



# The haunted house motif in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, Richard Matheson's *Hell House* and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*: a panoptic microcosm of the twentieth century american society

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Par

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**The Haunted House Motif in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, Richard Matheson's *Hell House* and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*: A Panoptic Microcosm of the Twentieth Century American Society**

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**Titre :** La figure de la maison hantée dans *The haunting of Hill House* de Shirley Jackson, *Hell House* de Richard Matheson et *Burnt Offerings* de Robert Marasco : un microcosme panoptique de l'Amérique du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle

**Mots clés :** Surveillance panoptique, Le regard, L'Inquiétante étrangeté, Domesticité, Hystérie, Paranoïa, maison hantée, angoisse

**Résumé :** Cette thèse tâche de renouveler le champ d'étude de la figure de la maison hantée en mettant en évidence le fait qu'il ne s'agit pas simplement d'un moyen utile pour déclencher l'horreur chez les personnages en s'appuyant sur leur passé refoulé, mais aussi d'un cadre panoptique dans lequel les personnages sont piégés et observés en permanence par des forces invisibles, dans une tentative de les contrôler et de les détruire mentalement, psychologiquement et physiquement. Le sujet développe une étude littéraire et historique des maisons hantées. Le motif du cliché, utilisé de manière excessive tout au long de l'histoire de la littérature gothique, sera étudié ici en référence à la théorie foucauldienne du panoptisme, afin de mettre en évidence la dimension métaphorique du décor dans les trois romans étudiés. Cette dimension sera approfondie par l'analyse du pouvoir du regard comme outil de surveillance et de domination.

Ainsi, cette étude vise à transcender la présentation classique des maisons hantées, en s'intéressant de près aux aspects panoptiques qui les transforment en éléments primordiaux dans le développement de l'intrigue des romans. En outre, elle s'efforce d'analyser les dimensions panoptiques des décors des trois romans étudiés en relation avec les contextes historiques, politiques et sociaux des États-Unis au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le but est de prouver que les différents décors sont, en fait, le microcosme d'une société panoptique, contrôlée par une figure puissante et invisible. Afin de donner à la démonstration une base théorique solide, l'analyse s'appuiera en outre sur la phénoménologie de l'espace de Gaston Bachelard, ainsi que sur les théories psychanalytiques de Lacan et Freud, notamment leurs conceptualisations de l'angoisse, du traumatisme et des troubles paranoïaques.

**Title :** The Haunted House Motif in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, Richard Matheson's *Hell House* and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*: A Panoptic Microcosm of the Twentieth Century American Society

**Keywords:** Panoptic surveillance, gaze, uncanny, domesticity, hysteria, paranoia, haunted house, anxiety

**Abstract:** This doctoral dissertation seeks to renew the field of study of the figure of the haunted house by attempting to highlight the fact that it is not only a useful means of triggering horror in the characters by drawing on their repressed past, but also a panoptic setting in which characters are entrapped and observed constantly by unseen forces in an attempt to control them and destroy them mentally, psychologically and physically. The topic presents a literary and historical study of haunted houses. The clichéd motif, used excessively throughout the history of Gothic literature, will be studied relying on the Foucauldian theory of Panopticism, to highlight the metaphorical dimension of the setting in the three novels under study. This dimension will be further examined, analyzing the power of gaze as a tool for surveillance and dominance.

This topic aims to transcend the classical presentation of haunted houses as ornamental tools, studying their panoptic aspects that transform them into primordial elements in the development of the novels. Furthermore, it targets to analyze the panoptic dimensions of the settings in the three novels under study in relation to the historical, political and social contexts of the United States in the twentieth century. The purpose is to prove that the different settings are, in fact, a microcosm of a panoptic society, controlled by a powerful and invisible figure. In order to give the demonstration a solid theoretical basis, the analysis will also rely on Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of space, as well as on the psychoanalytical theories of Lacan and Freud, in particular their conceptualizations of anxiety, trauma and paranoid disorders.

*I dedicate this thesis to my family who instilled in me the values of education  
and the drive to pursue educational success.*

*To my mother, for all the sacrifices that she has made in my behalf.*

*To my father and brother, for their love, patience and sacrifice that makes me  
what I am today.*

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## **Abstract**

The doctoral dissertation's topic presents a new scrutiny of the motif of the haunted house that will bring to the fore the results that it is not simply a means to trigger the horror of characters relying on their repressed past, but also a panoptic setting in which characters are entrapped and observed constantly by unseen forces in an attempt to control them and destroy them mentally, psychologically and physically. The topic presents a literary and historical study of haunted houses. The clichéd motif, used excessively throughout the history of Gothic literature, will be studied relying on the Foucauldian theory of Panopticism, to highlight the metaphorical dimension of the setting in the three novels under study. This dimension will be further examined, analyzing the power of gaze as a tool for surveillance and dominance. This topic aims to transcend the classical presentation of haunted houses as ornamental tools, studying their panoptic aspects that transform them into primordial elements in the development of the novels. Furthermore, it targets to analyze the panoptic dimensions of the settings in relation to the historical, political and social contexts of the United States in the twentieth century. The purpose is to prove that the different settings are, in fact, a microcosm of a panoptic society, controlled by a powerful and invisible figure. In order to give to my demonstration a solid theoretical bedrock, the analysis will be based on major psychoanalytical concepts, such as anguish, trauma, and paranoia in relation to socio-political context of the United States (sexual liberation, cold war, mass surveillance), presenting therefore an interdisciplinary study of the haunted settings, drawing on Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological study of space, along with psychoanalytical theories of Lacan and Freud.

**Keywords:** *panoptic surveillance, gaze, uncanny, domesticity, hysteria, Panopticon, house*

## Résumé

Cette thèse présente un nouvel examen du motif de la maison hantée qui mettra en évidence le fait qu'il ne s'agit pas simplement d'un moyen de déclencher l'horreur de personnages en s'appuyant sur leur passé refoulé, mais aussi d'un cadre panoptique dans lequel les personnages sont piégés et observés en permanence par des forces invisibles dans une tentative de les contrôler et de les détruire mentalement, psychologiquement et physiquement. Le sujet présente une étude littéraire et historique des maisons hantées. Le motif du cliché, utilisé de manière excessive tout au long de l'histoire de la littérature gothique, sera étudié en s'appuyant sur la théorie foucaldienne du panoptisme, afin de mettre en évidence la dimension métaphorique du décor dans les trois romans étudiés. Cette dimension sera approfondie en analysant le pouvoir du regard comme outil de surveillance et de domination. Ce sujet vise à transcender la présentation classique des maisons hantées comme outils ornementaux, en étudiant leurs aspects panoptiques qui les transforment en éléments primordiaux dans le développement des romans. En outre, il vise à analyser les dimensions panoptiques des décors des trois romans étudiés en relation avec les contextes historiques, politiques et sociaux des États-Unis au XXe siècle. Le but est de prouver que les différents décors sont, en fait, un microcosme d'une société panoptique, contrôlée par une figure puissante et invisible. Afin de donner à ma démonstration une base théorique solide, l'analyse sera basée sur des concepts psychanalytiques majeurs, tels que l'angoisse, le traumatisme et la paranoïa, en relation avec le contexte socio-politique des États-Unis (libération sexuelle, guerre froide, surveillance de masse), présentant ainsi une étude interdisciplinaire des décors hantés, en s'appuyant sur l'étude phénoménologique de l'espace de Gaston Bachelard, ainsi que sur les théories psychanalytiques de Lacan et de Freud.

**Mots-clés :** *la surveillance panoptique, le regard, l'inquiétante étrangeté, domesticité, hystérie, le Panoptique, la maison*

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# INTRODUCTION

Since its rise in the eighteenth century, the Gothic genre has proved itself to be the art of transgression. It became the enthroned rebellious genre since it has a particular fascination with the subversion of literary, social and cultural norms. As Donna Heiland argues in her book *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction*:

The Goths did much to bring about the fall of the Roman empire (of which Britain has been a part), and while Gothic fiction does not literally depict the Goths' repeated incursions into Roman territory, or the sack of Rome in A.D.410, Gothic fiction does tell stories of "invasions" of one sort or another. Gothic fiction at its core is about transgression of all sorts: national boundaries, social boundaries, sexual boundaries, the boundaries of one's own identity. (3)

Arising in 1764 with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otronto*, the eighteenth-century Gothic genre rebelled against the rationality of the Enlightenment, by creating a world that embraced darkness, wilderness and unreason. The Gothic genre can be considered a reaction to the unrest that characterized its era. The late eighteenth century is considered an age of political turmoil with the American Revolution that shook the British Empire. The genre subverted the philosophical and scientific thinking of the Enlightenment using different means that included an implausible plot that involves supernatural elements, inexplicable haunting scenes and monstrous characters. It is developed, then, as an obverse of the Enlightenment, focusing on darkness rather than illumination and being primarily an expression of the characters' psychological state. Besides, the Gothic genre finds in architecture a means to convey the complexity and tenebrosity of the human psyche. Gothic authors opt for extravagant old medieval castles with hidden chambers and secret passages. Yet, the American adaptation of the Gothic genre seems to be slightly different since it is haunted by the history of the United States. The setting in American Gothic fiction revives the past as it explores historical and social disruptions. It serves as a means to record American anxieties like racism.

American Gothic literature is characterized with three important phases during which the role of the Gothic setting develops to be more indicative of its transgressive nature. The first

phase is marked with the writings of Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving. Here the focus is on the American-ness of the setting and characters with an emphasis on the geographical wilderness and secludedness of the setting. The second phase is marked with the writings of Edgar Allan Poe who planted the seeds of psychological horror. Poe used the traditional characteristics of a Gothic setting (old decayed aristocratic mansions) but he moved one step further by turning the setting into an animate character endowed with its own will. This can be traced in his tale *The Fall of the House of Usher*, in which the setting seems to have a power over its inhabitants, according to Roderick Usher who believes that the house can think and feel:

The belief, however, was connected (as I previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The condition of the sentence had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones – in the order of arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around- above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. (16)

The American Gothic in the twentieth century features the third phase of the development of the genre, since it reveals a special focalization on the haunted setting as a modern, urban space. It uses some of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' motifs and characters like ghosts, scientists and aristocracy within a modern context of domestic space, shedding lights on some of the major social issues of the era. In this context, Fred Botting examines thoroughly the particular characteristics of the twentieth century Gothic, bringing out the diversity of the haunted space, away from the clichés of medieval castles. The haunted space becomes a main ingredient to infringe personal and social boundaries. Horror is now more common and dispersed as:

Terror and horror are diversely located in alienating bureaucratic and technological reality, in psychiatric hospitals and criminal subcultures, in scientific, future and intergalactic worlds, in fantasy and the occult. Threatening figures of menace, destruction and violence emerge in the form of mad scientists, psychopaths, extraterrestrials and a host of strange supernatural or naturally monstrous mutations. (Botting 9)

He shows in his study that horror is strictly linked to modernity; it generates an uncanny effect since it is “new and yet familiar” (Botting 9).

A substantial amount of research has been conducted on the confluence between the haunted house’s design and the characters’ psyche. The coalescence is generally studied as a metaphor of repressed desires, traumas and anxieties. In this regard, I can mention Andrew Smith, who, in his book *Gothic Literature*, examines the haunted house as an uncanny space “used to bring to light historically contextualized anxieties” (15). Dale Bailey addresses, in his work entitled *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, one of the main points that are discussed in my thesis—the idea that the haunted space can be studied as evocative of both characters’ unreliable deceptive mind, affected by the repressed traumas and the presence of ruling specters who themselves can be a reflection of a cultural or social phenomenon. This can be a reference to what Tzvetan Todorov considers as specifically *fantastic*. In his study *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (original French title: *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*), he compares three important concepts: *the uncanny*, *the marvellous* and *the fantastic*. The latter describes the undecided nature of the supernatural as it is both uncanny (the supernatural events are created out of the characters’ mind) and marvellous (the actual presence of the paranormal). Todorov highlights the importance of doubt in his definition of *the fantastic* as:

The fantastic requires the fulfilment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus, the reader’s role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work—in the case of naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as “poetic” interpretations. These three requirements do not have an equal value. The first and the third actually constitute the genre; the second may not be fulfilled. Nonetheless, most examples satisfy all three conditions. (Todorov 33)

Research on haunted houses has a long tradition. Studies on its origins and roots in Gothic literature have been thoroughly elaborated. The emphasis is mainly placed on the

psychoanalytical dimension of the haunted houses, with a remarkable use of the Freudian theory. One of the eminent researchers in this field, Catherine Spooner, focuses, in her book *Contemporary Gothic*, on the twentieth century portrayal of the haunted house, pointing out that it is a space where trauma comes back to life and the past repressed memories are revived: “It is not, as in the architecture of the Gothic Revival, invested with nostalgia or idealism. The past chokes the present, prevent the progress and the march towards personal or social enlightenment” (Spooner 18-9). She goes further by citing a verse from Emily Dickinson’s poem “One need not be a chamber – to be haunted” to show the development of the Gothic haunted space, transcending its architecture and to connote disorientation and the divided self. Horror becomes originated from facing an uncanny fear-filled alter ego and not foreign ghosts in a secluded medieval space.

Despite the concentrated focus on its thematic importance, I can also trace out various studies on the architecture of the haunted space. I can mention Anthony Vidler who explores the presentation of uncanny spaces in English and French literatures, taking writers like Victor Hugo and Herman Melville as examples. He does not stray from the classical use of the Freudian *unheimlich* when he describes the haunted space: “The house provided an especially favored site for uncanny disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast the terror of invasion by alien spirits” (17). Vidler points out that architectural qualities cannot create a haunted space as “there is no such thing as an uncanny architecture, but simply architecture that, from time to time and for different purposes, is invested with uncanny qualities” (12).

The Freudian concept of *Unheimlich* has been widely adopted in the study of haunted houses in Gothic literature and cinema and the three novels under study are no exception. While there are scarce studies on Robert Marasco’s *Burnt Offerings* and Richard Matheson’s *Hell*

*House*, the bountiful research on Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* agrees on the importance of using the Freudian concept to analyse the haunting dimension of the setting. In this context, Judie Newman explores in her essay "Shirley Jackson and the Reproduction of Mothering: *The Haunting of Hill House*", through the motif of the haunted house, the mother-daughter relationship, using the Freudian psychoanalytic theory and mainly his work on the unconscious and the uncanny. The association of both architecture and Freudian concepts is also studied by Ljubica Matek in her article "The Architecture of Evil: H.P. Lovecraft's 'The Dreams in the Witch House' and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*". She highlights the importance of architecture in conveying the transgressive nature of Gothic literature, using the concept of the *unheimlich* to study the haunted house as a place of safety and danger. Matek goes further to consider that the architectural configuration of the haunted space can be unsettling for both readers and characters, as it blurs the fine line between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Numerous studies on the architecture of the haunted space have been built on various theories of space and phenomenological studies of architecture. Most critics use Gaston Bachelard's theory of space to study the relationship between the spatial/ architectural and psychological dimensions of the haunted space. I can also trace the contribution of other theorists like Juhani Pallasmaa (who points out the importance of all human senses to appreciate and interact with complex architectures), Alberto Perez-Gomez and Christian Norberg-Schulz. Contrastively, only a few works of criticism have been written on the haunted house in light of the Foucauldian theory of panopticism. In this context, my thesis attempts to defend the claim that the haunted house is a panoptic space where all characters undergo a battle of survival, endeavouring to overcome the all-seeing gaze that aims to control and manipulate their sanity.

## METHODOLOGY

This doctoral thesis aims to prove that the haunted house is not simply a means to trigger the horror of characters relying on their repressed past, but also a panoptic domestic sanctuary where characters are trapped and observed constantly in an attempt to control and destroy them mentally, psychologically and physically. I endeavor to investigate the extent to which this panoptic haunted place is reflective of the American society during the mid-twentieth century, as it shows how an ostensibly familiar space (domestic realm) can turn out to be uncannily outlandish and lead to the characters' breakdown. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the three novels share the same vision of the haunted house since the characters feel they are in an endless maze, where tables are turned and the watcher becomes the watched. To study the forementioned points, I shall draw on Michel Foucault's theory of panopticism as well as Gaston Bachelard's theory of space, along with the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Lacan. I attempt to offer a midway interdisciplinary reading that relies on surveillance studies, psychoanalysis, and historicism. Following this line of thought, my thesis is divided into three parts: I shall devote the first part to the historical context of the United States and the way it overshadows the three novels under study. The second part is a study of both the architectural and metaphorical panoptic dimensions of the haunted house. It also examines the psychoanalytic effects of the panoptic design on characters. The final part is an examination of the literary reflection of the social and political context that shaped the American history.

The choice of studying three novels written by distinct authors in different decades aims to bring to light the common aesthetic perspective of the haunted house. Shirley Jackson, Richard Matheson and Robert Marasco project an image of a monstrous space, fraught with the heavy weight of the past traumatic memories. The haunted house is also an everlasting space that feeds itself with the energy of the present characters, their traumas, phobias and even



desires and dreams. This perspective, shared by the three authors under study, troubles us and drives us to investigate the way the haunted house presents a bridge between the past and present and the way the haunting past is used as a mechanism to manipulate characters. The uncanny image of the haunted house can be found, in addition to the American contemporary Gothic literature, in cinema. The Gothic space is marked by a new vision of an urban domestic space, organic and innately malevolent. Barry Curtis examines this idea in his book *Dark Places: The Haunted House in Film*, highlighting the way the haunted space stores and reflects its inhabitants' anxieties:

All houses are haunted—by memories, by the history of their sites, by their owners' fantasies and projections or by the significance they acquire for agents or strangers. Houses inscribe themselves within their dwellers, they socialize and structure the relations within families, and provide spaces for expression and self-realization in a complex interactive relationship. (34)

As the protagonists of the three novels under study explore the haunted house, in an attempt to investigate and trace the haunting disturbing force, they do not realize that they are transcending the spatial dimension. They discover and confront their repressed self that they either ignore or they don't realize its powerful presence.

This dissertation aims to examine the various complex representations of the haunted house drawing on a number of theories. The first part deals with the Gothic setting as a place haunted by its history and as a mirror of the present. The first and second chapters contextualize the haunted space by exploring the political, historical and social events that contribute to the rise of the American panoptic force, normalizing surveillance and annihilating the right to privacy. In this part, the use of the theory of New Historicism will be a way to prove that the three novels transcend the Gothic narrativity to be historical texts through which I can inquire about the post-war United States. In this part, I will turn to the miscellaneous events that paved the way to the rise of a panoptic society. The political events prove to be influential since they marked the mid twentieth century art. Whether within the pages of a novel or on a movie screen,

the rising panoptic society is criticized for the unverifiable power that puts American citizens on pins and needles. The third chapter deals with one side of the relationship between the characters and the haunted house through the metaphor of the American Dream. The idea of the haunted house as an epitome of the American Dream was studied by other critics regarding other novels like Stephen King's *The Shining*. In *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, Dale Bailey explores the image of the hungry haunted house in Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*, believing that "the book is nothing less than an attack on the American Dream, the ideology of accumulation and consumption that structures so many American lives" (77). This chapter builds on Bailey's argument, extending the study of the metaphor of the American Dream on the novels of Jackson and Matheson. It records the development of the haunted house from a symbol of the characters' American Dream to the locus of their predicament. The haunted house's sordid past and hideous present embody the hidden face of the American ethos that historically degenerated to be a symbol of materialism.

After a contextual presentation in the first part, the second section of this dissertation will come as a textual analysis of the haunted house in the three novels. Choosing the work of both Sigmund Freud and Gaston Bachelard as theoretical frameworks, I will study the uncanny nature of the haunted space where characters feel adrift. The uncanniness of three settings will be demonstrated to be not only architectural but it will also be relied on to examine the way it echoes and manipulates the mental experience of different characters and mainly the female protagonists. The use of Bachelard's notion of *oneiric house* will serve as a tool to study the relationship between characters and their domestic space. Bachelard highlights the power of the imagination in changing the way people can see the domestic space since "the imagination builds "walls" of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection—or, just the contrary, tremble behind thick walls, mistrust the staunchest rampart" (5). The first chapter of the second part continues with the study of Hell House, highlighting the

way its disreputable past shapes the various haunting episodes. Besides, I will draw on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's dialects of the visible and the invisible to show the different instances of altering activity and passivity, looking and being looked at. This chapter ends with Marasco's novel that presents a critique of the American domesticity. This critique is associated with the subverted image of the American Dream that disempowers Marian and lets the haunted domestic space run amok. The second chapter of this part is devoted to the concept of panopticon and the theory of panopticism. It aims at showing the analogy between the haunted spaces and the Foucauldian panopticism. In this regard, Hill House will be analyzed architecturally relying on Jeremy Bentham's design of Panopticon, while Michel Foucault's theory and Jacques Lacan's *gaze* provide the primary focus to study Hell House and Long Island mansion. This chapter aims at establishing that the haunted house's panoptic dimension surpasses the architectonic form and is conveyed through other elements. In fact, it aims to show the clash between objectivity and subjectivity as well as the idea that the absence of panoptic geometry in some haunted spaces does not prevent it from being a site of inspection and this is a result of a strategic surveillance and a complex optical system. The last chapter of this part aims at exploring the effect of the panoptic haunted space on protagonists. It is concerned with the protagonists' subjection and normalization that arise from the internalization of the panoptic gaze. This chapter also studies the relation between surveillance and hysteria, showing the protagonists' complex journey in facing the panoptic power and that leads to their tragic end.

