsday message from the father could be faulty, just as Mrs. Willow's daughter Gloria's "seer of the future" messages from the apocalypse might be more reliant on parlor tricks than actual psychic vision. At points, Aunt Fanny's behavior—running from the garden down the hill back inside the house as the Hallorans have morning coffee, looking at her through the window, discussing the newly bred race of mankind with sweetness directly after describing cleaning the world by destruction—verges on laughable ridiculous. Her character's reaction to the father's garden vision promising the Halloran's safety post-apocalypse is cheerfully optimistic. Her role as the family's unmarried old biddy gets purported to one of meaning and relevance. Though laughably extreme (especially if one reads the text as being entirely delusion), Aunt Fanny's reactions and spreading of the "good word" prepares her to take on a suitable household role. She is no longer lingering in the attic space, dutifully restoring the past Halloran apartment. Instead, Fanny returns to being Frances Halloran, filled with zeal and drive to help sustain the Halloran family. She becomes an equal with her sister-in-law Orianna, the new Mrs. Halloran, and need not care what others think about her revelations.

Interestingly, revelations are never evaluated in Jackson's text. Many moments encapsulate Fanny's newfound vigor for the nearing end of the world in a charming light. In one instance, she and the rest of the family are consuming martinis in the mansion (an activity they continue with relish and alarming normalcy as the doomsday deadline looms ever closer). As the

family drinks their martinis, or “spirits” according to the ever sardonic Mrs. Halloran, Fanny disarms any attempts at combating her polite discussion of the end of the world. She “smiled approvingly” at Mrs. Halloran, as she disregards the jab and continues to speak about the seemingly improbable, remarking, “We are in a pocket of time, Orianna, a tiny segment of time suddenly pinpointed in a celestial eye” (39). Fanny’s language has all of the power and prose of a Transcendentalist essay describing the all transparent eyeball, or Freud’s examining of eye anxieties in E.T.A.’s “The Sandman”. For a moment, her cool response overtakes Orianna Halloran’s imposed power over the household. The two women each create their domestic control over the estate as the end of the world gets closer. Fanny (Frances Halloran) represents the old order, the true claim to the estate by blood that trickles down to the delightfully sinister child Fancy. Mrs. Halloran (Orianna) represents a sort of social climber, married into the wealth and the estate, calling claim to the house and contents through her ruthless ability to control others (one of the first narrative jumps into her head on page 56 reveals her biggest fear: losing the house and its contents). This duality lends itself to headbutting humor, a sort of slapstick attention to genre that gets placed onto its head given the urgency of the situation at hand. Despite their duelling motivations, each woman shares the same goal in protecting the house.

Jackson’s writing is not concerned with figuring out the apocalypse’s factuality or “realness.” Instead, it opens up the possibility of multiple “realnesses” depending on each character’s intentions and point of view. Part of the horror in reading the novel is seeing how far those affected by the doomsday message go in light of its meaning: fabricated, exaggerated, or not. As what lays implicit in the previous paragraph (and Jackson’s larger corpus), horror is at the heart of the nearing apocalypse in the Halloran family’s everyday moments. Fear is not only expressed in casual conversation about “fire and floods and sidewalks melting away and the earth

running with boiling lava and all the poor people trying to get away,” or looking out from the Halloran estate’s safe walls to a world where “there will be nothing but drying earth, with the grass beginning to grow” and “all the houses and people and automobiles, and everything... just melted away,” (84) as Ms. Ogilvie the governess reveals to a local man at the soda fountain during a short village shopping outing. That outside fear exists, certainly, described in ways that are always orbiting the text, becoming what Miller calls “The literary effect [we call] horror,” which “turns on the dissolution of boundaries, between the living and the dead, of course, but also, at the crudest level, between the outside of the body and everything that ought to stay *inside*” (“The Haunting of Shirley Jackson”). Each Halloran family member or employee exhibit an immense fear of the outside that impacts the inside of their home, which Jackson brilliantly encapsulates in startling parlor scenes. The outside of the body is the domestic setting, the literal inside of the household and how it reflects upon individual characters’ mental faculties.