The last part of this thesis titled "Haunted houses: A reflection of the American society in the second half of the twentieth century", is divided into three chapters. First, in "Hill House: the epitome of surveillance", I examine the different manifestations of panopticism within the socio-political context of the mid-twentieth century United States. I will focus mainly on the image of Eleanor as Shirley Jackson's novel is mainly considered as a female Gothic tale. The female Gothic will be used as a reference to illustrate Jackson's

perception of Eleanor's struggle to resist her space of enclosure. It allows the author to create a free space where the transgression and subversion of the long-established ideology of domesticity is guaranteed. Jackson sets from the beginning of the novel the basis for a perfectly vulnerable heroine by portraying Eleanor as a victim of her fragmented psyche, haunted by her past and seeking refuge in Hill House. The female Gothic is also manifested through the idea of imprisonment. Eleanor's longing and search for her authentic self-drive her to be entrapped in a fantasized world, represented through Hill House that develops from a Gothic haunted space of danger to her sanctuary where she becomes voluntarily a victim. This idea is further examined by Roberta Rubenstein in her article "House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and Female Gothic", seeing that Jackson's female Gothic is highlighted through "the character's troubled identification with her good/bad/dead/mad mother, whom she ambivalently seeks to kill/merge with; and her imprisonment in a house that, mirroring her disturbed imaginings, expresses her ambivalent experience of entrapment and longing for protection" (312). Through the use of female Gothic, my aim is to show the effect of the incessant surveillance on Eleanor, tracing her journey from resistance to death/suicide. Eleanor's vulnerability along with the uncanniness of the setting that mirrors the protagonist's confusion between repulsion and longing, drive us to question the reliability of her perception of Hill House. After a thorough focus on Eleanor, the first chapter concludes with the analysis of another key character: Dr. Montague. He represents the scientific pole that marked the United States of the late twentieth century. This subpart shows the inability of science to stop surveillance despite the seemingly perfect methods. It also aims to point out the considerable power of the panoptic gaze that remains unperishable. Secondly, in "Hell House: A microcosm of the US in the twentieth century", I study panopticism through both Emeric Belasco and Benjamin Fischer. I explore the complex, manifold surveillance that Belasco exercises to manipulate the characters. I will also relate this hierarchal surveillance to

the governmental surveillance that prevailed in the United States during the late twentieth century, using New Historicism as a theoretical framework. Besides, Fischer will be studied as an unvoiced character whose passivity throughout the novel is reflective of American citizens who accepted and subdued mass surveillance under the tag of 'national security'. His metamorphosis from a passive, apathetic person to an active character who succeeds in unveiling the secret of Hell House and destroys the legend of Emeric Belasco can be explained as a reproduction of the way Americans reacted towards surveillance: They first tolerated it, notably within the context of political turmoil, then they started to react against it, criticize it and tried to triumph over it. Fischer's method, based on mockery, proves to be effective and destructive of the panoptic power. The choice of mockery can be understood as an example of the different satirical works of art that mocked and criticized the growing mass surveillance. This chapter ends with the study of Matheson's *Hell House* as a historical document through which I can trace numerous analogies between the novel and the American society of the era. These analogies will be highlighted through the analysis of the setting, the relation between the characters and the duality of entrapment and the illusion of freedom. The last chapter "*Burnt Offerings*: the indestructible panoptic power" studies the notion of the American Dream as a tool to exercise the panoptic surveillance. The panoptic force is far from being scary ghosts. It turns out to be scarier. Here, I will show that the American Dream is a sinister figure that haunts Marian Rolfe. This part aims to emphasize the close relationship between the literary supernatural (the haunting episodes) and the real world (the social context). This chapter ends with the study of the Long Island mansion as a hungry house, a h(a)unter that chooses the suitable victims. While the typical haunted house presents, in the wildest imagination, a holder of horror that may fall apart at the end of the story, Robert Marasco's Long Island transcends this cliché by being a regenerated haunted house with a sourceless, unrestrained horror. The house uses Marian's dream of property as a tool to manipulate her and to alienate her from the real world of familial relations. Marian quickly finds herself entrapped

in her domestic sphere, surveilled by Mrs. Allardyce whose absent presence overcomes her free will. This chapter also examines the way the panoptic surveillance is exercised and how it is similar to the way the American Dream of ownership was propagated in the 1970s in order to manipulate the public view.

## **PART ONE**

### **“Big Brother is watching you”: the US state surveillance system**



The Eye of Sauron -Lord of the Rings-



The three novels examine the theme of surveillance through the motif of the haunted house. The Gothic space that should be exploited by the characters becomes a combat zone between the haunting powerful gaze of the absent present surveillant and the resistant characters. Yet, prior to Shirley Jackson and the other authors, the theme of surveillance was explored in other literary genres. In this context, George Orwell presents one of the most famous novels ever written on the theme of mass surveillance, that is, his dystopian fiction *1984*. In a context marked with Stalinism and Nazism, *1984* explores the different surveillance techniques in the totalitarian regime of Oceania. Orwell provides an imaginary setting that serves as an example of a dictatorial reign based on a panoptic model. It also echoes the anxieties of the Occidental world about the growing totalitarian regimes during the first half of the twentieth century. Orwell's novel is renowned for its emblematic phrase "Big Brother is watching you" that is used as a title of the part of this thesis, insofar as it points to the wide scale and efficient mass state surveillance I am dealing with in this part. In Orwell's novel, Big Brother is not a character, but an omnipresent image that serves to remind the characters that they are constantly watched:

The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, the post with enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran. (5)

Big Brother is a metaphor of the panoptic system coupled with the use of advanced technological devices, leaving no space for freedom, privacy, or intimacy. The caption used in Oceania becomes an allegory of mass surveillance, utilized in art, politics and even in everyday life. My part deals throughout the following three chapters with the US government as an analogical image of Orwell's Big Brother. The first chapter explores the political context of the twentieth century in America, mainly the decades during which the three novels under study were written. It focuses on the cultural, social and mainly political contexts of the United States

then in an attempt to relate the previous literary analysis of the novels under scrutiny to their period of publication. The focus will be mainly on the period between the 1950s and 1970s since the three novels in question were published during that period; Shirley Jackson's *The haunting of Hill House* (1959), Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971) and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1973). The first chapter studies the different events that characterize the twentieth century as a period of national and international unrest, leading to the creation of a masked oppressive system as different strategies of the mass surveillance have been created, transforming the United States into a 'real' Oceania. Relying on the Foucauldian theory of panopticism, the second chapter focuses on the dichotomy between what the United States symbolizes and a masked persistent and oppressive dictatorship. This necessitates an examination of the different ways used by the government to institutionalize the mass surveillance. The last chapter studies the way the duality of illusion and disillusion that is presented throughout the different novels under study echoes the Americans' disappointment with the mythical American Dream that turns to be another strategy used by the government to control its citizens.

### **1. Methodological aspects**

Given that this part focuses on the cultural, political and social contexts of the United States in the second half of the twentieth century, with a main interest on the period of the 1950s to the 1970s that influenced the three novels under study, I will be using the New Historicist theory to set forth the surveillance and panopticism depicted in the three novels in their social and political framework. In the fiction of Shirley Jackson, Richard Matheson and Robert Marasco, the entrapment of characters in a haunted house transcends the Gothic frame of horror to depict broader topics related to their society. Panopticism, entrapment and haunting are starting points to discuss American taken for granted ideals and ethos like the

American Dream, domesticity and family. In addition to the theories of Foucault, Bachelard, Lacan, and Merleau-Ponty, that are used in second and third parts, New Historicism comes as a theoretical strategy to end the isolation of the literary text by studying dialogically its history.

Prior to the 1980s, literary criticism was marked by a text-based approach, a general assumption characterized by a close reading of a text in total isolation from its cultural and socio-political contexts. During this period, an increasing awareness of the isolation of the text from “reality” developed along the theoretical lines of New Criticism, Russian Formalism, and structuralism. It is within this polemical context that New Historicism came into its own, as a response to the centrality of the literary text. In the 1980s, Stephen Greenblatt coined the expression New Historicism (and in the late 1980s he pointed out that he preferred using “cultural poetics” instead, to describe his works), announcing the birth of a revolutionary theory. He started revisiting the Renaissance texts (and particularly William Shakespeare’s plays), relocating them in relation to non-literary sources of the era. This method renounces the previous critical stands that there is nothing outside the text, providing a fresh historical perspective through which a text can be analyzed. In this context, Mark Robson highlights in his contribution to *The Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, the crucial importance of New Historicism in the world of literary criticism:

It is no exaggeration to say that New Historicism has become the dominant mode of literary criticism in the Anglophone world since its emergence in the 1980s. Associated in particular with criticism of the early modern and romantic periods and the nineteenth century, some of the central tenets of the New Historicist enterprise have seeped into criticism that would not necessarily identify itself directly with the movement. Inevitably, the force of its newness has dissipated into a retrenchment of older forms of historicism. While this mode of criticism in the forms in which it initially emerged does seem to be waning – and there have been several announcements of its “death” – its impact continues to be felt throughout Anglophone literary studies, and is also to be seen in disciplines such as art history and history. (747)

By studying New Historicism, I can easily find out that the influence of theoreticians like Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Clifford Geertz is unmistakable. Yet, Michel Foucault presents particularly a crucial antecedent. His concepts of *discourse* and

*pouvoir/savoir* inspire New Historicists to develop the notion of *pervasiveness*. This notion, shared with Foucault, underlines the circulation through social orders of ‘power’ (it does not exclusively refer to the power of vested authorities, violence and tyranny. It corresponds much more pervasively and insidiously to the way knowledge circulates in a culture). Through the notion of *pervasiveness*, Greenblatt, for instance, tries to figure out the different forms and shapes that power takes from one historical period to another, taking the example of Shakespearian plays and the Elizabethan society. Furthermore, New Historicists lay such intense emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between history and discourse. In other terms, history conditions what literature can say in a given epoch and literature is a cultural product of its time. Here, Greenblatt goes further by calling for a dynamic way of dealing with art and society in his essay “Toward a Poetics of Culture”, stating that:

[...] the work of art is the product of negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society. In order to achieve the negotiation, artists need to create a currency that is valid for a meaningful, mutually profitable exchange. It is important to emphasize that the process involves not simply appropriation but exchange, since the existence of art always implies a return, a return normally measured in pleasure and interest. (12)

Accordingly, New Historicism has an avowedly interdisciplinary intent as literature is seen to be part of a field that encompasses a diversity of contexts in need of reconstruction. This approach leads to a revision of critical methodology. Framing New Historicism, Greenblatt exemplifies a pattern of New Historicist analytical methodology beginning with *anecdote*. Along with Catherine Gallagher, Greenblatt studies thoroughly this concept in his book *Practicing New Historicism*, asserting that it presents a midway between the fictional world of a literary object and “the touch of real”<sup>1</sup>: “The turn to the historical anecdote in literary study promised both an escape from conventional canonicity and a revival of the canon, both a transgression against the domestic and a safe return to it” (47). Therefore, it helps the author

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<sup>1</sup> It refers to the title of the second chapter of Greenblatt’s *Practicing New Historicism*.

to study straightforwardly and freely different social, political or historical issues that were not examined in classical canonic literature. Memorable and often personal anecdotes are able to uncover the neglected, the for granted, and the unfamiliar.

Another key figure of New Historicism is Louis Montrose who highlights as well the inextricable chiasmic relation between literature and history, through his resonant phrase “the historicity of the text and the textuality of history”. He defines it in his essay “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture” as

By the historicity of texts, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing—not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question—traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the “documents” upon which historians ground their own texts, called “histories” (20).

The success of New Historicism lies in its status as a practice and not as a theory. It is one of the literary criticisms which is absolutely practically formulated and implemented. Another key reason for its success is the way it combines insights from other thinkers and philosophers; namely Foucault and Geertz. Using New Historicism as a framework, this part aims to show the way the interpretation of events is a product of the author’s culture. The three novels are in fact a continuum of what happened historically in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century. It also aims to show how Jackson, Matheson and Marasco use the Gothic genre and the haunted house formula to present a subverted image of what is circulating in the American society.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **The American political context in the twentieth century (1950s-1970s)**

The twentieth century stands for a period of radical changes in the American history as it refers to different periods of political, economic, social and cultural prosperity. The early twentieth century began with a period of abundance and growth inasmuch as manufacturing was developed and geographically distributed all over the United States. Culturally, the era was also marked with a significant development of art and the expansion of museums. Different artistic movements in painting and sculpture were developed. Painters like Peter Blume or Ivan Le Lorraine Albright succeeded in creating new techniques (the use of symbols and the combination of realism and surrealism), contributing to the American artistic advance. Socially and politically, the first half of the twentieth century saw different revolutionary amendments that contributed to the rise of the American democracy. During the twentieth century, labelled the era of reforms, the United States ratified different amendments to the Constitution, mainly the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment that guarantees the direct election of senators, and the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment that grants women the right to vote. These different events chip in the creation of the image of an idealized America, admired nationally and internationally. This “promise of American life”<sup>2</sup> and the mythical image of the US as a land of opportunities, democracy, freedom and creativity, have led to the rise of the third wave of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. Yet, this bright side of the twentieth century is tainted by different political and social, national and international events that unveil the hidden dark side of the modern Eden, transforming the American Dream into a nightmarish reality.

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<sup>2</sup> It is the title of Herbert Croly's 1909 book.

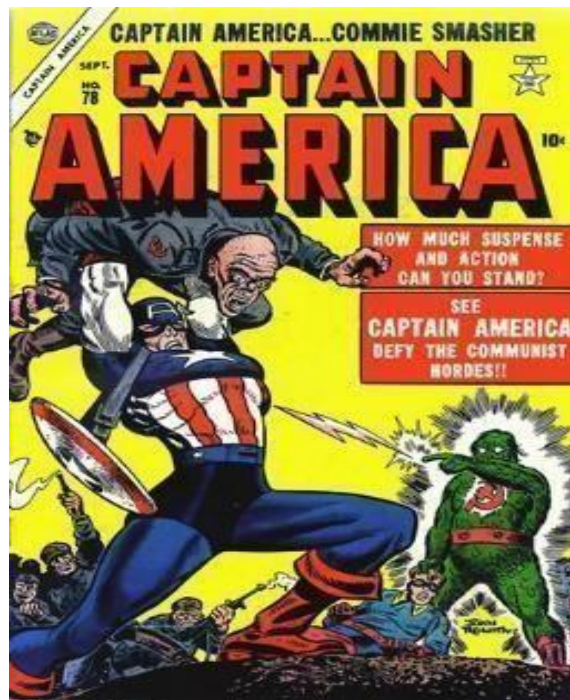
### **1.1. The twentieth century: An era of a global political turmoil**

Despite the artistic and cultural blooming that marked the twentieth century, the era was also a period of a global political unrest that affected different countries around the world and notably the United States. The First and Second World Wars cast a dark shadow over the world as it left many countries economically and politically powerless. Despite the fact that the United States emerged as a superpower at the end of WWII, political and social problems cropped up, leading to the rise of infamous American mass surveillance. The Red Scare<sup>3</sup> rose as one of the aftermaths of WWII. It refers to the paranoic fear of Communism that was expressed through different governmental measures. During the 1950s, the Red Scare affected the world of art as many artistic works were used as a governmental propaganda against Communism. The national mindset was that of implausible suspicion, believing that ‘those who are not with us, are without hesitation, against us’. This general atmosphere of repression was accompanied by McCarthyistic practices of witch hunting, as all Americans were possible suspects. In Hollywood, numerous professionals were on the blacklist due to their suspected political beliefs. Among them, Orson Welles, an American actor and producer was accused of being a Communist after his movie *Citizen Kane*. Another famous example is the case of Charlie Chaplin who was blacklisted as he refused to cooperate with the governmental agencies about his political views. He was considered a threat to the national security and his movies were boycotted. Other artists were easily labelled communist like Langston Hughes, who was obliged to testify before Congress to push himself away from the communist label. Along with the McCarthyistic witch hunt of alleged communists, the Red Scare hysteria can be examined through the US government propaganda in the press and even in comics and movies. In Captain America’s cover page of the 78<sup>th</sup> issue of 1954, the main theme is obviously hunting communists as there is explicit, flashy headline “See Captain America defy

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<sup>3</sup> Red Scare refers generally to two different periods namely the first and the second Red Scare. The First Red Scare refers to the period of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, after which Communism rose as a strong ideological wave in Europe. Here, the focus is on the Second Red Scare that reappeared in 1947, as it triggered public and governmental hysteria.

the communist hordes!":



**Fig.1.** *Captain America* 1.78 (September 1954).

In this cover page, I notice the presence of two major characters: Captain America and his enemy. In the foreground, Captain America is presented in a position of power, wearing a uniform with the colors of the American flag. The way Captain America is beating the communist enemy connotes straightforwardly the state of perpetual war that started in 1917. In the background, the enemy is drawn as an unhuman, extraterrestrial monster, wearing a green uniform with a hammer and a sickle (symbols of communism). The choice of a secondary color (green) is significant as it highlights the dominance of the superhero who wears principally primary colors (red and blue). This cover page, loaded with political subliminal messages, is intended for teenagers and more generally the young generation. This proves the way McCarthyism reached its climax as the government tried to manipulate the public opinion, leaving no space for neutral stands. The jittery political context of the 1950s America can be further examined through the different works published during the 1950s that reflect the public discomfort and uneasiness. The paranoid practices of general accusation of betraying the national values of the United States in favor of communism, were attacked by different



authors and cartoonists. One of the most famous artists who denounced the exaggerated governmental practices is the cartoonist Herbert Lawrence Block (known as Herblock). He was known to be a fierce opponent of Senator McCarthy's oppressive methods that created a ubiquitous sense of fear and alert. Throughout his numerous works, Herblock criticized the American domestic policy that deprived Americans from their civil liberties and freedom of choice and expression. His 1947 cartoon entitled "*It's Okay -We're Hunting Communists*" is a good illustration:



Fig.2. "It's Okay-We're Hunting Communists." *Washington Post*, 1947.

In this cartoon, Herblock portrays the brutality of McCarthyism. The car represents the committee on un-American activities, a committee of US House of Representatives, that aims to investigate a supposed treason of citizens, academics and organizations. The committee exercises an unbearable pressure with the long endless hearings and police violence.

Herblock's car figuratively crashes the innocent victims, who seem to be scared and shocked. This cartoon condemns the Committee's fanaticism, that is seemingly tolerated for the sake of national security. Herblock straightforwardly considers the committee as a threat to the national security as it clearly violates the first Amendment to the Constitution<sup>4</sup> that outlaws the government from any practices that interfere with the freedom of expression.

In addition to the Red Scare and the different methods adopted by the government to spread the anti-Communist ideology during the Cold War, the 1950s decade was characterized with the rise of the African American Civil Rights Movement, whose development also intersected with the issue of surveillance. It was triggered around December 1955, after Rosa Parks' arrestation. Manifestations and boycotts were generated all over the United States, demanding a fair treatment between all Americans regardless their skin color. The era witnessed the rise of different Black leaders like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Both leaders fought for the same cause but with two different approaches. While Martin Luther King believed in the non-violent struggle to "make America one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all"<sup>5</sup>, Malcolm X completely disagreed believing that America cannot be one integral nation and that all means are allowed to gain equality. The civil rights movement was fueled by the aftermaths of WWII as African Americans realized that they would not be considered equal to the WASP Americans despite their heroic act and their noteworthy participation in the war. This collective disappointment brings to light the hidden discrimination that remains covered under the mask of numerous amendments. As the tension gradually inflamed, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X became more and more influential, leading them to be under the government's scrutiny.

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<sup>4</sup> Ratified in 1791, the first Amendment to the US Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances"

<sup>5</sup> King, Martin Luther. "The Other America." Stanford University, Apr.1967, *Rev*, 3 July 2020, The Other America Speech Transcript - Martin Luther King Jr. -Rev.

Martin Luther King's pacific methods and undeniable influence on people were considered as dangerous and threatful to US national security. In his article entitled "Surveillance, Spatial Compression, and Scale; the FBI and Martin Luther King Jr", Jules Boykoff examines the way the FBI surveilled Martin Luther King, intensifying its surveillance through three different phases. It started by investigating any communist influence (as it was the general pretext used by agencies to inspect people). After years of tracking Martin Luther King's path without finding any traces of Communism, the FBI moved to "discrediting King's character" (736) by besmirching his reputation through scrutinizing his private life and relations. In this context, Boykoff thinks that "this process of neutralization also points to one way the state uses surveillance to impose and enforce "a normative space-time ecology" on dissident citizens and their potential supporters." (737) Boykoff studies the different methods that the FBI used during this phase to discredit Martin Luther King. Under the umbrella of democracy, the FBI was allowed to reach King's home, hotel rooms and his different extra-marital relations in order to destroy his image as an influential leader and pacific pastor. The author goes further by examining the third phase during which the whole movement was under scrutiny. Talking about the Vietnam war put King and his movement under the spot of the state's eagle eye. The FBI's goal was to neutralize the movement and prevent the rise of black nationalism. The domestic surveillance applied intensively on Martin Luther King presents an example of what is called COINTELPRO Project of the FBI. The project that started in 1956 transcends spying to work on rumors in order to discredit the target. The COINTELPRO mission is simple: collecting all private information, exposing them and distorting the trustworthy image of the target organization, movement or person.

During the twentieth century, the US also witnessed a tumultuous period from the 1960s to the 1970s. In addition to the Civil Rights' fight for equality, other violent protests started. The anti- Vietnam war protestors turned against the government as they started to notice the futility of the war along with the passivity of the government towards the injured soldiers and

veterans who found themselves indulged in depression and drugs. Besides, the decade shaped culturally the United States as the counter-culture movement flourished through the rise the New Left. It refers to the intellectual student movement, based upon the ideology of subverting all types of authority. The New Left started as a movement that called for freedom of speech. Yet, the concept includes other groups and movements like the anti-war movement and the Hippies. The New Left is fed on the rejection of the norms of the American standard culture, calling for peaceful free lifestyle. The movement was considered anarchist, which triggered the necessity of the state's surveillance. Perceived as threats, the state spied on university campuses using different methods and programs. One of the best-known surveillance projects, I can mention the Project Merrimac in which secret agents were infiltrated in campuses and organizations. In his book *The Family Jewels*, John Prados defines the project as:

Project Merrimac was another Office of Security initiative. This was simply supposed to help secure CIA facilities, warning of protests that might threaten headquarters. Merrimac began in February 1967 when division chief Osborn assigned a CIA proprietary to seek advance information, first regarding a march on Washington that took place that April, then a boarder effort to monitor four 'target groups': Women Strike for Peace, the Washington Peace Center, the Congress on Racial Equality, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Four CIA contract employees –none a professional –later expanded to a much larger force. Again, the quest for information led to infiltrations of domestic political groups. (37)

The twentieth century can be considered a tough period for the United States as well as a period of transition as it transformed its flawless image as the land of rising democracy to a country where mass surveillance is masked everywhere to maintain political and social control. The methods of mass surveillance have increased dramatically. Its purpose was mainly to keep the country secure by stifling political opposition like the one represented by the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam war advocates and the rising counter-culture groups.

### **1.2. The American eagle eye: The US state's strategies of mass surveillance**

The Watergate Scandal presents the utmost political disgrace in the United States as it unveils the hidden side of American democracy. Indeed, spying and surveillance did not start

in 1972 as a means to win elections<sup>6</sup>. The twentieth century was characterized by the edgy context of post WWII. The Red Scare, the Cold War and the rise of the civil rights movement and other political activisms (like the students' protest movement) led to the extensive use of mass surveillance, putting all American citizens under scrutiny. During the 1950s, mass surveillance took a legal form as President Henry Truman ordered the creation of the National Security Agency<sup>7</sup> and the Central Intelligence Agency. The principal mission of these two agencies was to record all the different telegrams and letters sent from and to Americans, searching for any clues in relation to communism. The domestic surveillance grew rapidly as infiltration among activists has become the new method. The frightening development of mass surveillance clearly threatens liberties as it encroaches on all the private details of daily life. This can be considered as an obvious violation of the fourth amendment to the Constitution that highlights:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Big Brother agencies (FBI, CIA and NSA) took the turbulent political and social context of the twentieth century as a "probable cause" upon which their fanatic search transformed the United States into a totalitarian panoptic country. In this context, the American journalist Glenn Greenwald compares, in the fourth chapter of his book *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA and the U.S. Surveillance State* (2014), the NSA to George Orwell's Oceania stating that

Invoking George Orwell's *1984* is something of a cliché, but the echoes of the world about which he warned in the NSA's surveillance state are unmistakable: Both rely on the existence of the technological system with the capacity to monitor every citizen's actions and words. The similarity is denied by the

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<sup>6</sup> It was proved that president Richard Nixon was involved in the Watergate Scandal as he protected and may be ordered secret agents to spy on his election competitor George McGovern. Following this scandal, Nixon resigned as his public image was blemished and as he lost the American public trust.

<sup>7</sup> Hereafter referred to as NSA.

surveillance champions –we’re not *always* being watched, they say—but that argument misses the point. In 1984, citizens were not necessarily monitored. But the state had the capability to watch them at any time. It was the uncertainty and possibility of ubiquitous surveillance that served to keep everyone in line. (166)

As Orwell’s Oceania that merges the panoptic control and the use of advanced technology, the United States develops its surveillance through the use of more invasive technological devices. As David Lyon shows in his book *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*, the United States witnessed during the twentieth century the development of sophisticated technological devices, like computers and micro electronic technologies, that were used to guarantee discipline and security in the welfare state. Lyon goes further by tracing the striking resemblance between the Orwellian plot and what the USA have been through from the mid-twentieth century till now.

The twentieth century context of post WWII shaped the modern American domestic surveillance. It also shaped the American lifestyle as it meant for the citizens the beginning of the end of privacy. The US mass surveillance moved from the foreign level to a more national one. During this era, the United States modernized the different surveillance devices to be more central and obtrusive. In *The Handbook of Surveillance Technologies*, J. K. Peterson categorizes the different types of technological devices used for foreign and domestic surveillance. He also studies the different historical contexts that led to the development of these devices. He notes that in the mid-1970s, the computing technologies witnessed huge developments that helped to upgrade the existing devices and to intensify surveillance as “many sonar systems were upgraded to be more portable and powerful” (253). The closing decades of the twentieth century were also characterized with the introduction of surveillance cameras and pen registers as new forms of recording information. As these devices were easily carried, they could be implanted everywhere on the American soil, filtering through the society (145).



**Fig.3.** Philips CCD Camera (1979)

Peterson examines further the brisk development of surveillance technologies, giving the example of what is called ‘blue boxes’ that controlled payphones. It is a technology that allows the manipulation and the surveillance of different conversations (150). Surveillance becomes electronic more than ever before. With the unceasing development of technology, the illusion of privacy was wiped out as citizens have become aware of the rising totalitarian state that they live in (especially after the Watergate scandal). The established surveillance government inspires the world of art in the twentieth century as numerous works of art (movies, music and literature) dealt with the relationship between technology and surveillance, reflecting the public anxieties of the era.

### **1.3. The effects of mass surveillance on the world of art in the twentieth century**

In the context of a twentieth century paranoia of the Red Scare, during which communists were the modern age monsters who threatened the world security, the ‘national security’ tag has become an American doxa<sup>8</sup>, through which the government applied all possible

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<sup>8</sup>According to the online Encyclopedia Universalis, “doxa” is a Greek term that refers to a depraved form of belief

forms of power, control and ‘governmentality’<sup>9</sup>. The world of art was deeply affected as the presupposed image of communists and the intensified surveillance of the American government were questioned.

Different movies, songs and literary works share the recurrent theme of the governmental abusive mass surveillance. One of the most famous songs that presents the theme of surveillance in a humoristic way is Dewey Markham’s (also known as Pigmeat Markham) 1958 “Your Wires Have Been Tapped”. The fraught context was also shown in numerous Hollywood movies of the era among which: *The Conversation* (1974) which was released a few months before Nixon’s resignation after The Watergate scandal. The movie deals with a private surveillance agent who invades people’s privacy by recording all their conversations. The movie presents the different technologies of electronic surveillance of the era, echoing the Americans’ rising concern over the violation of privacy and the governmental paranoia that allows unrestricted justified voyeurism. At the literary level, although Orwell’s *1984* is considered as the apotheosis of dystopian fiction that envisions a world of mass surveillance with the omnipresent figure of Big Brother, other works dealt also with mass surveillance, not only as a future but also as a present reality. In this context, I can mention Philip Dick as an example. In his 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly*, Dick deals with the destructive effect of constant surveillance. Unlike other authors, Dick presents mass surveillance along with the theme of drug addiction, reflecting a ubiquitous phenomenon of the 1970s in the US. In her article

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and common knowledge that is opposed to science and philosophy. This Platonian definition was revisited by Alfred Schutz who presents it as what is unquestionable and taken for granted. Pierre Bourdieu develops the term “doxa” sociologically, defining it in his book *Pascalian Meditations* as “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit, self-conscious dogmas” (16). Bourdieu believes that the undisputed nature of the doxa turns it into a form of power embedded in different social, economic, political and cultural institutions. In chapter 7 “Doxa” from *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, Cécile Deer shows the symbolic power of *doxa* and how it can be manifested in different forms “[It]requires that those subjected to it do not question its legitimacy and the legitimacy of those who exert it. Recognition is the by-product of unquestioned norms that have been internalized by social agents [...] Doxa creates, in contrast to the notion of rules accepted by a majority, which posits the emergence of a field of *opinion* where different legitimate answers can be given to an explicit question about the established order” (121-22).

<sup>9</sup> Governmentality is a reference to the concept created by Michel Foucault to refer to the exercise of power that aims to realise “the welfare of the population, the improvement of their condition, the increase of their wealth,



“Surveillance and Counter Surveillance in Philip K. Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly*”, Jennifer Rhee states that the novel does not only reflect the author’s era, but also his own life:

Weaving Cold War themes of paranoia, conspiracy, and surveillance into an indictment of drug addiction, Dick’s novel narrates the tragic effects of a surveillance society alongside the tragic effects of drug addiction. Replete with grim auto-biographical elements and tragic futility, the novel engages both Dick’s paranoia and his turn away from once beloved 1960s countercultural values. (134)

The political flustered context of the twentieth US century made the distant dystopian society in Orwell and Dick’s works a bitter reality. The justified political surveillance of the enemies of the national security becomes gradually an abusive voyeurism that violates the different liberties that present the pillar of the American society. The American paranoid mass surveillance was ceaselessly intensified despite the growing artistic criticism. The political tension during the twentieth century and mainly from the 1950s to the 1970s marked also the world of literature that witnessed the production of several works that reflect the anxieties of modern man who lives in an open-air prison. The three novels under scrutiny echo the concerns of the American society from different angles. Yet, the common point remains the detailed depiction of the surveillance techniques that intimidate the characters and lead them to their tragic end. There is a common focus on the verticality of the haunted houses: through the image of tower in *Hill House*, the attic in *Long Island mansion* and the gigantic height of *Hell House*. The common architectural presentation of the haunted settings aims to highlight the relationship between setting and characters since it connotes the supremacy of the haunting force over the characters who are entrapped within its scopic field. In Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* and Matheson’s *Hell House* the surveillance transcends the observation of characters’ actions to become a form of voyeurism. The three novels contain intimate scenes during which the house’s heavy presence prevails, depriving characters from any privacy.

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longevity, health, et cetera” (*The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, 100). The governmentality practice necessitates the manipulation of people’s education, beliefs and desires. As people’s consent is not an obligation, governmentality can be applied on people without being aware of it as it is strongly rooted and smoothly practiced.

## CHAPTER 2

### **US Society: A panoptic dictatorship under the mask of democracy**

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the rise of the American version of the Big Brother paradigm seems to be a result of the political and social crucial context of the twentieth century. Yet, an analytical reading of the history of the United States during this era shows that it presents a factual version of the Orwellian fictional state of Oceania. In Orwell's novel, Oceania is in an endless state of war with Eurasia and Eastasia. The enemy is not clearly mentioned as there are changing alliances between these three states. This leads us to question the truthfulness of this war. Orwell answers indirectly this question by stating anaphorically the Party's slogan "war is peace" (7). Although it seems to be illogical, the slogan echoes perfectly the governmental propaganda because Oceania's constant ongoing "war", offers de facto an advantageous state of peace for the government as it guarantees its supremacy. The alleged perpetual war generates a prevalent state of fear that leads people to surrender their basic rights in order to focus on national security, thus giving the government a reasonable alibi for the unconditional surveillance. Besides, in *1984*, Oceania's state of constant war with an ambiguous enemy gives the government the legitimacy to impose a ceaseless surveillance on the vulnerable people, coerced by the paranoia of being watched, adjusting their behavior and actions. In the three novels under examination, the haunting force seems to be all set to attack characters who are either investigators or tenants. From the outset, there is a clear manipulation of the characters' fears, desires and memories to trap them in a cycle of constant surveillance and to guarantee its supremacy. Moreover, the three haunted settings are known for their constant war against anyone who dares to enter the house. Dr. Montague chose to investigate Hill House in particular after he had heard about its haunted nature. Hell House is regarded as

“the Mount Everest of haunted houses” (Matheson 15) that “physically and/or mentally demolish eight people [...]” (Matheson 17) during two prior investigations. Marasco’s Long Island mansion is no exception. The set of photographs of people with a cold dead look proves that the war on the Rolfes was not the first one.

The twentieth century was shaped by the United States’ ultimate state of perpetual war which is still going on<sup>10</sup>. It started in the eighteenth century with the American Revolutionary way. This state continued in the twentieth century with World War I as it firstly supplied the Allies and when the United States interfered in 1917, declaring war on the German Second Reich. The United States’ engagement in a perpetual war did not stop with the end of WWI since there were numerous battles that cast their shadow on American politics and society (Vietnam war as one of the most famous examples). Simultaneously, the US perpetual war started to be social: war on alcohol, war on communism, war on drugs, on the Black movement, war on the counterculture and LGBT rights movement. This state that seems to be an endless crisis, empowered the government that legitimized surveillance, despite its clear contravention of the fourth amendment that protects people from the abusive governmental control. The United States that started as an ideal “city upon a hill”<sup>11</sup>, a land of freedom and uniqueness where the American Dream meant initially the pursuit of equality and democracy (in contrast with the Old World) becomes an image of an unlivable country that searches endlessly for new techniques to survey its people and manipulate their minor moves.

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<sup>10</sup> The state of perpetual war started in 1776 (which is the year of the declaration of independence from Great Britain). The USA entered the lasting state of war over 200 years. It includes wars against Native Americans (for example the Cherokee-American war that lasted 19 years), revolutions, world wars and interventions in different countries (war on terrorism in Yemen, Syria and Somalia). The state of perpetual war is not strictly related to military interventions since it can refer to social crisis. As an example, I can mention the 1971 war on drugs declared by President Nixon who took strict measures to control and restrict the distribution of some types of drugs in order to decrease the growing demands among war veterans and young generation of the counterculture. Despite the promise of Barack Obama to end the state of endless war during his presidency, the United States is still involved in ongoing wars in the Middle East and other regions. Apparently, this state becomes an ideology as James Joyner discusses in his article “How Perpetual War Became U.S. Ideology”.

<sup>11</sup> It is an expression, extracted from John Winthrop’s sermon *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630). It presents a biblical allusion that refers to Puritans as a model to be followed and a beacon that enlightens the world. This expression gives the new land a mythical dimension (the new paradise on Earth) and the Puritans a sacred dimension as they carried a holy crusade-like mission.

In this tense context, the United States opted for a polymorphic surveillance as a way to control information and as a form of power and domination. In his book *The Nation-state and Violence*<sup>12</sup>, Anthony Giddens focuses on the importance of surveillance as a central element of power. He depicts two forms of surveillance, direct and indirect:

‘Surveillance’ refers to two related sorts of phenomena. One is the accumulation of ‘coded information’, which can be used to administer the activities of individuals about whom it is gathered. It is not just the collection of information, but its storage that is important here. [...]

The other sense of surveillance is that of direct supervision of the activities of some individuals by others in positions of authority over them. The concentration of activities within clearly bounded settings greatly enlarges the degree to which those activities can be ‘watched over’, and thus controlled, by superordinates. (14)

Giddens clearly states that surveillance presents a key method that “reaches an intensity quite unmatched in previous types of societal order, made possible through the generation and control of information, and developments in communication and ‘transportation’, plus forms of supervisory control of ‘deviance’” (312). This central method can be applied politically, socially and economically (as in workplaces). The different historical events that bespoke the rise of the new governmental system which contravenes the principles of freedom and democracy, established by the founding fathers, has led to the development of the national ethos of the American Dream. This gradual, yet deep change, is shown in the examined novels, where the authors try to deconstruct and/or construct a new version of the American Dream and a new image of the United States as a panoptic nation.

## **2.1 The evolution of the American Dream**

The expression American Dream was firstly used in 1931 by James Truslow Adams in

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<sup>12</sup> The English sociologist Anthony Giddens gives a new definitional dimension to the notion of “nation-state” by associating it with violence. In his book *The Nation-State and Violence*, he starts by defining the concept of ‘nation-state as a new model of political and administrative organization that rules a homogeneous community and presents “a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence” (121). By ‘the institutional forms of governance’, Giddens mentions four different types that contribute to the rise of the modern nation-states: capitalism, industrialism, administrative coordination through surveillance and information control and the military power. Following this definition, I cannot consider the United States as a state-nation. The use of Giddens’ book aims to focus on the third type of institutional form (surveillance) as a form of power since the monitoring of every activity and action of targeted people was done by state and through different organizations (notably NSA, FBI and CIA).

his book *The Epic of America*. Published in a context of post-depression spirit, during which the American people were trying to survive the aftermaths of the most severe economic depression in the history of the USA, Adams' book offers a detailed evaluation of the different reasons behind this crisis, considering the country's moral values at the helm of America's historical failure. He believes that the over indulgence in materialism was the tragic flaw of the United States, and that the solution will be simply to bring back to life the fundamental ethics of the society. In this context, he coined the phrase American Dream defining it as follows:

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (Adams 404-405)

Through this definition, Adams highlights the different characteristics of this dream. Despite the fact that it is feasible, Adams stresses the difficulty of realizing this dream that consists in the establishment of a fair world of liberty, equality and opportunity for all Americans regardless their origins, ethnicity, gender, social class or political stand. It is worth mentioning that the concept of the American Dream has no strict definition as it is constantly changeable. Accordingly, Jim Cullen studies the complexities of the American Dream, accentuating the idea that there are multiple versions of the concept. He explains in his book *American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (2003) that

Beyond such considerations, a reckoning with the Dream also involves acknowledging another important reality: that beyond an abstract belief in possibility, there is no *one* American Dream. Instead, there are many American Dreams, their appeal simultaneously resting on their variety and their specificity. What James Truslow Adams called in the epilogue of *The Epic of America* "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyman" may be fine as far as it goes, but the devil is in the details: just what does "better and richer and fuller" *mean*?