Moreover, the narration in *The Sundial* is ever cognizant of how bizarre the doomsday—an extension of the unknown, horror, and the possibilities in an ever-shifting world—message is, often providing meta commentary on the situation. After Aunt Fanny first describes her heavenly vision and warning to the household, a snake makes a sudden appearance in the library. Biblical Garden of Eden motifs aside, the characters all express fear at the snake, then the text begins a commentary on abstraction and manifestations: “Being impossible, an abstract belief can only be trusted through its manifestations, the actual shape of the god perceived, however dimly, against the solidity he displaces. Not one of the people around Aunt Fanny believed her father’s warning, but they were all afraid of the snake...” (34). Impossibility and abstraction are understood not in the actual thing in question (in this instance, the apocalypse) but the “manifestation” of the unknown. Fanny’s channeled warning is in question, as the other

characters could not have *seen* what she encountered out in the garden. What they can see, though, is the tangible manifestation of the snake. Though one fear is rationalized by “the actual shape” of something, the judgment still does not rest on the individual or the doomsday message. Reality exists in layers, a theme continued later in the text when Essex ponders over the question “what is real?” (58) during a library lounge session. Aunt Fanny answers “at once,” and says “the truth,” Mrs. Willow answers comfort, and Ms. Ogilvie responds with a paused and hesitation, moving from “I couldn’t really say” to “We... food, I guess” (58). These answers are a bit of an echo of what the characters say about the things they will bring into the new world. Tangibility is a way to judge reality, but as Fanny suggests, it is not always a definite or universal truth. Objects are one means for the family to interact with their layer of reality, acting not unlike Fancy’s dolls inside their house. In another Freudian nod to the uncanny, Fancy acts throughout the novel as delightfully demonic little girl whose main obsession is controlling her dolls (and later, potentially, the Halloran estate). Freud’s essay documents a case study of a woman who believed her dolls would awaken and come to life with a certain gaze, then considers larger ideas of dolls coming alive as a delight to some children rather than inciting fear. Fancy, “looking like a demon in her red pajamas” (175) fits the latter description of delighting in horror and fear.

Just as Jackson’s other texts do, *The Sundial* frequently plays with home space conceptions and functionality of rooms. Initially, the library is a space for masculinist discourse and intellectual signifiers. The decorations are meant to follow along the original Mr. Halloran’s obsessions with literature and quotable material from great thinkers—the house is described as having Rudyard Kipling’s “If” as one inscription, thanks to the English Literature loving architect who studied at Columbia, along with other “elegantly presented suggestions” which became “a matter of indifference” in various settings from dining room to staircase (168)—with

busts, books, and other stand ins for knowledge. Until the doomsday vision, objects in the Halloran house are left undisturbed. Mrs. Halloran mentions that some objects were not moved since the house was built (64), affixed in place like monuments in a museum. After the apocalyptic message from the father, the Halloran family library moves from its previous functionality with masculine decor into a space to hold food stuffs and provisions. Once the “Formal portion of the house,” with a “bust of Seneca” holding open the doors (105) put there by the family’s inefficient library cataloger Essex, who arranged the books which were “well dusted but not catalogued,” as they “looked down with an air of unbelieving surprise” (106), the library becomes something new entirely as the novel moves into the family’s eminent future. Aunt Fanny, representing a part of the shift from masculine control to female-centric domesticity, begins telling deliverymen to “carry out bushel baskets of books” from the library, as Mrs. Halloran makes further instructions for their burning inside the barbeque pit (107). Books, once food for knowledge, become likened to cooked supper and destruction. Essex’s title moves from book cataloger to food stuff organizer, as he “industriously” replaces the bookshelves with canned milk, olives, soup, and other food items, remarking that the library “is really a very good place to store things” (107). Such movement from book to canned items signals a change in the space, which is blasely reduced to the room having “an odd air of not having been changed in any very fundamental manner; half the shelves were packed with cartons, but they were neat” (107). Though a large distinction between the masculine acquisition of knowledge and the feminine role of supplying food to the family (not unlike the generations of Blackwood women and their canned items), the library’s shift is not changed “in any very fundamental manner,” as items are still on the shelves and arranged with attention to organized detail. As Aunt Fanny and Mrs. Halloran begin controlling the library’s function, domestic