The answers vary. Sometimes "better and richer and fuller" is defined in terms of money – in the contemporary United States, one could almost believe this is the *only* definition – but there are others. (7)

After exploring the different variations of the American Dream starting from the Puritan age to the modern era, Cullen concludes that despite the quick evolution of the American Dream, there is always an unchangeable gist that presents the ideological starting point for everyone's vision of the phrase:

However variegated its applications –which include the freedom *to* commit as well as freedom *from* commitment –all notions of freedom rest on a sense of *agency*, the idea that individuals have control over the course of their lives. Agency, in turn, lies at the very core of the American Dream, the bedrock premise upon which all else depends. To paraphrase Henry David Thoreau, the Dream assumes that one *can* advance confidently in the direction of one's dreams to live out an imagined life. (Cullen 10)

In the preface of his book *The Epic of America*, Adams explains that his definition of the phrase does not present utopian ideals. It is rather a patriotic concept that gathers all Americans:

We have a long and arduous road to travel if we are to realize our American Dream in the life of our nation, but if we fail, there is nothing left but the old eternal round. The alternative is the failure of self-government, the failure of the common man to rise to full stature, the failure of all that the American Dream has held off hope and promise for mankind. (416)

Yet, in addition to this strong positive image of the phrase, Sarah Churchwell explains in her book *Behold, America* that Adams admonishes the readers of his book that the American Dream is under a constant threat to be distorted and that it needs to be regenerated: “[it] has been present from the start. Ever since we became an independent nation, each generation has seen an uprising of the ordinary Americans to save that dream from the forces which appeared to be overwhelming and dispelling it” (Adams xx). Although he did not state concretely the foe of the American Dream, he indirectly refers to “authoritarianism in the many guises Americans had been discussing for the previous thirty years: tyranny, yes, but also special interests, corruption, plutocracy and oligarchy, crony capitalism and corporatism, and the various forms of rising totalitarianism, as tyranny went corporate” (Churchwell 148). Yet, the American Dream starts off long before 1931. The ideals of the American ethos can be traced back to earlier phases of the history of the USA and the formation of its ideology. As freedom and

opportunity present integral parts of the American Dream, the two ideals can be related to the American ideology of exploration, or what is known as “Manifest Destiny”<sup>13</sup>. The idea of discovering the unknown that could be savage and dangerous, is also presented in the *Letters from an American Farmer*, by John de Crèvecoeur. In the third letter “What is an American?”, Crèvecoeur emphasizes the fact that the American raw and wild land presents an unmissable chance to have a new start with a clean slate: “The American is a new man who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions” (Crèvecoeur 56). The freedom that characterizes the new world provides in fact an opportunity to create a new Eden. Hence, the first pillar of the American Dream can be a reference to the freedom to move, travel and explore the uncharted far-off.

As time moved forward, the American Dream deviated from its original definition. In the twentieth century, the concept became purely materialistic, reflecting the drift of a growing consumerist society. Moreover, the alluring American Dream has been corroded by the destructive phenomena of racism, discrimination and exclusion. Sarah Churchwell explains in her book *Behold, America* that

At the beginning of the twentieth century, thanks to the explosion of advertising, the rise of celebrity culture, the use of photographs in newspapers and the imminent dominance of Hollywood in the American imagination, consumer capitalism—which included the ‘fashion and home magazines’—was becoming aspirational: ‘the universal American Dream and hope’. Ordinary Americans could scrutinise the lives of the rich and powerful, in all their glamorous and luxurious detail. They could see what their houses looked like, and not just tiny glimpses of exteriors through hedgerows or over stone walls. Readers could now look at their furniture, their fashion, their cars, their yachts. (33-34)

The rise of the American Dream as synonymous with consumerism and materialism gradually intensified and reached its peak in the 1950s. Devoid of any moral model, the ideals of freedom, equality and opportunity were replaced by the pursuit of a secure job, a perfect

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<sup>13</sup> In his article “The Origin of “Manifest Destiny””, Julius W. Pratt states that the phrase was created by the American editor and journalist John L. O’Sullivan to refer to the holy mission of exploring the unknown West to spread the American model of democracy and civilisation (Pratt 796). A mission that highlights the American exceptionalism that Winthrop talked about in his sermon.

house in the suburbs, and a car. The heavy weight of the Great Depression (1929) marked the distortion of the American Dream during decades as money has become a value in itself rather than a way to produce or reach a value. In the early 1960s, the American ethos continued to morph as it was marked by the experience of the African Americans. During this decade, the American Dream was questioned as there was a clear incongruousness between what Americans embraced as a dream and the context of exclusion and discrimination towards the African Americans. The African Americans' journey in America was as epic as the American Dream. Their struggle to gain their basic rights, taken for granted by the rest of Americans, marked the evolution of the American Dream. During one summer day of 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his famous speech "I Have a Dream" in which he reminded all Americans of the ingrained values of the American Dream, that is 'freedom, equality of opportunity':

I still have the dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

[...]

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

In this text, Martin Luther King succeeds in reminding all Americans of the forgotten real values of the dream that marks American exceptionalism. The materialistic version that marked the second half of the twentieth century presents a misinterpretation that was a result of intense economic circumstances. King's vision of the American Dream echoes Adams' definition of "a dream of a social order" (404-5), by being able to have equal opportunities regardless race.

Considering the changing nature of the American Dream, can we find another dimension of this charming dream within the context of a rising panoptic government? Unfortunately, while King was fighting to revive the true ideals of the American Dream, an



important pillar of the national ethos was gradually destroyed through the intensive mass surveillance exercised by the government throughout the twentieth century and mainly between the 1950s and the 1970s. With the creation of the National Security Agency in 1952, the United States became a technologically developed organisational system of gathering, controlling and decoding information (the so-called “intelligence”) about any possible threat to the national security. The NSA used a variety of electronic complex systems of recording and decrypting the different information received. The development of mass surveillance started as a political and security necessity within a tense context of Red Scare and Cold War. However, it transformed into a hegemon that influenced Americans’ daily lives, creating an atmosphere of fear and paranoia. It is but a short step from a tool of protection to an indispensable instrument for the Orwellian nightmarish totalitarian society in which every aspect of private life is controlled and monitored. Worse, this development shaped the future of the American political and social system.

The rise of the mass surveillance interferes, by definition, with the fundamental right to privacy and freedom from intrusion and disturbed control of one’s life. The right to privacy becomes clearly problematic since the American society feels under siege by the incessant use of technologically-advanced surveillance apparatus, ostensibly to expose the enemy within<sup>14</sup>. In his book entitled *None of your Damn Business: Privacy in the United States from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age* (2019), Lawrence Cappello provides a thorough historical study of the controversy between surveillance, privacy and security. He compares the war on privacy and the encroachment of this fundamental right to a crusade, explaining that it reaches its acme with McCarthyism (74). Cappello highlights the importance of the twentieth century generally in the history of the United States as it is marked by the clash between surveillance and privacy,

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<sup>14</sup> “Exposing the Enemy Within: Privacy and National Security, 1917-1961” is the title of the third chapter of Lawrence Cappello’s *None of Your Damn Business: Privacy in the United States from the Gilded Age to the Digital Age*.

transforming the for granted right into a desired goal. This clash is characterized by the rise of the complex techniques of surveillance:

Although technology developed in the nineteenth century, of course, it wasn't until the twentieth century that the fragile balance that the framers had struck between privacy and surveillance was threatened. Major breakthroughs in the sophistication and miniaturization of surveillance technology, particularly after World War II, concomitant with political, social and cultural trends, fostered an acceptance of widespread physical surveillance [...]. As historian Sara Igo notes, it was there, in the postwar period, where the threat to privacy "came not from one particular direction but from every corner of American society", including "the government and the military, corporations and workplaces, universities and hospitals, media and marketers."

By the early 1950s new surveillance hardware could penetrate homes and offices without a physical trespass, and it could monitor unrestricted channels of communication like telegraphs, telephone lines, and radio frequencies. The technology was quickly commercialized and made cheaply available to the public. Futuristic devices like the bulky "button camera" and miniaturized tape recorders were relatively easy to install, and in most states, they were not illegal to own. Soon they were being used by government agencies, private businesses, professional investigators, and individuals. At the same time, technologies like data-based phone connections and other early digital communications were increasingly coordinating personal, business, and governmental affairs. (129)

Although he underlines the importance of the century as a turning point in the American history, Cappello warns us to consider it as the beginning of the surveillance age. It is rather a growing phenomenon that develops exponentially due to various reasons and through different ways (130-31).

Surveillance is not only a political concept; it has also become a social and cultural concept as it was integrated in the American 1960s popular culture. Surveillance was normalized as it was advertised by different magazines and newspapers. In a world where the United States faces numerous national and international "enemies" who threaten national security, surveillance is propagated as a necessity for personal and public protection. In the August 1963 issue of *Popular Electronics* magazine, different courses of surveillance were commercialized under the title *Be a Spy*:

Correspondence course on wiretapping, bugging, telescopic sound pickup, recording techniques, microphotography, and invisible photography. Lessons in surveillance, tailing and use of equipment. Complete course 22.50 \$. C. Carrier Co., 6311 Yucca St., Hollywood 28, Calif. (126)

Here, surveillance and all its technological devices transcend the political sphere, pointing out the complete wearing away of privacy. The term moved from being a right to a privilege. The open access to information exposed all Americans, which led them to question their understanding of their rights and to redefine their dreams. The concept of the American Dream with its transnational ideals of freedom, equality of opportunity has eroded away over time, taking the form of a nightmare. Americans become unable to recognize their own country, or at least the image they had constructed of it. In fact, an idealised vision of a country can open the field of many disappointments. Believing that America is their Eldorado, a land of freedom and all kinds of opportunities, they soon realize that they live in an open-air prison where they are constantly under the all-seeing gaze of “Big Brother”. The second half of the twentieth century marks the birth of a new definition of the American Dream as a free, discrete private life is quested.

## **2.2. When the dream turns to a nightmare**

Before drawing close the way the American Dream turns into a nightmare, I will analyse both terms to see what they imply and whether there is any semantic difference. Both terms are commonly used as antonyms. However, they both allude to the illusive images and sensations that brain develops during a period of semi-consciousness, which are comparable from a psychological standpoint. The concept of dream was studied by many theoreticians like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Jung highlights the fact that dreams are not imaginary ideas that could be easily controlled but rather products of the unconscious, as they “have the advantage of being involuntary, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche and are therefore pure products of nature not falsified by any conscious purpose” (67). Different theories around dreams were established. Some of them are based on neuropsychology like the theory of Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley and others are psychological like George William Domhoff. But they all concurred in the fact that a dream is a complex, psychologically entrenched concept.

However, how a dream can be turned into a nightmare? Can I consider dreams and nightmares as two sides of the same coin? Since Freud defines dreams in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* as the fulfilment of a wish, thereby can I consider the nightmare as an unfulfilled or denied desire? In this context, I will analyse further the way both concepts of dream and nightmare are interconnected in the three novels under study.

“What happens to a dream deferred?” asked Langston Hughes in his 1951 poem *Harlem*. He suggests that a deferred dream is a dead dream that becomes a heavy burden and a nightmarish aspiration. Even though Hughes’s perception reflects a particular context as it echoes the disappointment of the African American community in getting real racial equality, his description can be used to examine the way the American Dream becomes an anxiety-inducing dream that may blast in the end. The concept of the American Dream developed throughout decades and centuries. As I saw above, it started as a dream of justice and equality, that marked rigorously the United States as the land of opportunities. Yet, it was transformed gradually into disillusioning empty ideals that divided the American society. In her article “The original meanings of the ‘American Dream’ and ‘America First’ were starkly different from how we use them today”<sup>15</sup>, Anna Diamond retraces the deformation of the ideals of the American Dream. As she interviews Sarah Churchwell, she notes that the concept of wealth was initially considered in opposition of the American values of democracy and equality. Yet, in the 1950s the American Dream was estranged from its original sense:

[The phrase] was redefined in the 1950s, and seen as a strategy for soft power and for [commercializing] the “American Dream” abroad. It was certainly an “American Dream” of democracy, but it was a very specifically consumerist version that said “this is what the ‘American Dream’ will look like.” By contrast with the earlier version, which was focused on the principles of liberal democracy, this was very much a free market version of that.

The twentieth century witnessed a radical change of the American life-style. In the 1950s,

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<sup>15</sup> It is an article published in *Smithsonian Magazine* in October 2018. In this article, Anna Diamond interviews Sarah Churchwell, the author of *Behold, America*, studying the origins of Donald Trump’s slogan America First and the way it is, along with other fundamental concepts like the American Dream, misunderstood.

America witnessed the rise of a massive consumerist lifestyle and an active social mobility. The new American Dream was now based upon the opportunity of owning a house in a suburban area. The suburban areas turned into the new target of all Americans, announcing the rise of a mass-consumption society. In this context, Jon C. Teaford wrote in the fifth Chapter of his book *The American Suburb: The Basics* that

A house in the suburbs—that has long been regarded as the American Dream. In the minds of Americans, suburbia has been virtually synonymous with the single family detached house resting on a green lawn. Americans have aspired and saved for a suburban manse, and a large portion of the population has realized that goal. [...]. Homeowning is the chief form of investment for most Americans; their house is their nest egg. (159)

The rise of T.V commercials paved the way to the creation of this consumerist society and to the distortion of the American ethos. The media created a perfect, idealized image of suburbia. The American Dream became in the 1950s a suburban dream with a new landscape of excessive consumption. This image can be further traced in the way suburban areas were organized in the US. According to Lizabeth Cohen<sup>16</sup>:

the landscape of mass consumption created a metropolitan society where people no longer left their residential enclaves to enter central marketplaces and the parks, streets, and public building that surrounded them, but, rather, were separated by class, race, and less so gender in differentiated commercial subcenters. (288)

The suburban life became too idealized to the extent that it was equated to the new image of the United States, replacing the classical image of the land of freedom and equal opportunities. This suburban Eldorado became the quest of many Americans, replacing gradually the long-established values of freedom and individualism that marked the American Dream. The degradation of the American ethos and the corruption of its values were explored and criticized by different authors during the 1950s and the 1960s. The obsessive quest of the suburban

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<sup>16</sup> In her book *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-war America*.

American Dream was presented in the writings of the novelist John Updike and mainly in his 1960 novel *Rabbit, Run*. The novel chronicles the way Harry Angstrom (nicknamed Rabbit) tries to escape his middle-class monotonous life and to lead a new experience. Through the protagonist, Updike reflects the middleclass angst, loss and moodiness related to the prominent culture of mass consumerism. John Cheever is another writer of that generation of American authors who criticized the suburban way of life, showing how the American Dream turned into a nightmare. Through his short story *The Swimmer*, Cheever records the decay of the American Dream. The short story deals with the journey of Neddy Merrill, a man who leads a perfect life, according to the mainstream standards of the 1950s, in his way home. He lives in a suburban house and enjoys a pleasant social status. As he goes from pool to pool to reach his house during one midsummer day, Neddy starts to feel older and weaker. The character presented at the beginning of the short story as a young, strong and self-confident person becomes a confused person, completely lost as he found his house abandoned with no sign of life. Cheever shows through the changing reactions of neighbours and the altering seasons the nihilism and emptiness of the suburban dream that is completely devoid of any moral basis<sup>17</sup>. Cheever shows also that this materialism-based dream consumes the dreamer's life, energy and youth. This dark vision of the 1950s American Dream can be also traced in the different novels understudy as the different characters are physically and mentally consumed by their own American Dream that morphs at the end of the novel into a nightmare.

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<sup>17</sup> In Cheever's short story highlights the way neighbours' reaction changes. They firstly treated Merrill friendly since he belonged to the rich class. He was welcomed in all houses to swim and drink. As he moved on, he started to notice the radical change of treatment. His neighbours became disagreeable. He realized then that he lost his wealth and social status, becoming for them unworthy of their friendship.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The duality of illusion and disillusion in *The Haunting of Hill House*, *Hell House* and *Burnt Offerings***

As the American ethos was metamorphosed during the twentieth century announcing the rise of new consumerist ideals, different American authors used their literary skills to show the impact of this radical change and to criticize it. Shirley Jackson, Richard Matheson and Robert Marasco share the same vision of the American Dream and present the duality of the illusive, distorted images of the American ethos and the disillusioning dimension of reality, in three different decades and at different levels: characterization, setting, the different episodes of haunting and the tragic end.

#### **3.1. The quest for the American Dream**

In the three novels under examination, the American Dream is a key element for the declassed characters who live on the edge of the society. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor Vance is presented as a delusional character. As she spent eleven years taking care of her disabled mother, Eleanor had not the chance to enjoy her youth. She could not get rid of her mother's shadow that continued to haunt her even after her death. After the death of her mother, Eleanor tried to carry on with her life with her sister and her little family. Yet, the sister turned out to be as shrew as her mother, turning Eleanor's new life into hell. Dr. Montague's invitation to investigate the haunting nature of the infamous Hill House comes as an unmissable occasion to gain a life experience full of vim and to meet new people, freeing herself from her quiet miserable life with her sister's family. Hill House becomes synonymous with a new fresh life. She seems to be very determined to keep her dream alive that she

disregards her first presentiment of the evil and dark energy of the house: “Why am I here? She thought helplessly and at once; why am I here? The gate was tall and ominous and heavy, set strongly into a stone wall which went off through the trees” (Jackson 28). Upon her arrival at Hill House, Eleanor meets Theodora, Luke and Dr. Montague. The dream to have a stable warm family and friends starts to be realized as Eleanor gets on well with them and mainly with Theodora, with whom she shares her bedroom. Theodora, who is presented as a countercultural character, seems to be Eleanor’s foil and complete opposite:

Theodora was not at all like Eleanor. Duty and conscience were, for Theodora, attributes which belonged properly to Girl Scouts. Theodora’s world was one of delight and soft colors [...]  
Theodora had been tempted and had somehow plunged blindly, wantonly, into a violent quarrel with the friend with whom she shared an apartment. Things were said on both sides which only time could eradicate; Theodora had deliberately and heartlessly smashed the lovely little figurine her friend had carved of her, and her friend had cruelly ripped to shreds the volume of Alfred de Musset which had been a birthday present from Theodora, taking particular pains with the page which bore Theodora's loving, teasing inscription. (Jackson 8)

Unlike Eleanor, Theodora seems to be more audacious and daring. She expresses her emotions openly and directly. While Eleanor’s insanity is quiet and conservative, Theodora’s rebellious demeanour is clearly expressed through her lifestyle and her opinions concerning love, spiritualism, religion and science. Her free style and liberated way of thinking attract Eleanor who seeks such independence. The idea of starting a new experience with foreign people, is for Eleanor as appealing as the idea of the American Dream itself, since it is a chance to overcome her psychological complexes and to start up a new life out of nothing. It is an experience of a paramount importance as it defies herself to prove her ability to lead a normal, stable life. The setting presents a haunted dream space, in which Eleanor’s life would be better and fuller. In the opening chapter of the novel, Eleanor’s journey to the Hill House is described as a one-way journey, predestined for her:



She was well away from the city now, watching for the turning onto Route 39, that magic thread of road Dr. Montague had chosen for her, out of all the roads in the world, to bring her safely to him and to Hill House; no other road could lead her from where she was to where she wanted to be. (Jackson 17)

The description shows the protagonist's journey as a holy mission, reflecting the Calvinist concept of predestination. Moving from her old world, where she led a miserable life with her mother, to a new one, a promised space of freedom and opportunity, echoes the Puritans' first journey to America, aiming to realise their dream of religious freedom and equality. Reaching Hill House, Eleanor discovers a particular place that is completely remote, massive and with a particular interior design:

"Some of these rooms are entirely inside rooms," the doctor said from ahead of them. "No windows, no access to the outdoors at all. However, a series of enclosed rooms is not altogether surprising in a house of this period, particularly when you recall that what windows they did have were heavily shrouded with hangings and draperies withing, and shrubbery without. Ah." (Jackson 64)

The misleading design of the house reminds the reader of the immensity of the American land. The group of Dr. Montague can be considered, as Dr. Montague mentions, Hill House's "pilgrims". Each character has his or her own American Dream that he or she aims at realizing. Eleanor, in particular, becomes as the novel progresses, obsessed with Hill House. The different haunting episodes are narrated from Eleanor's point of view. The oddity of the events along with the instability of Eleanor's mindset drive the reader to wonder if Eleanor's obsessive quest to belong to Hill House and its inhabitants, drives her to be the one responsible for the different hauntings and events.

Eleanor's quest to realise her dream becomes her own curse as it drives her to her tragic end. She starts to experience a psychological conflict between what she consciously and unconsciously desires. As she starts to experience supernatural phenomena, during which Eleanor insists that the house wants her to stay and that it is the reincarnation of her mother, the reader discovers that the real American Dream for Eleanor is to be regrouped with her deceased mother. Hill House transcends its nature as a setting to become a major character

and even a potent symbol of alienation and psychological unsettlement. Throughout the novel, the author focuses on the house's misleading, disturbing design, attributing to it human traits:

No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice. (Jackson 34)

Eleanor's initial reaction to the house's distorted style is an overriding feeling as she says "Hill House is vile, it is disease; get away from here at once" (Jackson 33). Does the house's deformity remind Eleanor of her deceased mother? In fact, Eleanor's insistence on staying at Hill House despite its darkness and hostile atmosphere can be related to her dream to belong anywhere. By being in Hill House, she feels welcomed and accepted, believing that her dream may become true. Yet, Eleanor's psychological instability becomes clear for the other characters as she becomes completely dominated by the house, or rather obsessed by her dream to reunite with her mother. She starts to feel that she is an integral part of the house:

Eleanor sat, looking down at her hands, and listened to the sounds of the house. Somewhere upstairs a door swung quietly shut; a bird touched the tower briefly and flew off. In the kitchen the stove was settling and cooling, with little soft creakings. An animal—a rabbit?—moved through the bushes by the summerhouse. She could even hear, with her new awareness of the house, the dust drifting gently in the attics, the wood aging. (Jackson 223)

The first depiction of Eleanor as a dreamy girl endowed with a wild imagination is reinforced through the way her perception of the house transformed from fear and alert to love and fusion. She identifies different rooms like the nursery with the figure of her mother along with experiencing supernatural haunting episodes that the other characters could not witness. Eleanor seemingly becomes the target of the house. Nonetheless, she enjoys the situation of being the chosen one:

She heard the little melody fade, and felt the slight movement of air as the footsteps came closer to her, and something almost brushed her face; perhaps there was a tiny sigh against her cheek, and she turned in surprise. Luke and the doctor bent over the chessboard, Arthur leaned confidently close to Theodora, and Mrs. Montague talked. None of them heard it, she thought with joy; nobody heard it but me. (Jackson 226)

Eleanor's emotional and mental fragility turns her into a vulnerable victim of her own dream. The distinguished horror trait of Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* is the complete absence of the classical element of monsters and ghouls and the presence of the psychological terror, objectified in the house itself. The house, presenting figuratively Eleanor's American Dream, should not be desired and thus appropriating it too much, in the sense that probing it too deeply, leads certainly Eleanor to death, after having been consumed mentally by its power. Eleanor's death scene remains ambiguous as both readers and characters could not determine if it was a suicide, committed consciously to break free from the house's iron fist or a logical calamitous end resulted from the mania to realise one's American Dream.

The motif of the haunted house as a metonym of the characters' American Dream can be also traced in Richard Matheson's *Hell House*. The novel follows the same storyline as *The Haunting of Hill House* with the presence of a group of investigators composed of a scientist and his wife, and two other characters (Florence and Benjamin Fischer) who had previous paranormal experiences. The infamous setting is a means to criticize the American Dream as a source of deception through different ways. First and foremost, the quest of Belasco's house (known also as Hell House) is presented in a way that echoes the ideology of Manifest Destiny or the ideology of exploring the unknown in the name of "good" and rationality. The novel starts with the mission of Dr. Barrett, hired by the dying owner of Hell House, Rolf Rudolph Deutsch, to prove the existence or inexistence of the afterlife. Belasco's house is presented from the beginning as an enigmatic place, a source of wonder and excitement, according to the way both Deutsch and Dr. Barrett responded to the name of the haunted house:

“If they exist,” Deutsch interrupted, “you’ll find them in the only place on earth I know of where survival has yet to be refuted. The Belasco house in Maine.”

“Hell House?”

*Something glittered in the old man’s eyes.*

“Hell House,” he said.

*Barrett felt a tingling of excitement.* “I thought Belasco’s heirs had it sealed off after what happened.” (emphasis added) (Matheson 11)

Following the first reactions of Deutsch and Dr. Barrett, Hell House does not seem to be a simple haunted place. It is referred to as an epic place that needs to be explored so that the truth would be disclosed. It is as Dr. Barrett describes it “the Mount Everest of Haunted Houses” (Matheson 15). At the beginning of the novel, the house, situated in Maine (Matawaskie Valley), is presented as a secluded place. The narrator highlights its gloominess and dimness, in an attempt to set the basics to create a dreadful atmosphere:

All of them gazed at the hill-ringed valley lying ahead, its floor obscured by fog. [...].

The car was suddenly immersed in greenish mist. Its speed was decreased by the driver, and they saw him leaning forward, peering through the windshield. After several moments he switched on the fog lights and wipers.

[...]

They all stared through the windows at the curling fog. It was as though they rode inside a submarine, slowly navigating downward through a sea of curdled milk. At various moments, trees or bushes or boulder formations would appear beside the car, then disappear. The only sound was the hum of the engine. (Matheson 27)

To confirm the mysterious nature of the setting, the narrator describes the interior design of the edifice. The characters discover a colossal mansion with an old decoration and sophisticated furniture:

Fischer played the flashlight beam around the dark immensity of the entry hall. The narrow cone of light jumped fitfully from place to place, freezing momentarily on hulking groups of furniture; huge, leaden-colored paintings; giant tapestries filmed with dust; a staircase, broad and curving, leading upward into blackness; a second-story corridor overlooking the entry hall; and far above, engulfed by shadows, a vast expanse of paneled ceiling. (Matheson 32)

The house’s interior design is described in detail, giving exact dimensions for some rooms to accentuate its gigantism. The uncanniness of the setting lies in the fact that it geographically reflects the American wilderness. Using the house plan, the characters are portrayed as

explorers of the sprawling mansion. Their dream is to discover and unveil the house's truth that was kept secret for decades. The Hell House experience is presented as a strong central motive for all characters in different ways. For Florence Tanner, Hell House is her highway to realise her dream to build a church. She did not think twice before accepting the mission despite her awareness of the lugubrious nature of the setting. For Dr. Barrett, and regardless the financial motivation, exploring the infamous Hell House is itself a dream to be achieved for a man of scientific research. Yet, for Benjamin Fischer, Hell House was not a dream but rather a challenge to be surmounted. Going back to the dreadful space after a traumatic experience and a miraculous survival, presents for Fischer a means to shake his repressed medium self to overthrow the insalubrious place. However, as the novel progresses, characters moved from the state of living their dream to fighting it as the house proves itself to be a disenchanting place, dangerous enough to wipe them out.

Apropos the presentation of the haunted house as a reflection of the American Dream, *Burnt Offerings* is no exception. It rather highlights plainly the way it can control people's choices and decisions. Marasco works on a different form of horror based on real life rather than on supernatural non-viable elements. In this context, Bernice M. Murphy highlights, in the first chapter of her book *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture*, that the American Gothic witnessed a turning point during the twentieth century, leading to a drastic revision of terror techniques and motifs. She cites Shirley Jackson, Richard Matheson and Robert Marasco as examples of authors who redefined the concept of horror, being inspired by the terrors of reality:

Before the 1950s, the most significant twentieth-century American horror writer had been H.P. Lovecraft, whose florid tales of 'cosmic' horror eventually spawned their own influential cult. Though he has remained a highly significant figure in modern American horror, Lovecraft's archaic style and old-fashioned preoccupations would soon be superseded by a new mood in horror the real-life terrors of the Second World War had an immense impact upon the genre. As David J. Skal put it, 'earlier, horror come from the irrational and ungodly encroaching from without—post war stories increasingly show horror arising from aspects of life normally associated with security and stability'. The fear that had for generations been aroused by the old bogeyman – Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, the werewolf and the

Mummy– had been neutralised by the awareness that no fictional or filmic fiend could ever top the evils perpetrated by humans themselves. The result of this paradigm shift was the trend towards exploring horrors of a more human scale that can be found in most post-war horror fiction. As one of the most significant social developments of the era, it is hardly surprising then that suburbia and its residents would soon become a notable genre preoccupation. (16-17)

In *Burnt Offerings*, Marasco depicts Long Island mansion as a temporary summer house, to Marian's liking despite its obvious decay. The Rolfes long for leaving temporarily their overcrowded life to enjoy a suburban idyllic atmosphere so much so that they overlook its battered condition, its suspiciously cheap price and bizarre landlords. Marian's yearning to have her own space is so strong that it becomes gradually an obsession that leads her hastily to her tragic end. Moving to Long Island mansion is extremely important for Marian for different reasons. Firstly, it quenches her consumerist thirst. The author depicts Marian throughout the novel as a person with an impulsive buying behaviour<sup>18</sup>. Her behaviour reflects in fact the consumerist mentality of the 1970s. Yet, most importantly, the mansion represents Marian's American Dream as it reflects the American ideology of special and social mobility. Marasco highlights the idea that freedom of mobility presents for the Rolfes a rooted ideology:

In the great tradition, they left seeking space, just as many of the young couples would eventually leave this neighbourhood and resettle in small houses out in Nassau or Suffolk. The Rolfes as well, Marian was sure; they were just a few years behind. (4)

As Dale Bailey notes in his book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, "the great tradition" used by the author refers to the concept of American Dream. He relates it to the westward expansion and mobility. The Long Island mansion presents for the Rolfes and mainly Marian their clichéd dream to own a spacious place in a suburban area that became glamourized during the 1950s. The theme of mobility can be traced through Marasco's detailed description of the Rolfes' journey to Long Island mansion.

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<sup>18</sup> Impulsive buying behaviour refers to a consumer behaviour that engenders the consumer to excessively buy unnecessary things. The consumer feels generally unable to resist or to control the urgent need to buy new things.

Having moved out from the city, the Rolfes realized how urban life is bleak. The author focuses through different instances on the secludedness of the setting, echoing the American wilderness, explored by westerners:

In a while the buildings were a gray mass behind them, like something glacial, and there were rows of small houses with trees and neat, billowy shrubs, and then houses with saplings and newly sodded lawns. The sun had come out and the air, heavy with unreasonable humidity when they left the apartment, had become clear. (20)

Fascinated by the house, Marian soon becomes unable to balance between her family and the hungry space that needs to be fed and watered. Marian realized her dream of owning the mansion to the detriment of herself and her family. Thinking that she owns the house / the dream, Marian did not realize that she was owned and consumed by it.

### **3.2. Haunted houses as locus horridus<sup>19</sup>**

That the haunted house is an unsettling space with architectural intricacy comes as a recurrent motif that pervades not only in the contemporary American literature but also the eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic literature. Authors like Horace Walpole were fixated on the dramatic history of the haunted house (inheritance and omens), incest and the damsel in distress. What has changed is that the haunted house becomes a place where the repressed is liberated, and trauma, phobias and fear are projected. Exploring the haunted house becomes a psychological as well as spatial experience. In this context, Catherine Spooner examines the evolution of the Gothic genre in her book *Contemporary Gothic*, pointing out that Freudian theories have a considerable impact on Gothic fiction, since haunting becomes no longer limited to the puzzling maze-like architecture. Mind and body become the new haunted and haunting space:

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<sup>19</sup> Locus horridus or terribilis refers to a literary motif that is opposed to locus amoenus, developed by the German literary critic E.R. Curtius. Contrary to locus amoenus, which is defined as an idyllic space with an irresistible beauty and peace, locus horridus is a hellish nauseating place.

As Emily Dickinson, a poet with a frequently Gothic awareness, wrote, ‘One need not be a chamber—to be haunted’: in twentieth century film and fiction, the troubling ghosts of past traumas were not restricted to architectural locales, but made the mind itself a kind of prison. [...]

In Gothic texts, therefore, the past is a site of terror, of an injustice that must be resolved, an evil that must be exorcised. It is not, as in the architecture of the Gothic Revival, invested with nostalgia or idealism. The past chokes the present, prevent progress and the march towards personal or social enlightenment. (18-19)

If the motif of haunted houses is instantly connected to the Freudian theory of the “unheimlich”, its study as a disturbed haunted space entails other theories like Gaston Bachelard's. As previously mentioned, the haunted house presents in one way or another the characters' American Dream, through which they think that they can rejuvenate their monotonous life. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard introduces the concept of *dream house*, defining it as the opposite of the real childhood house. It “may be merely a dream of ownership, the embodiment of everything that is considered convenient, comfortable, healthy, sound, desirable, by other people” (61). The *dream house* presents the perfect house that has none of the imperfections or deformities of the real house. Hence, following Bachelard's definition, can I consider the three haunted houses (Hill House, Belasco's house and Long Island mansion) as dream houses? In the three novels, only Long Island mansion in Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* can be considered as Marian's dream house as it fits perfectly the Bachelardian definition of the term. Contrary to her real house, the haunted Long Island mansion is massive, suburban and extravagant. It is the epitome of everything Marian desires and that is why she finds herself immediately behaving like a landlord and not like a tenant.

Yet, what can be obviously detectable is that the three settings are in fact the antithesis of Bachelard's dream house since they correspond to spaces of deep-seated instabilities and apparent inhospitality. The different settings are metaphors of moral, psychological and social fault lines of characters and their society. They become tools to study the psychologically shattered characters as the haunted house is as Dale Bailey studies in his book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction* “a profoundly versatile tool for examining the anxieties and tensions inherent in our national experiment [...]” (114). The three settings are not simply haunted by a ghost or a lost soul.



Every setting is haunted by its history, by its owner(s)' visions and fantasies, by its inhabitants' repressed memories and anxieties and most importantly by its significance for the different inhabitants. These factors turn the settings into locus horridus, psychic spaces where everything is unreliable.

In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Shirley Jackson, the undisputed master of contemporary Gothic fiction, paves the way for the dreary nature of the setting from the first lines as it is described as an epic house where sanity cannot withstand its gloominess and 'reality'. Defying her sister's authority by stealing her car, Eleanor hits the road, dreaming of liberation. As Eleanor approaches the house, a second description comes to approve the portrait of Hill House as an organic haunted house:

No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house, and yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice. Almost any house, caught unexpectedly or at an odd angle, can turn a deeply humorous look on a watching person; even a mischievous little chimney, or a dormer like a dimple, can catch up a beholder with a sense of fellowship; but a house arrogant and hating, never off guard, can only be evil. This house, which seemed somehow to have formed itself, flying together into its own powerful pattern under the hands of its builders, fitting itself into its own construction of lines and angles, reared its great head back against the sky without concession to humanity. It was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope. Exorcism cannot alter the countenance of a house; Hill House would stay as it was until it was destroyed. (34)

The above description of the house, filled with anthropomorphic attributes foreshadows that the haunting nature of the setting may be a question of perspective. Eleanor is presented initially as a character in an endless state of daydreams and fantasies, even before reaching Hill House. Even though Jackson highlights that dreams are the key to survive Hill House, Eleanor's dreamy character could not resist its "absolute reality". Hill House forces her to concede that her dream to be liberated is a mirage that will not be achieved and that she is driven gradually to the hellish life she endured for years (toxic mother/ daughter relation). Here, I can question if the haunting nature of the house is not a matter of perspective, notably if I take into consideration that the setting that refuses to let Eleanor out, by closing up on itself and on its

preys is accessible from outside (the arrival of new characters like Mrs. Montague and Arthur). The essence of the drastic change of Hill House from a dream destination into a nightmarish setting lies in its ability to turn Eleanor's mind and dreams into her worst enemies. The house's vastness and architectural complexity echoes Eleanor's psychological maze-like state. The house can be studied as a bearer of the character's inner conflict as it fits Tony Magistrale's definition in his book *Abject Terror: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*, of haunted houses as live organisms: "In most horror films and Gothic novels, the haunted house/castle serves as a vehicle for the inner psychology of its inhabitants. The protagonists appear trapped within its recesses especially as the house 'awakens' to assume an infernal biology of its own" (90). Eleanor's first reaction as she stands in the middle of the blue room shows the way her inner consciousness is exteriorised, forming her perception of Hill House. Feeling assailed by a strong presence that can feel and see every move Eleanor can make announces the collapse of time, space and notably her identity. It also foreshadows the collapse of boundaries between human and unhuman, normal and paranormal. Unlike the other characters, Eleanor correlates each room and part of Hill House with her mother. The setting becomes a physical mediator between her past memories (characterized by traumas and anxieties) and her present. In one haunting episode, Eleanor projected her inner child as:

[...] she heard a little soft cry which broke her heart, a little infinitely sad cry, a little sweet moan of wild sadness. It is a *child*, she thought with disbelief, a child is crying somewhere, and then, upon that thought, came the wild shrieking voice she had never heard before and yet knew she had heard always in her nightmares. "Go away!" it screamed. "Go away, go away, don't hurt me," and, after, sobbing, "Please don't hurt me. Please let me go home," and then the little sad crying again. I can't stand it, Eleanor thought concretely. This is monstrous, this is cruel, they have been hurting a child and I won't let anyone hurt a child, and the babbling went on and, low and steady, on and on and on, the voice rising a little and falling a little, going on and on. (Jackson 162-3)

Eleanor, holding Theodora's hands, reacts bravely as she tries to shout, challenging what seems to be one of the house's mind tricks. She shouts, admitting being scared but at the same time ready to stop and destroy "the lunatic filthy house" (Jackson 163). Supposedly holding

Theodora's hands, Eleonora is the only one who experienced this supernatural phenomenon as Theodora stunned, unable to understand Eleanor's sudden shouts. The fact that characters are not all encountering the hauntings in the same way gets to be clear at some point within the novel. Yet, they all understand that the house, whose secret they dream to explore and unveil, is in fact an ungraspable space and a source of danger that threatens them all.

Hill House can be considered a psychic sentient space. It proves able to feel, perceive and absorb memories, emotions and energies. In his book *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King points out that haunting can be defined as the projection of all traumas and memories:

Years later I read a speculative article which suggested that so-called 'haunted houses' might actually be psychic batteries, absorbing the emotions that had been spent there absorbing them much as a car battery will store an electric charge. Thus, the article went on, the psychic phenomena we call 'hauntings' might really be a kind of paranormal movie show – the broadcasting back of old voices and images which might be part of old events. And the fact that many haunted houses are shunned and get the reputation of being Bad Places might be due to the fact that the strongest emotions are the primitives ones – rage and hate and fear. (297)

The history of Hill House presents a key factor behind transforming the setting into a nightmarish space. As Dr. Montague explains, Hill House's history is a familial one. It starts as a dream house for Hugh Crain who wanted to secure a luxurious family house for his offspring. Its ominous sad story starts with the death of Crain's wife even before seeing or living in the house. Then, it continues with the death of two other spouses of Hugh Crain and the sisters' fight over the house which closes with the death of Crain's senior daughter and the suicide of her companion, being incapable to carry the legacy, hanging herself from the tower. Regarding these familial tragedies and suicides, all negative energies are soaked up, transforming the house into a malicious psychic place. The house's 'psychic battery' is further fed by Eleanor's turbulent mind, especially considering that she has the three strongest primitive emotions, as King mentions: rage at her mother who deprives her from living, hate

against her family (sister and brother-in-law and undoubtedly her mother) and fear from the experience of Hill House and the independent life she is leading.

The idea of the haunted house as locus horridus is also present in Richard Matheson's *Hell House* whose plot is reminiscent of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. The opening pitch is similarly traditional: a researcher is sent to spend a week in a house rumoured to be haunted. He chooses a group of people with profoundly distinctive profiles. The similitude between the two novels does not stop here. In spite of the fact that Matheson's novel relies more on visual descriptive style, as the detailed sexual violent haunting episodes provoke the reader, the author succeeds in pointing out the motif of the haunted house as a 'psychic battery'. Hell House is, like Hill House, characterized by its tragic history. It witnesses the degeneration of its owner Emeric Belasco, who built the house to be a place of art and culture but it ends as a luxurious setting for debauchery. As Benjamin Fischer describes the history of Hell House to the other characters, he highlights that the house harbors Belasco's laboratory as he "attempted a literal enactment of de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*" (Matheson 60). Fischer continues by pointing out Belasco's glut of pleasures, turning his invitees into a state of bestiality and cannibalism. In a carnivalesque extravagant context analogous to the atmosphere of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Masque of Red Death*, Belasco stands observing the results of his experiment. The story of Hell House does not end with the death of its owner. Since then, it has kept absorbing its owner's mind and energy, becoming known as an evil house that violently rejects all attempts to unveil its secret by driving investigators to insanity or death. Yet, despite the striking resemblance between Hell House and Hill House, both haunted settings are different at numerous levels. First off, Hell House is unquestionably haunted, in contrast to Hill House, whose hauntedness is disputed. In addition, Hill House is presented at a certain point of the novel as a dream house for Eleanor, a destination that she desires. Whereas, Hell House is presented from the beginning as a repulsive abominable setting. Furthermore, Hell House is strictly related to the figure of Emeric Belasco. It is

different from Hill House that is related to the notion of family and for this reason, all characters relate to the fatherly figure of Hugh Crain, except Eleanor who considers it as a motherly figure. Hell House is a masculine house par excellence. There is no feminine or familial touch. The female figure is completely absent. This masculinity reflects in fact the owner's personality and is highlighted through the numerous sexual assaults and violence that occur in it. Hell House is not only fed by Belasco's misogyny but also by his repressed fear to expose his mythical image as 'the Roaring Giant'. The house's haunting power becomes stronger as it consumes its inhabitants' conflicts and memories. At the beginning of the novel, Hell House plays on the conflict between Dr. Barrett (science) and Florence Tanner (spiritualism) to chase them. To put the screws on them, Hell House uses divide and conquer method to unsettle and weaken the group, driving each one of them to his tragic end. Hell House's horror lies in the way it projects the owner's mindset, haunting its inhabitants using their traumas and memories. This is clear through the various haunting episodes that are all based on sexual acts, which shows a repeat broadcast of the fiendish experience that Belasco did 50 years earlier.