chores in cooking and cleaning make a seamless transition. By June, a month before the predicted outside world's meltdown, "Only one wall of books still stood and because the ashes of books—unlike the ashes of cloth, flesh, or even tea leaves and coffee grounds—are not healthy for growing things the gardeners had twice emptied the barbeque pit and taken the ashes to the village dump..." as "Most of the property now stored in the library was in cartons, items purchased by Aunt Fanny in a quantity and neatly packed" (140). Here, as in the lines describing the shelves, there is an emphasis on sustenance overtaking book knowledge, functionality replacing acquiring intellectual merit. Farming and the natural world overthrow the classics. Even in their base form, in ashes, the books are dismissed as non essential to growth. Instead, the cartons and newfound items replace the original objects.

This question of essential items as divided between the masculine and feminine continues on page 140, when Jackson creates individual answers to the bring your own survival pieces to the doomsday narrative for characters: Essex will bring a pamphlet on growing tobacco and corn-cob pipes (pipes/tobacco are masculine stand ins repeat in *Hangsaman* and *Castle*), the Captain will provide 8 bicycles, Mrs. Halloran wine, Arabella needles, thread, pins, hair curlers, deodorant, perfumes, bath salts, and lipsticks, Mrs. Willow's practical inclusion of blankets, wheelbarrow, nylon rope, axes, shovels, rakes, and a barometer, Gloria newspapers, Julia knitting needles and yarn. The only surviving books will be Aunt Fanny's Boy Scout Handbook, an Encyclopedia, Fancy's French grammar book, and World Almanac, described as the "unburnables." The male characters have their symbolic parts, and the women remain affixed to beauty items, sewing kits, or other private sphere pieces. Mrs. Willow does break down some of the binary in her items, but as a whole, these characters are still trapped in conventional associations. Women cook, clean, and mend. Men build, tinker, and create. If the house is to

become a museum style attraction in the future, then these items are imbued with the ways each individual would like to be remembered as:

It has seemed to me that this house will become a kind of shrine, for our children, and for their children. Living in the fields and woods as they do, living under a kindly sun and a gentle moon, with all their wants supplied from nature, they will have no thought of houses, and a roof will become to them synonymous with an altar; we may yet live to see our grandchildren worshipping in this house. (109)

Aunt Fanny's lines remind the reader that the house is not just a thing filled with meaningless object. The house's preservation for the future culture is to be an "altar" worshipped by distant post-apocalyptic family members, just as the current members attach their sentiment and meaning to prefixed and established objects. As Keith Eggener asserts in his study of *The Haunting of Hill House* and sentient houses throughout the horror genre, "Commentators have often noted that haunted house stories appeal to us by subverting our ideals of domestic tranquility and security; they are modern versions of the romantic sublime, where we watch in safety while egalitarianism, our conjoined attraction and aversion to aristocracy and wealth, our envy of the rich and our suspicions about how their gains were got... They closet skeletons upon which great fortunes were built and reassure us that crime, though it sometime pays very well, comes with long, nasty strings attached" ("When Buildings Kill"). The Halloran family's background is never fully examined in text. The reader never finds out how the first Mr. Halloran made his money and the means for creating the new house, nor do they ever examine the villagers beyond the single barbeque party scene before the end of the world (complete with a drunken butcher and money grubbing opportunities in their finest pearls). Those from the "outside" exist as one-dimensional pieces to aid the wealthy Halloran family's destructed world

fantasy. “Skeletons” and “crime” could lurk in the family’s money making background, yet they are never examined at length. Instead, Jackson uses the end of the world imagery to create comfort for the wealthy family. They are not put off by the world ending, as Eggenger writes of the romantic sublime’s attachment to parsing out the wealthy against the common. While there is a sense of subversion of the “ideals of domestic tranquility and security,” it is not at the villager level—the Hallorans are the ones who ultimately take the world’s overall decay in stride. Their reaction is to protect themselves and their established order inside the mansion’s walls, creating happy domesticity by selection and compartmentalization of their existing rooms that will one day be worshipped, not by the outsiders, but by the chosen ones with particular objects of importance. Their space is the chosen space, their rules and regulations are enforced from the inside out.