In his book *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King mentions Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* among the recommended Gothic novels for all perusers and not only the passionate ones. This is no surprise, regarding the way Marasco delineates the motif of the haunted house. If Eleanor refers to Hill House as a dark, cold womb and if Belasco's house echoes its owner's mind, Marasco portrays The Allardyses' mansion as the material, concrete depiction of the death/ birth cycle. Unlike the classical depiction of haunted houses as massive, maze-like settings, the Allardyses' mansion is portrayed as a house that plumbed the depth of a life cycle. The description highlights its decayed state, having "the roof-tiles rippled, and the shingles, once white, were dirty gray and broke, with ancient rust stains; some of the windows had been patched with cardboard; and the balusters running up the centra steps were tilting, many of them, or missing [...]" (Marasco 26). The Rolfes' dream vacation turns to be a dust

nest and a home of an abandoned garden where “every plant is dead. Soil’s like powder” (Marasco 31). This description is presented right before the meeting between the tenants and the Allardyses, during which the latter asserts persistently that the house needs “right people” (Marasco 37) to bring life back to it. Marasco transcends the idea of the haunted house as a psychic battery to present it as a parasite, dependent on human sacrifice in order to live and to regenerate. As the novel develops, the mansion proves to be able to sense each character’s fears and desires, using them to deepen his/her physical and mental collapse. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, Ben Rolfe forgets where he parked his car and feels instantly lost and panicked, blaming the overcrowded city for driving him crazy. This scene shows Ben’s repressed fear of insanity and this will be used, later in the novel, by the house to regenerate itself. Soon after settling in Long Island mansion, Ben starts to see his childhood nightmare that traumatizes him:

He could trace, with some certitude, the genesis of the nightmare, or the image. When he was young, he had seen a black limousine idling outside his building, in the rain. There had been a death in a neighbouring apartment, the first death he could remember hearing about, and the limousine had come for the family. The sound stuck in his head, and the image, all black and gray, and even now if Ben were asked: What’s death? – he’d have to say a black limousine with its motor idling and a chauffeur waiting behind the tinted glass. (Marasco 101)

Realising the significant weight of this nightmare on Ben, the house starts to use it recurrently; in order to drive him to his worst nightmare, that is insanity. The house’s plan seems to be successful as Ben starts to lose control over his actions and reactions, leading him to hurt physically his child by trying to drown him in the pool. Ben feels that he is closer than ever to madness: “I swear, Marian, I don’t understand what happened to me out there. Maybe I blacked out or went crazy or something. I don’t know—but I couldn’t control myself, I didn’t know what I was doing. Hell, it’s worse. I did know, and I couldn’t stop myself. That’s the most frightening part of it.” (Marasco 103) This nightmare is used as a way to weaken Ben mentally, driving him to be paralyzed facing any serious situation. The example of

Aunt Elizabeth's last scene shows the power of this nightmare over Ben's mind and sanity. Ben hears the sound of a car's engine and sees the chauffeur approaching the dying Aunt Elizabeth's bed. Even though he is not sure if he is hallucinating or not, Ben is too scared to react and to save his aunt. With the death of Aunt Elizabeth and Ben's mental collapse, the house is revitalized, becoming brighter and newer than ever.

The Long Island mansion is presented from the outset as a nightmarish place since it feeds Marian's obsessions and desires in order to manipulate her easily. In order to estrange her from her family, the house uses fancy expensive antiques to keep Marian under control. Gradually, Marian's admiration turns into a mania. She starts to spend more time in Mrs. Allardyce's room, to eat her food and wear her clothes. Unlike other characters, Marian's end is more tragic. She gets to be subsumed by the house as she starts to take after physically to Mrs. Allardyce, the house's *raison d'être*. At the end of the novel, all the Rolfes, except for Marian, were photographed with the "same blank and lifeless stare" (Marasco 215), announcing their death. Whereas Marian becomes the new parasite, waiting for new victims to be regenerated again.

In the three novels under study, the image of the haunted house as a frightful, threatening space is presented following a similar pattern. In *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, Dale Bailey limns a conventional structure composed of four parts, outlined after a thorough study of the common formula present in haunted house tales.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Figure 1</b> <b>Formula for the Haunted House Tale</b></p>	
<b>Setting:</b>	<p>a house</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. with an unsavory history</li> <li>2. with an aristocratic name</li> <li>3. disturbed by supernatural events usually unrelated to human ghosts</li> </ol>
<b>Characters:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. a middle-class family or family surrogate, skeptical of the supernatural, who move into the house</li> <li>2. knowledgeable helpers who believe in the supernatural</li> <li>3. an oracular observer who warns of danger</li> </ol>
<b>Plot:</b>	<p>dual structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. an escalating series of supernatural events which isolates the family physically and psychologically</li> <li>2. the discovery of provenance for those events</li> </ol> <p>climax:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the escape of the family and the destruction of the house</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the escape of the family and the continued existence of the house</li> <li>2. a twist ending which establishes the recurring nature of evil</li> </ol>
<b>Themes:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. class and gender conflict</li> <li>2. economic hardship</li> <li>3. consequences of the past (especially unpunished crimes)</li> <li>4. Manichean clash of good and evil</li> <li>5. clash of scientific and supernatural world views</li> <li>6. cyclical nature of evil</li> </ol>

**Fig.4.** Bailey, Dale. "Formula for the Haunted House Tale." *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, 1999, p.56.

The haunted house in the three novels shares the same characteristics. Evidently, being the core of the Gothic tale, Hill House, Belasco House and Long Island mansion are not simply urban haunted settings but main characters. The haunting transcends the presence of ghosts or any supernatural element. The settings are threatening spaces as they are haunted by the memories, phobias and traumas of their inhabitants. Exploring these settings cannot simply be equated with exploring the spatial dimension, but can be seen a psychological experiment where characters face their own fears, dreams and a repressed part of themselves. The climax can be identified as characters acknowledge being under the house's gaze and manipulation. The seer becomes the seen and the haunted house turns from a dream place to a locus horridus, an untamed place of desolation and an apocalyptic infernal locus where characters are consumed physically and mentally.



### 3.3 The haunted house as a map of female trauma

Despite their numerous differences, Hill House, Hell House and Long Island mansion share an illuminating resemblance. The haunted settings are all explored principally by female protagonists. The relationship between the haunted space and the female characters is not a new motif as it has been graciously examined in numerous works on the Gothic genre (I can mention the example of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*). Yet, in the three novels under study, the authors take this relation one step further, by focusing on the haunted house not simply as an antagonist force but also as a physical manifestation of female trauma. This relation is underlined within a study of the way female protagonists investigate and confront the haunted house. Critics tend to examine this relation within the context of domesticity as they point out that the haunted house presents the domestic tyranny under which women are oppressed and h(a)unted. Domesticity can be studied as a starting common point between the three novels as the female protagonists; Eleanor, Florence and Marian seem to be confined to social norms of the domestic ideology. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor is inescapably dependant on family. She is in a ceaseless, constant research for kinship and familial assurance. The growth of her adult self is impeded by the presence of her mother (despite her physical death). Eleanor, feeling adrift and homeless, tries to make Hill House an effective alternative to her deceased mother, leading to the fantasy of a perfect, harmonious domesticity. This idea is further studied by Tricia Lootens in her article "'Whose Hand Was I Holding?': Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*" as she points out that Jackson creates "a house that entraps its inhabitants with fantasies of domestic bliss even as it forces them to recognize such fantasies as delusions" (155). The picnic scene can be used as an example to illustrate this domestic fantasy. Exploring the house with Theodora, Eleanor visualizes what seems to be a family picnic in a colourful idyllic landscape. Her phantasm echoes her own mythical perception of domesticity: a harmonious

couple and happy children playing around under their parents' gaze. Eleanor is deprived of a protective and loving family nest during her childhood as her father dies when she was a child. Moreover, she grows up in the presence of her domineering mother and callous sister. She is haunted by the image of the bad mother: "her years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair" (Jackson 6). The image is further highlighted as Eleanor mentions that she never enjoyed eating in her mother's kitchen: "In my mother's house the kitchen was dark and narrow, and nothing you cooked there ever had any taste or color." (Jackson 111) Eleanor was never able to overcome the lack of physical and emotional nurturance. Her unquenchable thirst for love drives her to search for a home in an unhomely haunted space like Hill House. The motif of Gothicized domesticity with the image of failed mothers and decayed homes can be traced, from a male's point of view, in Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*. In this novel, the image of tyrannical male figure who oppressively manipulates female protagonists within the Gothic setting is deconstructed and replaced by female tyranny. The Long Island mansion (it is also referred to as Mrs. Allardyce's mansion) is presented from the beginning of the novel as a flawless dream house for Marian. She soon becomes unconsciously submerged by her domestic role, spending the day long taking care of the house, neglecting her fundamental role as a wife and a mother. Noticing the absence of his wife, Ben starts to replace her in every familial time, spending more time with his child and aunt. The dream summer house becomes a locus horridus since it transforms Marian into an absent failed mother and since the Rolfes' union becomes loose. Unlike the classical haunted houses, the Long Island mansion is not identified with the male figure. It is strictly presented as one and the same as Mrs. Allardyce:

"This house is just about all the world she knows. It's her life."

"And vice versa," Brother said. "The whole thing would just come down without her." (Marasco 48)

The initial description by Roz and Brother, the landlords, shows a sense of exaggerated patriotism, insisting on the importance of being loyal to their mother and to the house: "Love it, the way Brother and I live it." (Marasco 40) The house's manipulative strategy seems to be different from Hill House and Hell House. It starts immediately to give what Marian longs for. Whenever Marian gives the care that the house needs, it gives her back different expensive furniture and decorations. The house becomes quickly able to manipulate Marian's interest inasmuch as it realizes her dream of owning such a mansion. Yet, she does not realize that she is gradually losing her family by being alienated, physically and mentally from her family. Marian remodels unconsciously the definition of domesticity, becoming synonymous with taking care solely of the house and of the absent Mrs. Allardyce. The house's violence is deeper and more dangerous than the sexual violence of Hell House or Hill House's revival of psychological trauma. The house's manipulation is a long, piecemeal approach in which all characters were the elixir of youth thanks to which the house rejuvenates its structure. Marian becomes at the end of the novel the new Mrs. Allardyce, fully assimilated in the house, showing how her obsessive domestic dream has become her nightmare, leading to the destruction of her family.

The female exploration of the haunted setting can be also studied in relation to Edmund Burke's perception of *Sublime*. The term *Peri hypsous (or on the sublime)* is initially coined by the Greek rhetorician Longinus. In his essay, addressed to a Roman figure named Terentianus, he treats *Sublime* as a literary and linguistic phenomenon, pointing out that it "consists in a certain loftiness and excellence of language". He compares *Sublime* to a lightning bolt to illustrate the uniqueness of the reader's experience of pleasure and ecstasy originated from the power of the language. Longinus goes further by contrasting it with rhetoric which is according to him, slow and premeditated. In this essay, Longinus identifies different features and sources of *Sublime* (five different sources) but the critical ingredient without which things will be ornate is ultimately passion. Longinus's work was inspirational for different authors, notably

when it was rediscovered in the Renaissance period. In 1674, the French critic Nicolas Boileau introduced Longinus to the European public as he translated it into French. In 1757, believing that Longinus's ideas were not well developed, since there is no clear separation between beauty and sublime, Edmund Burke wrote a work entitled *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. He defines the term "sublime" as an experience of terror and amazement, a form of astonishment: "[...] and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror" (53). In this context, Burke uses an image, previously used by Longinus, as he refers to the Latin origins of 'astonish' and which means thunderstruck. To better illustrate the concept, he highlights that *Sublime* and *Beauty* are two different experiences. While *beauty* is a social experience, based on pleasure, *sublime* is about self-preservation. It is about danger, pain and fear (34). Moreover, Burke's work on *Sublime* develops its defining features that include, among others, terror and fear, power, and darkness or obscurity. Even though Burke's perception of *Sublime* is applicable in the corpus, the exclusive detailed description of physical and psychological suffering and agony makes Matheson's *Hell House* a fertile ground to study the Burkean *Sublime*. The novel is exclusively overloaded with explicit scenes of sexual violence. While it may seem classical from a Gothic point of view since heroines endure constant threats of rape and sexual abuse like a form of domination, the numerous episodes of sexual scenes may also be explained as the author's strategic way to convey the paradoxically overwhelming and delightful sublime haunted house. The first feature of *Sublime* is introduced in the first pages as soon as Belasco's house is described. A massive setting manipulated by a dark powerful entity that remains undefeated against all different attempts to unveil its secret. Exploring the house with the other characters, Florence Tanner experiences exclusively physical and psychological terror. She soon realizes that the house's vast, imposing architecture is not its only power. It is in fact the house's unpredictability. The more unpredictable Hell House is,

the more arbitrary and the scarier it becomes. Florence undergoes different mind tricks as she tries, throughout the novel, to save Daniel, a lost soul that pretends to be Belasco's son. She starts to fall in love with this present absent character, getting closer to him physically. Yet, she discovers at the end of the novel, that Daniel does not exist and that all that she experiences was a replay of a television show she played once. Matheson highlights the nightmarish reality of Hell House through the detailed description of sexual violence on Florence and the obsessive attack on her neck and breast. The novel unveils a mutual exploration: Florence explores the house as a medium, searching the truth and a possibility of exorcism, while the organic haunted house, exercises its male gaze and explores Florence's body through multiple sexual hauntings. This mutual exploration echoes the Burkean way to genderize sublime and beautiful; the former as masculine and the latter being feminine. Through the example of the female body, Burke points out that sublime can be reached by experiencing the beautiful and vice versa:

Observe that part of a beautiful woman where she is perhaps the most beautiful, about the neck and breasts; the smoothness; the softness; the easy and insensible swell; the variety of the surface, which is never for the smallest space the same; the deceitful maze, through which the unsteady eye slides giddily, without knowing where to fix, or whither it is carried. (105)

Here, Burke highlights the way the female body can be a source of sublime by being a source of disorientation. In *Hell House*, Florence uses, from the beginning of her adventure, her body as a way to communicate with the house, which foreshadows that she will be h(a)unted differently. She is, in fact, the only character who is sexually abused several times by Belasco. Florence's haunting scenes and her death scene were all centred around the sadistic, butcherly nature of Hell House. Before her death and as she becomes close to unmask the truth of Belasco, Florence starts to conjure up violent scenes between men and women, who apparently were victims of Belasco's experience of excessiveness:

She stopped, hitched back. Two figures sprawled across the steps below, a man and woman. The man was plunging a knife into the woman's throat. He started sawing at the jagged wound, blood spouting, splashing on his twisted, gleeful face. He was cutting off the woman's head. Florence jammed her fist into her mouth and bit down, stiffening at the burst of pain. The man and woman vanished. (Matheson 243-4)

The feminine body, supposedly a symbol of the beautiful, becomes here a means to produce the sublime effect. Matheson focuses on Belasco's sadism and exorbitance from the beginning of the novel and points it up further through Florence's sexually violent end. Belasco succeeds in exploring Florence's body, and by distorting her body, he manages to destroy the only thing that can immobilize his phallogentric gaze and can cause sublime feeling.

All things considered, the haunted house in the three novels develops from a lifelong dream to a nightmarish experience that leads to the death of all the protagonists. Howbeit, the female exploration of the haunting space is presented differently. In Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*, exploring the haunted house means walking through the characters' traumas, fears, obsessions and what is unspeakable. It is a way to voice the usually unvoiced, forgotten side of these characters. It discloses the vulnerability of these characters in their domestic space. In *Hell House*, an opposition between the sublime and the beautiful is underlined. The author succeeds in showing both horror and terror as he depicts the atrocities of physical contact with the protagonist's source of fear and the power of imagination as Florence confuses reality and imagination, and since the possession story is questioned by the other characters prior to her tragic death. Similar to the other haunted settings, Hell House is firstly presented as an unmissable chance to realize personal dreams (for instance, Florence's dream to build a church on her property). Soon after, the characters realize that their dream opportunity is in fact nightmarish as the house proves itself to be a living psychological maze. The first haunting episodes, experienced by different characters and mainly by Florence Tanner, prove that the house is an organic element. This reflects Tony Magistrale's definition in his book entitled *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*, as he refers to the haunted houses as living entities as "In

most horror films and Gothic novels, the haunted house/ castle serves as a vehicle for the inner psychology of its inhabitants. The protagonists appear trapped within its recesses especially as the house “awakens” to assume an infernal biology of itself” (90). Throughout the haunting scenes, the house proves itself to be an apparatus of Belasco’s morbid psychology. The duality of presence and absence, experienced by all characters as Belasco is always felt but unseen, echoing thus his surveillance technique as used in the infamous experience and “study of evil” (Matheson 60).

## **PART 2**

### **THE METAPHORICAL ASPECTS OF THE PANOPTIC HAUNTED HOUSES**



## CHAPTER 1

### **The Haunted House: In between the Gothic traditions and the innovations of the twentieth century**

Prior to its first appearance as a literary movement, Gothicism marked English literature with multiple references to its defining features and characteristics. William Shakespeare used repeatedly some Gothic aspects at the level of plot and setting. In his tragedies, he uses references to the elements of the supernatural or to Gothic medieval decayed settings. In his canonical play *Macbeth*, Shakespeare illustrates a typical Gothic setting in which there is a gloomy medieval castle that epitomizes Macbeth's decay and fall into darkness. Besides, he refers to the witches' desert Heath, a setting that reflects horror and gloominess. In *Hamlet*, other than the ghostly appearance of Hamlet's father, the setting itself refers to the medieval age with its grotesque architecture. Even in Romantic tragedies like *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare did not hesitate to refer to dark vaults and graveyards. Actually, the literary and cultural presence of Gothicism did not start in a particular year or with a particular author. It traces back to the different folk tales in which supernatural elements and bleak settings are emphasized.

In the eighteenth century, and with Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*, Gothic literature was associated not only with the transgression of literary norms, but also with, as Dani Cavallaro mentions in his book *The Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear*, "an emphasis on irresolution, the suspension of principles of verisimilitude and its concomitant commitment to discourses of psychological and ideological transgression" (123). It stands as the extreme opposition to the norms of the age of Enlightenment and Neoclassicism, a period governed by logic and reason, correctness and accuracy. In this context, Gothic literature presents, as Fred Botting describes in his book *The Gothic*, "a writing of excess" (1) since it infringes the literary tradition of the era. In the

European context, the Gothic writings of Walpole, Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe and Mathew Lewis, subverted the classical writings of Neoclassicism by creating new themes and unique settings that challenge reason and sagacity. The setting in *The Castle of Otranto* forges the link between the medieval morbid architecture and horror conveyed by the author. In his book *The Gothic Tradition*, David Stevens stresses the idea that the sense of horror and “obscurity” lies in the intermingling of the setting and characters, in a way that setting morphs into character (55). He highlights the idea that Walpole “exaggerated his idea of himself by exaggerating his castle. The hero of his novel is the castle itself [...]The battlements, cloisters, galleries, dungeons, underground vaults and trapdoors of Otranto provide the heroics” (55). Walpole relates his presentation of the castle to the medieval edifices, in which a ruined bleak castle with labyrinthine passages accentuates the atmosphere of gloominess and lost.

The castle of Otranto presents a genuine setting resulting from Walpole’s wild imagination; it was inspired from a nightmare he experienced in his Gothic-style estate named Strawberry Hill which became strictly associated with Gothic architectural conventions. The Gothic architecture transcended the literary vision of Walpole to become a widespread model that inspired others like the English novelist William Thomas Beckford whose Fonthill Abbey presented another Gothic reference with a grotesque design that conveyed the Sublime. In fact, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Gothic designs were revived in different buildings across Europe. Castles, churches and even institutional buildings like Westminster Abbey in England, had Gothic architecture with a medieval design: an ornamental style with outstandingly high windows, sharp arches and vaults. This picturesque sublime architecture invaded the United States only in the mid nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This architectural movement was concentrated on churches like the Cathedral Church of St John the Divine in New York. The adoption of the medieval Gothic architecture presented a concretization of wild architectural fantasies: sublime grotesque designs that mingled melancholy and gloominess.

Walpole paved the way for the eminent authors to come by creating one of the basic formulas of Gothic literature, which presents a balanced equation of gigantic crumbling settings and a sophisticated presentation of the supernatural. This formula was adapted by other authors not only in England but also in the United States.