Being one of the “chosen ones” inside happy domestic order carries through *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. Joyce Carol Oates writes that “in the Blackwood manor house, life is quiet, sequestered, governed by the daily custom and ritual of mealtimes, above all inward,” (“The Witchcraft of Shirley Jackson”) after the arsenic sugar bowl poisoning. Just as the Hallorans carefully replace the library with food stuffs, resisting fear for the end by carving out their own conceit of domesticity, the Blackwood girls Merricat and Catherine practice self care alongside home care. The Gothic genre offers surprising avenues for such feminine control and order. Fred Botting argues that the Gothic genre presents a “recasting of the nature of social and domestic fears” where narratives can create “different, more exciting, worlds in which heroines in particular could encounter not only frightening violence but also adventurous freedom” (7). Such a notion that a genre can use the home space as a reflection and reassertion, or a type of pushback to social realities, is essential to understanding “otherness” and power structures

behind literature. Jackson questions the mid century American woman's role throughout *Castle* just as she did in *Hangsaman* and *The Sundial*, where domesticity and horror coexist. The prescribed nature of womanhood makes up much of the work, presented in a Gothicized as well as a blissfully domesticized lens. While the backstory to the novel's timeline establishes some "frightening violence" and sinister elements, the overwhelming arc takes the heroines into a space that is both adventurous and freeing in its horror while keeping in line with certain cultural conventions: Jackson simultaneously adheres to and breaks mid-century visions of femininity in protagonists Merricat and Constance's narratives.

Before attending to how Merricat and Constance represent their respective domestic values in Gothicized form, it is essential to lay out some plot points. The novel begins with eighteen year old Mary Katherine Blackwood, who explains herself to the reader in straightforward terms. The opening passage begins with Mary Katherine's name, age, likes, and dislikes, ending with a halting jolt: "Everyone else in my family is dead" (Jackson 421). The family's deaths are not mentioned in the following paragraph, nor are they referenced often in the text. The reader must find themselves contented with not knowing more details about the event, growing closer to "Merricat" as she tells the story of herself, sister, and day to day routine in a rural village that despises her. We do eventually find out that the family, Merricat and Constance's father, mother, brother, and aunt, were poisoned at dinner one evening at the Blackwood mansion. We learn that Constance was suspected to be the murderer and had been tried for the crime in a public setting, absolved of the poisoning legally but not in the minds of the villagers. We do not learn that Merricat was the one who poisoned the family by putting arsenic into their sugar dish with full clarity until shortly before the novel ends. This suspended truth haunts the novel's pages, where something is amiss but not generally confronted directly.

Thus, the murders cast a phantasmal shadow over Merricat's narrative. Surprisingly, Merricat remains a pitiable, charming figure associated with white magic and dreaming rather than a cold blooded murderess. Overall, the stark moments describing the horror that unfolded before the novel opens are forgotten amidst cheery scenes of sisterly love and care for the Blackwood house, often with a sardonic twist.

The girls "have always lived" in the Blackwood castle, suggesting a sort of entrapment within the space. After her opening describing her character, Merricat remarks on the day to day life inside the structure with Constance and her family:

We always put things back where they belonged. We dusted and swept under tables and chairs and beds and pictures and rugs and lamps, but we left them where they were... Blackwoods had always lived in our house, and kept their things in order... and so our house was built up with layers of Blackwood property weighting it, and keeping it steady against the world (Jackson 421)

In this passage, the collective "we" is inescapable. The narrative reads almost like a cleaning manual, dusting and sweeping various locations. Yet for all the cleaning and arrangement in the passage done by Merricat and Constance, the house remains in tact. The girls leave things as was and will forever be, keeping in line with the "layers of Blackwood property" which "weight" the home and "keep it steady against the world." To disrupt the home space would be to let the home crumble, which is to set off some sort of unknown curse against the individual. Much like Aunt Fanny's decision to persistently and stubbornly uphold the home's moral Halloran value, the girls must protect their space for honor. In the passage, the only refuge and safety from the outside is the house's structure and the contents inside. In a sense, the home takes on a relic infused meaning where the past is contained and the present is kept out. Merricat and Constance

are the home's keepers. This sole focus on caring for the house and their family continues in the novel even after both are destroyed in the eyes of the village community and the reader. They remain inside the space and act together as its caretakers, with mythicized implications as its guardian.

Patricia Murphy describes spatial imagery as a "key concern of Female Gothic," a term coined by Feminist scholar Ellen Moers to encapsulate Gothic writing by women (16). Murphy writes that spatial considerations are important when viewing characters' homes, which are usually castles "or similarly elaborate edifices, perhaps decaying or partially in ruins" in which "the Romantic heroine comes to view her environs as a source of anxiety and terror, for a domestic space that should be associated with a security and serenity is instead configured into one that poses perpetual peril" (16). Jackson's novel takes the castle setting in metaphorical terms in the novel's opening pages, where the horror has already happened and is shrouded in mystery but somehow omnipresent. The physical ties to castle imagery through the mansion's structure is inescapable as well. The castle does become ruined later in the story, when Merricat sets fire to the structure following a potential "perpetual peril" of outsider infiltration. Acting as the house's keepers moves beyond the normal duties, the cooking, cleaning, washing, and domestic tidying. The girls must perform their role like mythological guardians, even setting fire to the structure to protect it from outside influence. To not act as keepers for the castle would destroy the girls' monomaniacal function, entrusted to them with generations' worth of duty. They would be nothing without their caring for the castle. While these points will be examined more closely later in the essay, Murphy's argument is worthy of consideration.

In most Gothic novels, there is some threat to the story's stability and perceived order. In *Castle*, stability exists in how Constance and Merricat behave in their home. Though their

domestic happiness should have arguably ended after Merricat kills the family, the true threat to their existence comes in the form of Charles Blackwood. When discussing the remaining Blackwood family members left after the murder critic Roberta Rubenstein describes Constance and Merricat in aforementioned “Angel in the House” embodied terms, where Constance is “a housebound maternal figure who soothes anxieties and provides literal and figurative nurture” and Merricat “a child who lives in a fantasy world sustained by magical thinking” (319). Such a dynamic rests on the house, nurturing, and fantasy between the sisters. Femininity is idealized in soothing, nurturing, or magical mindset in Rubenstein’s description, which permeates Jackson’s text. Constance and Merricat’s lives revolve around domesticity and care. In another trauma to the mansion (and family structure) after the arsenic poisoning, Merricat causes a full cleansing burn to protect their home from their money obsessed cousin: There is no room for Charles in the Blackwood girls’ idyllic castle. Though in many Gothic texts the ghost is the phantasm spectre of a woman haunting abbey halls or a physical form of a maddened woman in the attic, in *We Have Always Lived* such a role is filled by a masculine presence. Merricat refers to Charles as a ghost repeatedly in the text, a gender swap that remains in line with how she views her home and its functionality. Charles is an outsider, despite carrying the Blackwood name. He exists as one of the only survivors that could undermine the happiness the sisters have carved for one another following their family’s’ deaths (as Roberta Rubenstein and Lynette Carpenter note in their respective essays note, the only other survivor of the murder is Uncle Julian who is left powerless, mad, and nearly physically paralyzed after the dinner; thus rendered a non threat to the girls). As he begins to move in on Constance’s affections, Merricat concludes that Charles must be removed from the house in form and presence. She states that “Every touch he made on the house must be erased” (Jackson 485), and that in his presence “The house was not secure...”

(Jackson 490). These statements about Charles place a vulnerability within the house for the sisters, no longer a safe space within his presence.

While he is impermanent and transient to Merricat, the house remains a solid image. Her repetition of “the house” calls back to her obsession with its keeping that runs through the novel. When the “layers” within the home get disrupted, Merricat must take action and preserve the fixed, dollhouse like order for the castle which she and Constance have maintained, reaffirming her duty as the home’s protector. Charles’ objects are scattered throughout the home space, including the sacred drawing room where Merricat’s mother once held dominion. He chooses to take over the father’s bedroom, to Merricat’s displeasure. She obstinately refuses his self imposed role as the home’s new owner, remarking that “Already the house smelled of him, of his pipe and his shaving lotion, and the noise of him echoed in the rooms all day long; his pipe was sometimes on the kitchen table and his gloves or his tobacco pouch or his constant boxes of matches were scattered through our rooms” (Jackson 494). Instead of the “we” that Merricat uses in earlier in the narrative when talking about the house, Charles’ “him” and “his” repeats. His body’s representative objects, the pipe and shaving lotion, are smells that permeate through the home space like a ghostly presence. His other objects, gloves, tobacco pouch, and boxes of matches, spread throughout the space in a more physically imposing and visually marked manner. Charles does not belong in the home, there is no room for his ghostly image in Merricat’s perceived domestic happiness. Just as the angel of the house was to expunge the home sphere from bad feeling from the public following a husband’s return from a long day out in the marketplace, Merricat is to ensure her and Constance’s castle is safe from Charles. She decides to fix the situation, using her white magic to start a fire in his room by knocking over his pipe. Much like her poisoning the family’s sugar bowl, an object explicitly linked to domestic

sweetness, heirlooms, and dinner time, Merricat chooses to use Charles' pipe to destroy the house. The pipe is tied to masculinity, smoking as a thoroughly male behavior and outright attempt at patriarchal control of a space. By deliberately displacing the object and causing the fire, Merricat regains agency over the castle again.

Merricat's fire demolishes a large part of the castle. While the castle does carry some semblance of a haunted past before the fire, in its outward appearance things seem normal. That normalcy is visibly reduced once the mansion burns. The main domestic spaces of the home, including the satin covered drawing room with its Dresden figurines and kitchen where Constance carefully prepared the family's meals are reduced to rubble and ash, and the second floor with the bedroom spaces and attic area are entirely incinerated. Merricat openly wonders what will be left of the home when she and Constance remove into the woods, as the structure burns and villagers parade around the space looting its contents and telling horrible tales of its owners. She concludes upon viewing the house after the fire that it is "a castle, turreted and open to the sky" (Jackson 534). While this castle image is entirely Gothicized, how the girls continue to view the now visibly sinister structure somehow remains filled with domestic joy.

The girls are entrapped in the home, as they had been before by their outsider status in the community, the murder forcing a shadow over their existence. After the fire, they are more so contained in their home's blackened wall, cloistered off in an entirely domestic space: the kitchen. There are no other characters left. Uncle Joseph dies in the fire and Charles flees the scene after being unable to secure the family safe. This entrapment does not bother either, however. The two simply carry on as they have always, cleaning, scrubbing, cooking, and caring for one another. Merricat remarks soon after the burning that "We were going to be very happy, I thought. There were a great many things to do, and a whole new pattern of days to arrange, but I

thought we were going to be very happy” (Jackson 538). Here, as before, the “we” returns. She and her sister become a solid base for the house again, able to continue living out their lives in the castle. Their “great many things to do” become commonplace tasks like doing dishes, cooking food, cleaning fragments of the former home, and barricading themselves—literally and figuratively—against the outside world. Merricat continues in her story, stating that “Slowly the pattern of our days grew, and shaped itself into happy life” (Jackson 545). Pattern, order, and happiness are found in sisterly love and domestic duties to the house, now a crumbling Gothicized castle.

The tale ends happily for the sisters. Amidst the ruin they carry on their routine as they always have, gathering vegetables from the ashen garden, cooking food, cleaning the skeletal remains of the mansion, shaping clothing for themselves out of scattered fabrics and Earth, assuring one another of their mutual happiness. Instead of horrific final lines remarking on pain, suffering, or absolute terror, Merricat’s ending narrative conveys immense joy. After a few lines of dialogue describing how the villagers view the sisters as cannibalistic witches, Merricat says to Constance “we are so happy” (Jackson 559). There is still a bitterness to the novel’s closing, but overwhelmingly the girls are content with one another. Their domestic sphere remains radiant in its Gothicized isolation. Perhaps Jackson was using this happiness as a sort of ruse, where the outsider reader notices cracks in the narrative Merricat has constructed for herself and her sister. Domestic joy does seem to rest on necessity, driven by prescribed or interpolated roles rather than free will in the text. Overall though, Jackson’s writing acts as a bridge between two uncommonly fixed ideals: the horror and the happiness, which refuse to be neatly divided from one another.

In tracing Jackson's novels, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* signals a breakthrough in outsider status. Natalie could not fully escape her suburban then collegiate confines without creating Tony, just as Aunt Fanny and the Halloran family as a whole cannot exist in a space without blocking out the rest of the world. Each novel prior to *Castle* requires a strict either/or placement for the main characters. While they do carve their own home setting against the world, they cannot fully exist within that home setting in a way that corresponds with the outside world. Natalie's fate is uncertain after her beachside abandonment and return to normalcy with strangers in a car. Aunt Fanny is left with a new tyrannical figure to reign over the Halloran estate after Fancy pushes her grandmother down the mansion's steps in an alarming echo back to the novel's beginning. *Castle* ends with women who blend all Shirley Jackson personality facets, the witch mother, rebellious daughter, masculine thinker and feminine provider, with the larger villager versus family theme. While other characters remain locked inside their domestic happiness in a self-centered fashion, Merricat and Constance can exist in their bliss with the help of the villagers. The villagers begin leaving baked goods for the girls, visiting the charred and decaying house to check in on them. Though the girls still represent a horrifying enigma to the villagers, there exists a mutual sense of comfort between all characters. From the twofold trauma (the arsenic poisoning that sets the novel in motion, then the fire that creates the charred and renewed domestic space for the Blackwood girls) rises understanding and genuine contentment.

As I have shown, Jackson's building of the Freudian uncanny rests within the domestic sphere, illustrating that her writing is readable within established theoretical realms. The importance in asserting Jackson's role in theory is a major first step that still needs to be examined in other essays and theoretical arenas. Instead of denouncing Jackson's writing as pure pleasure for a largely female audience in midcentury America, a closer look needs to be taken

into *why* so many found her work to be of value and merit from the drawing room to the classroom. Beyond an author whose work is a pleasure to read exists “literaryness.”

Whereas most Gothic novels assert far away corners as the horrific, Jackson twists the conceit on its head. Instead of fear being found in the extraordinary shifts, Jackson finds a way to construct horror from the everyday. One little girl playing with dolls on a sunny afternoon is a tableau vivant for enacting a fictionalized version of startlingly real dilemmas like class warfare. Things in Jackson’s works are just out of place enough to be unsettling, leaving readers awestruck and wondering where everything went off balance. Such exploration requires close reading and analysis, an attention to tropes and symbolism enacted in literary criticism. In her novels, essays, magazine work, and larger literary corpus, Jackson destabilizes hegemonic values by working within them. Her novels are formed from Freud, Hawthorne, mythology, classical architecture and a myriad of other “masculine” constructs. Their raw structure and symbols are extensions of the expected in analyzing literary works. However, it is how Jackson uses these structures as a base to build on and reconfigure that is of note. It is as if Jackson takes the standard recipe for a stew, adds in her own set of spices and magic, then transforms the dish entirely from something totally familiar to something slightly further away from familiarity: The end product is recognizable, but with same notes of flavor that one can’t quite pin down. Analyzing the domestic double and liminal spaces within *Hangsaman*, *Sundial*, and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is simply one step in what should be a larger re-discovery of Jackson’s work.

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