### **1.1 Haunted houses as decayed settings: the importance of architecture in enhancing horror**

The Gothic setting is presented generally to convey the *outcastness* and wildness (through the image of remote pathless areas) that characterize that literature. The architectural revival of the medieval designs was a reaction to the intellectual classicism that pervaded the era. The beauty of the setting lied in its secludedness and decay. In the early Gothic writings, medieval architecture was emphasized to enhance the characters' horror. With a grotesque design and an extravagant presentation, the haunted setting (generally a castle) is a horror trigger as it highlights terror and uncanniness, which disturbs further the different characters. The major examples of these haunted settings can be found in the early works of the English Gothic fictions, notably the writings of Matthew Lewis, Clara Reeves and Mary Shelley. In the American context, the Gothic setting is far away from being simply a medieval haunted castle. It connotes the history and society, highlighting its geographical immensity and showing the effects of the puritan traditions. In the early American Gothic literature, the haunted setting reflects the historical and social context of the eighteenth century. In the USA, the early Gothic writings started with Washington Irving, who used the basic elements of Gothic literature in his masterpiece tale "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"<sup>20</sup> (1820). This reaction to the prevalent literary movement is upheld by the use of supernatural elements like monsters, ghosts evil aristocratic characters, damsels in distress. But, above all, the uncanny setting highlights

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<sup>20</sup> Within the framework of a literary overview about the development of the motif of haunted house, Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" comes as an example that depicts the context of early colonial era, as events take place in 1790, just after the American Revolution.

the Gothic world of gloominess and mystery that may reflect in fact the hidden side of eighteenth-century America. In the context of building up a national and a literary American identity, Irving tries to convey the Americanness of his writings by using allegedly typical American Gothic settings inspired from the wilderness. In “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, the setting mirrors America’s vastness and mystery. Tarry Town is hard to present since, as America, it hides under its peaceful, beautiful raw natural landscape, a gloomy atmosphere haunted by its dark history. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the Gothic setting changed drastically to convey different themes and symbols. The source of horror transcended the decayed setting to convey wider architectural dimensions and psychological references. Washington Irving’s tale presents one of the early American Gothic writings in which the haunted setting (Tarry Town in this case) reflects the American wilderness and the frontier anxiety. Tarry Town presents a perfect example of a Gothic setting that connotes the idea of the Freudian *uncanny*. The uncanniness of the setting lies in the fact that it geographically presents the new, revolutionary America; a free, fresh and raw land that is characterized by its history of settlement. However, the same familiar setting encompasses a power of haunting the mind of its visitors and locals, by blurring the fine line between reality and imagination. The setting presents at the same time a familiar and unfamiliar place as it is a homely space for the protagonist Ichabod Crane and at the same time a source of constant horror and uneasiness. Another example can be found in Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798) in which the setting’s wilderness was emphasized to present, along with other elements, the source of horror in the novel.

The Gothic movement witnessed drastic changes during the nineteenth century with the rise of the Poean Gothic. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) started from the basis of the early Gothic writings by refashioning the basic elements of the eighteenth century, using the same concepts of gloom, darkness, decay and exaggerated emotions. Poe’s originality lies in

his choice to urbanize the Gothic setting. In his book *Gothic*, Fred Botting explores the remarkable role of Poe in shaping the American Gothic:

The various devices, styles and subjects that Poe uses and transforms influence all of subsequent Gothic writing: the doubles, mirrors and the concern with modes of representation; the scientific transgressions of accepted limits; the play of internal and external narrations, of uncertain psychological states and uncanny events; and the location of mysteries in a criminal world to be penetrated by the incisive reason of a new hero, the detective, have become staples of the Gothic. (80)

Botting points out that Poe's urbanization of setting is a real about-face, as "Domestic, industrial and urban contexts and aberrant individuals provided the loci for mystery and terror" (81). This choice is directly related to his own vision of the sublime, derived from Edmund Burke's *Sublime* since Poe "skillfully exploited the visual attributes of the sublime as set forth by Burke and others. The *sublime*, as he often insisted, was not opposed to, but rather a part of the *beautiful*" (424) as mentioned by Fredrick Burwick in his article "Edgar Allan Poe: The Sublime, the Picturesque, the Grotesque, and the Arabesque". Burke defines in the preface of his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) the sublime as the experience of terror and amazement, delineated as "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger" (34). Accordingly, ugliness, the dark, gloomy and grotesque elements are all sources of the sublime. This vision of the sublime inspired Poe to create a new formula of the haunted house story, one that is based upon a contrast between the homely domestic space that presents a shelter and the terror that holds it. To convey his own refashioned concept of the "sublime", Poe built a vague description of the Gothic, stressing on its unkemptness and decay rather than its detailed medieval architecture. By doing so, Poe aimed to intermingle the Gothic setting, as a sublime object of terror, pain and beauty, and the characters' experience of horror. In his 1839 tale "The Fall of the House of Usher", Poe presented a parallel description of the Gothic house along with the narrator's reactions and feelings. He focused mainly on the architectural decadence as a source of a later horror as

the ruined building is in fact a holder of horror that overwhelmed the different characters:

I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. (22)

Hence, Poe manipulated the description of the Gothic setting to relate it to the different events: the climax or even the denouement of the story. In the example mentioned above, the description of the Ushers' mansion and the repetitive focus on its degeneration plays a predictive role as it foreshadows its denouement with the simultaneous collapse of the house and its inhabitants.

Furthermore, Poe plays an important role in highlighting the role of the Gothic setting by studying a new level of the haunted house away from the medieval architecture. In numerous short stories like *Ligeia* (1838) and *Morella* (1835), Poe focused on a small, particular space rather than a mansion. In *Ligeia*, for example, he focuses on the bridal room, an uncanny space par excellence. The settings' description is based upon its archaic, antique elements as it includes strange things for a bridal chamber: "a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor" (84). This detailed description that focuses on the interior design of the setting enhances the claustrophobic, suffocating atmosphere, accentuating its gloomy aura. Poe's descriptive style of the sublime Gothic setting was not systematically presented in a similar way throughout his short stories. He showed the complexity of his aesthetic theory by developing further his unique vision of the Gothic setting. He adapted the quintessential element of the grotesque massive Gothic setting with the medieval, cathedral-like architecture to his own era to make the horror prevalent and more authentic. He urbanized the setting, by making it more realistic, highlighting the ubiquity of horror. This vision of horror can be found in the 1990s movies that adapted and rewrote the idea of anxiety as a feeling of

tension and as a response to a danger that occupies a space without the ability to detect or to locate its source. I can mention the climactic scene of *Silence of the Lambs*, in which Clarisse, the young FBI trainee, confronts Buffalo Bill, a psychopath serial killer, in a completely dark place. The scene illustrates the idea of anxiety and the prevailed horror as it features Clarisse, presented as the hunter of Bill throughout the movie, haunted by the serial killer, who used night goggles to see every move she does. Through the male viewpoint, we can see Clarisse entrapped, clinging with one hand to her weapon and sensing with trembling left hand the wall. we can see and feel her scare through her heavy breath and agitated movements.

Yet, despite his realization that architecture was an important element for enhancing horror, Poe thought that there was another element that was equally important to guarantee apprehension and horror. The Poean formula necessitates along with architecture, a stress on the psychology and on the dismal atmosphere, since he believes that “words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality” (105). This new vision of horror as both physical and mental presents for the upcoming generation of authors the first step to go beyond architectural characteristics.

## **1.2. Haunted houses in the twentieth century: the era of transcending the architectural dimensions**

If *The Castle of Otranto* was considered as the urtext of the Gothic genre, Edgar Allan Poe is the godfather of twentieth century American Gothicism. His formula of a haunted house in an urbanized location and an apocalyptic sublime<sup>21</sup> inspires the generation of twentieth century Gothic writers to create a modern setting that reflects the horrors of modern man and mirrors the social, economic and political anxieties of the era. The century was marked by the

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<sup>21</sup> Poe presented his vision of apocalyptic sublime in many tales; among them I can mention “The Masque of Red Death” that is overloaded by biblical apocalyptic images. I can also mention “The Fall of the House of Usher”, relying on Jonathan Cook’s article “Poe and the Apocalyptic Sublime: The Fall of the House of Usher”. Cook asserts that Poe’s tale is filled with biblical apocalyptic images, mentioning the ending as an example: “If Burke’s

rise of the motif of the new haunted house; a modern setting that gathers the haunting unavoidable dark past memories and the social, moral and political decay of the society. In this context, the Southern Gothic presents an example of a new form of Gothicism that stands for a bridge between the old basic school of British Gothic and Poean formula and the new form that reflects modern decay and despair. The Southern Gothic is a subgenre of the American Gothicism. Yet, it is a continuation of the developing genre. It can be considered as “regional” since it focuses solely on the southern part of the United States but it still mirrors the national problems of race, sexuality, gender and social classes. One of the authors whose masterpieces were affected by the Poean influence and who pictured Southern horror is William Faulkner (1897-1962). The Gothic setting in Faulkner’s novels is presented in two levels: the fictional setting of Yoknapatawpha and the haunted plantation house.

Yoknapatawpha or as Faulkner refers to it “my apocryphal county” presents an omnipresent setting in all his major novels, in which he tries to lend verisimilitude to his imaginary place. Yoknapatawpha presents a Gothic setting as it is a rural place in which gloominess and horror are omnipresent. It presents the American South in miniature with all its complex social problems and the heavy legacy of the Civil War. The county symbolizes the South, a land of split, social and moral degradation, a land haunted and tortured by the ghosts of its past of slavery and racism. Within this general context of eeriness, Faulkner highlights the Gothic aspects of his novel *Absalom, Absalom!* through the recurrent motif of the haunted house. He replaces the medieval architecture that characterized British Gothicism with a typical Southern plantation house, haunted not by real phantoms but by past sins (Sutpen’s house is haunted by the sins of its owner Thomas Sutpen, whose sexual adventures and racist attitudes led to the death of all his offspring and to the downfall of his dynasty). Faulkner’s haunted

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ideas of the sublime provide "Usher" with a gallery of affects and events that crescendo at the conclusion to the story, its plot and symbolism also rely on a number of traditional apocalyptic motifs. Thus, the final extermination of both house and genealogical line of Ushers evokes the Day of Wrath imagined by the Old Testament prophets and enacted in the book of Revelation [...]” (10).



house presents as Carol Margaret Davidson mentions in her essay “Southern Gothic: Haunted Houses”, “[an] anthropomorphised [space], effectively assuming a life of its own in the form of sentience and agency” (*The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*, 55). It presents the typical uncanny plantation house, haunted by the undead history of ancestral sins, incest and violence (Charles’s murder at the gate of Sutpen’s house). Hence, instead of being a familiar site that symbolizes Southern wealth and richness, it is rather transformed into a dilapidated, razed setting ruined by the pressures of the antebellum South and the madness of its elite. This pattern was generally presented in almost all Faulkner’s novels, notably *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), *Light in August* (1932) and *Sanctuary* (1931). In his novel *Absalom, Absalom!* the setting is a classical Southern plantation house, a symbol not only of richness and aristocracy but also of bloodiness and suffering. In this novel, Faulkner tries to be faithful to the milestones of the Gothic genre by focusing on the ancestral sins as the horror trigger, a pattern that might remind the reader of Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*. However, he focuses on the setting as the true incarnation of horror; a prison like plantation house that uses the different social horrors of the antebellum South to haunt the protagonist Thomas Sutpen, who incarnates perfectly the deadly sins, ending up with a cataclysmal ending. The final scene in which the plantation house was completely burned and demolished can be seen as a reference to the decay of the postbellum South, wrecked by its heavy long history of inhuman treatment of blacks, racism, slavery, rape and theft. Faulkner’s representation of the South as an uncanny setting, a battlefield in which the present is challenged by the bloody past, can be illustrated further by *Sanctuary*. In this 1931 novel, the focus is from the opening descriptive passage on the decayed situation of the setting, with an emphasis on its historicity. The house was firstly described as

The house was a gutted ruin rising gaunt and stark out of a grove of unpruned cedar trees. It was a landmark, known as the Old Frenchman place, built before the Civil War; a plantation house set in the middle of a tract of land; of cotton fields and gardens and lawns long since gone back to jungle, which the people of the neighborhood had been pulling down piecemeal for firewood for fifty years or digging with secret and sporadic optimism for the gold which the builder was reputed to have buried somewhere about the place when Grant came through the county on his Vicksburg campaign. (8)

The above description of the Gothic house echoes perfectly the South with its alleged long history of glory, tainted by violence and slavery. Faulkner aims to create a typically American, Southern setting in which horror rises from the shockingly uncanny encounter between the past and the present. By doing so, he aims to transcend the formula of the haunted house to mirror the Southern society with all its contradictions.

With the Southern Gothic as an example, the twentieth century American Gothicism reaches another level of complexity as the horror expressed becomes more emphasized, intrinsic and unavoidable as it is originated from the social, economic and political milieu. The haunted settings become reflective of the characters' mindset and of the collapse of the social norms of the era. The classical focus on Gothic medieval architecture is transcended as there is an attempt to interiorize the horror through the use of common settings with an ordinary architecture. The haunted house becomes the center of the new formula, empowered by its strong thematic importance. In the twentieth century Gothic, haunted houses transcended the clichés that have been imposed for two centuries to be a major, active element in the rise of the prevalent horror. As Dale Bailey suggests in his book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction* (1999), "the contemporary haunted house rarely serves to contain the unquiet spirits of past human inhabitants. Rather, taking a cue from Poe, the house itself usually takes on an actively antagonistic role, to which any apparitions, if they exist at all, become subordinate" (58). This 'antagonistic' nature is presented mainly in the preeminent writings of the era and can be found for instance in the works of Stephen King. The new formula becomes based upon a haunted house as a battlefield where the different social and political backgrounds and thoughts are represented, clash against each other to be finally re-united against the common, invisible enemy.

### 1.2.1. Hill House: The avatar of the *Unheimlich*

Shirley Jackson is one of the most influential American authors whose Gothic writings inspired and influenced well-known authors like Stephen King and Richard Matheson. Her writings are often described as a balance equation of morbid, typically Gothic and horrific atmosphere and woman's fiction which was defined by Alfred Kazin, in his book *Bright Book of Life: American Novelists and Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer*, as "inordinate defensiveness against a society conceived as the special enemy of the sensitive" (174). The Jacksonian protagonists are generally female characters through whom Shirley Jackson was able to record and present female distress, depression, deception and defenselessness. She aims to explore the female world that was aggressively violated in the modern age. Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) was not an exception. Besides being a Gothic story par excellence, it draws the map of the female psyche in different instances and through different symbols. Generally, the reviews concentrated on the symbolism of the different female characters and their relationships with the patriarchal oppressive figures. Jackson's novel revolves around a scientific experiment led by Dr. Montague who chose to be accompanied by three people who lived a psychic experience: Luke, the heir of Hill House, Eleanor, the most vulnerable fragile character, and Theodora, the exuberant cheerful lady with telepathic powers. Jackson's novel sheds the ink of critics who studied thoroughly the character of Eleanor Vance and her relationship with other female characters (Theodora in particular) and with the house itself. In her article "*Whose Hand Was I Holding?*": *Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's The Haunting of Hill House*", Tricia Lootens studies the house's architecture as a microcosm of Eleanor's parental world, with a matriarchal power. She finds out that the house presents not only a "womb", a protective shell in which Eleanor found her familial love and settlement but also a "tomb" of her dreams (158). Lootens studies further the different erotic instances between Eleanor and Theodora and

the way the house alienates each character generally and Eleanor, the most vulnerable one, particularly to believe to be vital for the house (151). Based upon Lootens' criticism, this part aims to study the Hill House as a manifestation of the unhomely home, using the Freudian theory of the uncanny and Gaston Bachelard's concept of homely space. It aims also to prove that the house does not simply symbolize the power of motherhood, as Lootens showed in her article, but it is in fact a castrating mother<sup>22</sup> whose oppression leads to Eleanor's controversial death.

### **1.2.1.1. The uncanny in Sigmund Freud's theory**

Undoubtedly, *The Haunting of Hill House* contains different uncanny elements related to the events, the characters and their relationship with each other, and most importantly the house itself. The concept of *uncanniness* and its psychological denotation is strictly related to Sigmund Freud and his famous linguistic explanation of "heimlich" vs "unheimlich". However, Prior to Freud, uncanniness was first explored by Ernst Jentsch, a German psychiatrist who strongly influenced Freud. In his 1906 essay "On the Psychology of the Uncanny", Jentsch relies on literature generally and notably on E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman* to study and decorticate its uncanny elements. He studies the relationship between the main characters Nathaniel and Olympia, the automaton as an example of uncanniness resulted in a state of uncertainty. Jentsch studies the uncanny in relation to the binary opposition between what is new/ unfamiliar and old / familiar. However, in a certain situation where there is an interrelationship between new and old, familiar and unfamiliar, a feeling of undecision and ambiguity, related to the uncanny is raised up (4-5). Jentsch's definition of the uncanny is based

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<sup>22</sup> Within the context of psychoanalytical account of castration complex, Sigmund Freud points out that children consider women's genitals as terrifying since they appear castrated, enhancing the fear of being castrated (castration anxiety). Within this framework, the concept of castrating mother/ woman appears as a form of female monstrosity. It reflects the image of a strong woman with a devouring, withering force, under which the child feels psychological and even physical threat. This mother, as Nancy Chodorow mentions in her article "Freud on Women", "is not herself castrated, she castrates, or threatens to castrate, both her son and her daughter" (242). Accordingly, Eleanor's desire to find and merge with her mother is mainly driven by her fear to be castrated and not by daughter/mother love.

upon the experience of hesitancy achieved through the confusion between animation and inanimation. To explain this, he studies the example of Olympia in Hoffman's *The Sandman* as an ambiguous character whose nature is not clear; is it a real person or a lifeless machine?

This technique presents:

one of the most reliable artistic devices for producing uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has a human person or rather an automaton before him in the case of a particular character. This is done in such a way that the uncertainty does not appear directly at the focal point of his attention, so that he is not given the occasion to investigate and clarify the matter straight away; for the particular emotional effect, as we said, would hereby be quickly dissipated. In his works of fantasy, E. T. A. Hoffmann has repeatedly made use of this psychological artifice with success (11).

In 1919, Freud started from Jentsch's study of the uncanny to examine it further, believing that the concept is far from being simple. In his essay "*The Uncanny*", Freud studied the concept from different perspectives; linguistic, literary, cultural and psychoanalytical. He started his essay by stating that the uncanny as a concept is not merely psychoanalytical but is generally aesthetic as it is related to feelings and emotions. It belongs to "all that arouses dread and creeping horror" (1). To define the uncanny, Freud started by an etymological study of the word, referring to its core in German language "*heim*". With the prefix "-Un" the German word *unheimlich* comes as the opposite of the adjective *heimlich*. However, what seems to be interestingly complex is the amphibology of the adjective *Heimlich*, which means both the intimate and familiar and the hidden and secret. He goes further by referring to *heimlich* as private / recognizable and *unheimlich* as exposed / eerie. Accordingly, the term *unheimlich* presents "in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich* since its meaning as strange or unfamiliar corresponds in fact to the exposition of what is *heimlich* or hidden from others and from self. By decorticating the uncanny in this way, Freud transcends Jentsch's simple pattern of familiar vs unfamiliar to refer to the *unheimlich* as the return of the familiar repressed, i.e., the emergence of the familiar, preserved in the unconscious (13). This theory approves, in fact, a prior definition of *unheimlich*, highlighted by Schelling who referred to as

“[everything] that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light” (4). To clarify his approach, Freud analyzed thoroughly E. T.A Hoffman’s *The Sandman*. He stated that the concept of the uncanny transcends Jentsch’s idea of the experience of uncertainty vis à vis inanimate vs animate. Freud believes that the uncanny kernel of Hoffman’s text is in fact the figure of the sandman himself. The sandman presents a recurrent motif in Nathaniel’s childhood memories and in his present. It is in fact a mythical figure that revives the protagonist’s phobia. During his childhood, Nathaniel firstly discovered the myth of the sandman, when his nurse warns him that he is a sinister figure who tears out children’s eyes. Nathaniel related the myth of the sandman with his father’s associate Coppelius who tried to burn the protagonist’s eyes when he was discovered observing the different secret experiments conducted by his father and his associate. The motif of the sandman was revived through the character of Coppola whose fight with Spallanzani over Olympia’s body and eyes reawakens Nathaniel’s infantile fear of the figure and leads him to a state of madness. Freud stressed the idea that the uncanny is related to the idea of losing one’s eyes. He stated that "A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration" (7). Hence, the uncanny presents in fact the return of the repressed infantile anxieties and complexes. The uncanny in Hoffman’s *The Sandman* is resulted from the recurrence of Nathaniel’s forgotten and repressed fear of ripped out eyes. It serves in fact as a reminder of Nathaniel’s psychic past.

In Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, the Freudian concept of the uncanny can be studied through the character of Eleanor Vance. The character of Eleanor is firstly described as a complex character, socially alienated and psychologically unstable. The author did not describe her physically, morally or even socially. She rather focused on her strong antagonistic feelings towards her disabled mother which leads her to feel constantly rejected. The author’s detailed description of Eleanor’s relation with her family members generally and

her mother mainly, shows that her character is far from being flat. She is a mélange of hatred and longing for love, a complex character that hides different repressed memories and fears. Eleanor's acceptance to lead such a mysterious adventure in a haunted house presents a way to start a new, fresh life away from the burden of taking care of her mother and away from her imperious sister who tries to control every aspect of her life. However, what Eleanor thought to be a clean slate was in fact a return of the repressed memories. The novel's protagonist, Eleanor Vance is presented from the beginning as an enigma. She is a character who carries numerous mysteries that are going to be sources of the different uncanny scenes as the novel develops. She, as Darryl Hattenhauer mentions in his book *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic* (2003), "has lost her early adulthood and the chance of a career and permanent home while her older sister escaped caring for the mother and started her own family" (157). Eleanor's caring for her mother for long years left her with an "inability to face strong sunlight without blinking" (Jackson 6), and an immense longing for freedom and independence. The unusual adventure in Hill House is considered as a new start as she can finally enjoy herself away from the burdens of the past. However, Hill House revives all Eleanor's repressed memories, desires and fears.

Hill House presents an example of the Freudian concept of the "uncanny" as it is described in different instances as a mother figure. In the second chapter of the novel, and contrary to her enthusiasm to discover the Hill House, Eleanor felt an inexplicable fear and coldness as she entered the house. She pondered that she "like a small creature swallowed whole by a monster, [...] and the monster feels [her] tiny little movements inside" (Jackson 42). This spontaneous reaction unveils a complicated image of the house as a massive abhorrent womb in which Eleanor felt imprisoned and even devoured. This simile can be studied as a metaphor of the matriarchal oppression that Eleanor internalized throughout years. In fact, in her article "Whose Hand Was I Holding?: Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*", Tricia Lootens points out that the House's

vastness, gloominess and creepy silence overwhelm her as she feels trapped in a dark void that is similar to the female uterus, and re-enchained by the surveillance of the female figure (173). It shows the duality of inside/outside as Eleanor felt submersed and at the same time disintegrated from the familiar foreign space. Eleanor's reaction to the presence of Mrs. Dudley and Theodora, saying "thank heaven somebody's here" (Jackson 42), shows that she was terrified by the idea of facing alone the mother-house. The momentary solitude that she experienced drives her to think that she is going to revive her traumatic moments of solitude, facing her castrating mother. However, the presence of other characters provides a great relief. The idea of the Hill House as a reflection of motherhood can be further traced throughout the novel through the lexical field of motherhood with a recurrent use of words like "mother, headmistress, housemistress, mom ". Besides, Luke Sanderson, one member of Dr. Montague's group, described the house and its furniture, in several occasions as a tender, feminine place that is "all motherly [...]. Everything so soft [...] and hands everywhere [...] curving out to you, beckoning "(Jackson 209). Luke describes the house's furniture as both "embracing" and "unwelcome"; a dichotomy that reflects the uncanniness of the house that is at the same time warm and familiar as a mother figure, cold and potentially dangerous as a foreigner can be.

As mentioned above, Jentsch's uncanny includes the idea of confusion and uncertainty. Accordingly, Hill House's uncanniness can be related to its architectural distortion, something that leads to an incoherent, rambling "sense of balance" (Jackson 107). Describing the house, the characters focus on its design, using a vocabulary like "peculiar, crazy, distortion, misdirection". The architectural eccentricity of the Hill House lies in the fact that "every angle is lightly wrong. Angles which you assume are the right angles [...], are actually a fraction of a degree off in one direction or another " (Jackson 105). This erratic design leads the characters to experience a deeper uncanniness as they live in a constant hesitancy between what is real and what is imaginary, what is visible and what is



unseen. Thus, the setting presents an unhomely uncanny space from both inside and outside. Furthermore, using the Freudian perspective of the uncanny, the association of the house with the figure of the mother presents a concretisation of what Freud considers as the return of the repressed as the setting is transformed into a battlefield between the hidden and the exposed memories of Eleanor. This idea can be further explored, relying on the Bachelardian definition of home since the Hill House can be considered as the obverse of what Bachelard defines as a shelter.

### **1.2.1.2. The notion of house in Bachelard's theory**

As it is well-known, Bachelard studies space from a revolutionary perspective. He transcends the architectural dimensions of space to analyze their emotional and psychological aspects. He believes that the different forms of space (a house, a corner, a wardrobe ...) have numerous psychological significances beyond their tangible dimensions. Bachelard studies space and notably the concept of the house thoroughly in his book *The Poetics of Space* (1958), emphasizing the quintessential element it presents, without which "man would be a dispersed being" (7). He further explains that the importance of the house lies in its complexity as a place, compounded of emotions, memories and experiences which make the house "a body of images" (17) par excellence.

The Bachelardian house presents the first, basic platform in which the human ambitions, dreams, emotions, and thoughts are manifested. It is a cradle-like environment since it is depicted as the perfect embodiment of protection, shelter and love. It presents a realm where the past can be re-connected with the present through daydreams, since the memories of the space are integral parts of the house's present. Bachelard's study of the concept of home is based upon his perception of what he calls a *felicitous home* which is described as "[a] space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love" (xxxv).

Besides, he considers a house as a map of the human psyche since “all great, simple images reveal a psychic state. The house, even more than the landscape, is a “psychic state”, and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy” (72). To illustrate this idea, Bachelard uses Françoise Minkowska’s experience of children’s house drawings. It reveals the way the house conveys the psychological state of its inhabitants as happy children tend to depict a cheerful vision of their ‘shelter’ house, while unhappy, traumatized children portray house as a cold, motionless space. Bachelard’s claim that a house is the manifestation of human soul and psyche is further highlighted through different literary images used by poets like Victor Hugo and Baudelaire.

Through poetry, Bachelard defines the house as a complex space, made of memories and triggers different emotions. Yet, it is still a source of unique experience of intimacy. He believes that “reading a house” is reading the psychological status of its inhabitants (38). Believing that “the image comes before thought” (*Introduction*, x), Bachelard uses poetry as a way to study the phenomenology of space, examining in the second chapter of his book, the relationship between the interior of a house and the exterior world (universe). He points out that the intimacy and warmth of a house are further accentuated by the harshness of the outside world. He uses Baudelaire’s essay *Les paradis artificiels* as an instance of the way “the house derives reserves and refinements of intimacy from winter; [...]. As a result of this universal whiteness, we feel a form of cosmic negation in action” (41).

With *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard establishes phenomenological and psychological conceptualisations of the house since he studies the metaphorical aspect of the house as a manifestation of the human soul and as a space of intimacy:

“A house that has been experienced is not an inert box,” he determines early on. “Inhabited space transcends geometrical space.” As he listens to the geometry of echoes dignifying—and distinguishing—every old house, every experienced house, he probes the impact of human habitation on geometrical form, and the impact of the form upon human inhabitants. (John R. Stiloge, *Foreword*, vii)

Within the context of studying the metaphorical aspects of the haunted house in *The Haunting of Hill House*, *Hell House* and *Burnt Offerings*, Bachelard's perception of house as a space with "maternal characteristics" (7) and a holder of our intimate memories, presents a key theory upon which my analysis of the relationship between characters and haunted spaces will be based. Following the Bachelardian theory that house is the space of our dreams, memories, desires, phobias and trauma (6), each haunted setting under study presents a realm of the characters' unconsciousness. In Jackson's novel, Hill House presents a space that Eleanor's childhood trauma and repressed desire to revive her relation with her mother are parts of. The analysis of Hill House also necessitates Bachelard's reference to the different parts of the house that evoke our memories. Here, the Hill House's nursery presents in particular the space where Eleanor found her memories and relived, indirectly, her childhood trauma, as it provokes an unusual unpleasant sensation. Hell House and Long Island mansion also reproduce Bachelard's concept of the house. They are both depicted as spaces that generate memories and feelings. Unlike Eleanor, Florence Tanner has no traumatic childhood or past. Yet, by being a container for her memories and repressed desires, the haunted house succeeds in projecting Florence's weaknesses through haunting episodes. Moreover, Long Island mansion shapes gradually Marian Rolfe as it takes on her desire and dream of ownership.

Despite the pertinence of Bachelard's vision of space to the analysis of the metaphorical presentation of the haunted settings under study, Hill House, Belasco's house and the Long Island house present antipodes of the Bachelardian felicitous home as they present sources of danger and trepidation instead of being intimate spaces of love and protection. The three houses share an enigmatic nature as they stand for gloomy architecture and unknown origins. They are first referred to as sources of inexplicable uncomfortable feelings that pervade the characters. With the development of the three novels' plots, the three haunted settings prove to be hellish spaces that instill the characters with a constant feeling of fear, hysteria and

insecurity. However, the three spaces proved to be partly Bachelardian homes as they map the psychology of the characters and reflect their memories, thoughts and emotions even negatively, by being sources of the horror they live.

In the frame of studying the poetic image of the house, Bachelard defines it as “the non- I that protects the I” (5), presenting it as the shelter for its inhabitants, an intimate space that reflects their emotions and worries, nightmares and daydreams. He further highlights the relationship between home as a space and psychology through the example of *house-test*. The classical pictures that children draw to represent their houses or their dream homes reflect in fact their psychology, emotions and thoughts. The image of home drawn by a child in crisis seems gloomy, cold and lifeless, being thus different at the level of colors and size from other images realized when the child is in a joyful state of mind (72). Bachelard highlights further the importance of the childhood home in shaping our personalities. It presents a pillar space whose significance remains unchanged even in adulthood, as it echoes our memories and dreams. Besides, Bachelard studies the significance of home by comparing it to a body in its unified entity. It is a solid, steady space that protects the soul of its inhabitants. As it is composed of our different experiences, emotions and thoughts, home delineates the psychology of its inhabitants. He believes that each object and part of the house (rooms, drawers, wardrobes and chests) is loaded with different mental and psychological experiences. Despite the presence of this variety of sensations and sentiments, home stands, like a mosaic, and yet unified figure, drawing its strength and unity from its mental diversity and richness, since it brings out one single, complex experience of intimacy. This mélange of unity and diversity that constitutes the complex image of the house is further illustrated in Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* through the study of literary images found in poetry and prose.

In the novels under study, the three settings present spaces that echo the different mental experiences of the characters. Hill House’s horrific nature lies in its capacity to

transform the characters' memories, thoughts, fears, obsessions and even dreams into a distorted, intensified reality. In Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971), Belasco's house echoes the different subconscious desires and phobias by transforming them into a terrifying reality. However, the Long Island House in Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1973) presents for the main character, Marian Rolfe, a dream house. But this dream house turns out to be a nightmarish space that has mapped the dreams of the character and absorbed her happy, stable life to turn her into a lifeless part of the house. In Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), Hill House is a complex house as it is composed of different memories. Each different part and room of the house forms an independent world of past memories and gloomy experiences that present a source of horror for the characters. However, the house still presents a unified entity where the characters experience different mental and psychological accidents in different parts of the house at the same time. In Jackson's novel, the setting does not simply present a haunted house, occupied by an unrested soul. Rather, the house presents a dire entity that "has been unfit for human habitation for upwards of twenty years" (70). Leading the investigation, Dr. Montague started his presentation by describing the house as a truly evil place since the time it was built, as it was "born bad" (Jackson 70). To accentuate this idea, biblical and literary allusions<sup>23</sup> are used as an attempt to highlight the devilish innate nature of the Hill House. Dr. Montague uses the biblical image from Leviticus<sup>24</sup>, referring to the evil infectious houses that should be destroyed to be cleaned<sup>25</sup> (Leviticus 14:33-38 RSV<sup>26</sup>). He further uses the symbol of the underworld in the Greek mythology, referring to the house of Hades<sup>27</sup>. Through this allusion, Dr. Montague tries to draw a parallel image with the house of Hades, where no dead can escape from the dark place. Hades is like Hugh Crain's ghost, an

<sup>23</sup> An allusion refers to an indirect reference to a literary or biblical idea. It can be a reference to a historical figure as well.

<sup>24</sup> The book of Leviticus presents the third book of the Old Testament.

<sup>25</sup> The houses in Leviticus are houses infected by Leprosy. According to the Bible, God ordered Moses to follow different steps to clean these houses from Leprosy. The procedure of cleaning these houses includes a seven days closure and ends up with a complete destruction to guarantee disinfection.

<sup>26</sup> RSV: Revised Standard Version.

<sup>27</sup> Hades in Greek mythology is the God of underworld.

angry vengeful figure, who enjoys a complete authority over the Hill House. This allusion comes to support the initial description of the house, where all doors are closed and no one dares to leave the stage, since “it will not let [them] go” (Jackson 75). The house of Hades presents a hellish place for the dead and by using this imagery, Dr. Montague wants to explain that Hill House will be as hellish and dismal as the underworld in Greek mythology. The house’s gloominess is explained to be related to its dark history. The house was built by Hugh Crain for his little family where he would spend the rest of his life in comfort and tranquility. However, the house’s story is built upon the death of its female inhabitants as the tragedy started with the death of Crain’s first wife before entering the house. The second wife passed away in the Hill House as well. The omen passed to Crain’s daughters who spent most of their lives quarreling about the house’s ownership.

Hill House can be studied as the counterpart of the Bachelardian house as it does not present a shelter as a home should be. Contrary to its nature as a provider of safety and warmth, the house is a dark, cold and dangerous place where all characters are separated and driven to be alone. The house’s power and the cradle of its terror lie in the ability to manipulate the different repressed memories, dreams and desires in order to control its preys. The house focuses its manipulative and haunting power first and foremost on Eleanor Vance, who is presented as a character full of contradictions. She is firstly presented as a fragile person who suffers from her overbearing mother. She stands for a friendless character whose life revolves around her disabled mother. As mentioned previously, Eleanor’s harsh teenagerhood transforms her into a psychologically unstable person. She expressed in several instances her hatred towards her family and notably her mother. However, throughout the novel, it is noticeable that Eleanor leads the Hill House experience with a heavy burden composed of all her repressed memories, longings and desires to be reunited with her mother. In fact, through different incidents, the house reveals the inner hidden side of Eleanor as a

feeble person who is haunted by the figure of her mother. In this context, some critics tend to analyze the novel from the feminist perspective, studying principally the mother daughter bond (Eleanor Vance and her mother) and the other female relations (the erotic relationship between Eleanor and Theodora). In her essay ““Whose Hand Was I Holding?”: Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*”, Tricia Lootens focuses on Hill House as a clever h(a)unter, whose haunting Eleanor Vance in particular was not whimsical. The house’s ghost is aware of Eleanor’s longing for familial and romantic love. She has parallel fantasies of finding her perfect happy family and to enjoy erotic romance. By manipulating these familial and personal intimacies, the house succeeds in isolating Eleanor, pushing her to believe that “Hill House, and Hill House alone, wants and needs her” (Jackson151).

Following her background, described at the beginning of the novel, Eleanor proves to be the most vulnerable character since she is overwhelmed by her dark memories. She is haunted by her infantile complexes and repressed desires. For this reason, and throughout different instances, Hill House is represented as the reincarnation of the merciless, detrimental mother. As Judie Newman states in her essay “Shirley Jackson and the Reproduction of Mothering: *The Haunting of Hill House*”<sup>28</sup>, Eleanor recalls her repressed memories by associating different rooms with her mother. Prior to her visit to the library, Eleanor had confessed to Theodora that she was forced to read romantic stories for her disabled mother. Later, when she visited the library, she could not resist the cold, damp room, even though she was the only one who noticed it, and she “stood away from the wall; her hands were cold and she wanted to cry” (Jackson 104). Being overwhelmed, she admits to the group that she is unable to enter, uttering spontaneously “my mother” (Jackson 103). This shows that she relates the library to her mother and to the trauma that she endured over years, reviving her

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<sup>28</sup> Judie Newman, “Shirley Jackson and the Reproduction of Mothering: *The Haunting of Hill House*”, in *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*, ed. by Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), pp.169-82.

different staggering moments. Besides, during one night in the Hill House, Eleanor heard door knocking “down the hall, far down at the end, near the nursery door, and terribly cold, [...]” (Jackson 127). She immediately responded as if she was responding to her mother saying: “It’s all right, I’m coming” (Jackson 127). She connects the nursery room to the image of her mother; soulless and cold and “not jolly at all” (Jackson 119), which reflects her negative perception of motherhood. The haunting force continues its manipulation of Eleanor’s infantile repressed memories, transforming them into weapons turned against her. In the fifth chapter of the novel, and after numerous incidents in which Eleanor felt the strong presence of her mother, the haunting baleful force tries to perturb the already agitated Eleanor. “HELP ELEANOR COME HOME” (Jackson 146) presents the straw that broke the camel’s back: Eleanor, bewildered, feels she is explicitly attacked by the house, inviting her to be reabsorbed by her overpowered, controlling “mother”.

Furthermore, in another incident in *The Haunting of Hill House*, Dr. Montague feels that the nursery presents “one source of disturbance” (181) and decides to use a planchette<sup>29</sup> as a way to figure out the haunting force. In this experience, the haunting force uses repeatedly three words, strictly associated to each other; Eleanor, home, mother. This experience reveals that Hill House, not unlike the Bachelardian definition, describes the psychology of its inhabitants. It reflects what Eleanor believes and feels towards the house. It is in fact her own private space where her intimacy is unveiled. Eleanor thinks that by integrating in the house<sup>30</sup>, she will revive her bond with her mother, without whom she feels terrified and lost. As Newman writes,

An exploration of *The Haunting of Hill House* in light of feminist psychoanalytic theory reveals that the source of both the pleasures and the terrors of the text springs from the dynamics of the mother-daughter relation with its attendant motifs of psychic annihilation, reabsorption by the mother, vexed individuation, dissolution of individual ego boundaries, terror of separation and the attempted reproduction of the symbiotic bond through close female friendship. (171-2)

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<sup>29</sup> The planchette is defined in Shirley Jackson’s novel as “a device similar to the Ouija Board, [...] a form of automatic writing, a method of communicating with intangible beings” (Jackson 187).

<sup>30</sup> Before her tragic end, Eleanor tried to commit suicide by throwing herself from the top of the tower. This death drive is fed by her belief that she belongs physically and mentally to the house and that death is a way to be an integral part of it.



Hence, Eleanor's psychological instability, being torn between her independence and her total assimilation with her mother, presents, for the haunting force, a fertile ground to terrorize and to manipulate Eleanor, whose end was as turbulent as her psychology. Eleanor ends up dead, crushing her car into a tree. But, her death raises the question whether it was a suicide or a murder. Saying that the Hill House belongs to her, Eleanor seems to be willing to commit a suicide so that she can join her mother/house and be reunited with her forever. However, what brings this into question is the fact that the last thing she said before the crash was "Why am I doing this?" (Jackson 246). This sentence raises the probability that the haunting force, like Hades, was vengeful enough to stop Eleanor from escaping the house. Hill House's darkness seems to be timeless, as the story starts and ends with the same description. It is, as Dale Bailey describes it in his book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, "like a snake swallowing its tail" (40). The first and last lines share the exact words to describe the long-standing horror:

Hill House itself, not sane, stood against its hills, holding darkness within, it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, its 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. (Jackson 246)

Within the context of defining home as a space where memories, thoughts and feelings are intermingled and integrated, Bachelard discusses from the outset and throughout the chapters of his aforementioned book the concept of the *oneiric house*. The concept refers to the perfect embodiment of protection, shelter and love by the house. It presents a realm where the past can be re-connected with the present through daydreams, since the past memories of the space stand for integral parts of the house's present. The oneiric house presents in Bachelardian theory "a house of dream-memory, that is lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past" (15). It is shaped by numerous images and memories that we collect from our "first world" (7). The power of the oneiric house lies in its capacity to fuse memory and

imagination, which allows it to transcend the limits of past and present.

The oneiric house is different from the haunted houses under study insofar as it evokes protection, intimacy and comfort, fed by daydreams. The Bachelardian concept stresses the importance of childhood memory as a way to “maintain the poetry of the past. To inhabit oneirically the house we were born in means more than to inhabit it in memory; it means living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it” (16). While the Gothic haunted settings promise terror, physical and mental threat and distress. The haunted houses are portrayed as monsters that confine their victims and imprison them in their own fears. Yet in spite of this opposition, the Bachelardian concept presents a pivotal term that helps the critic to highlight the significance of the haunted Gothic spaces. Imagination and daydreams are means to reconnect with home and to find peace and shelter. However, this dream may turn into a nightmare in case imagination fails to find the homely home and this is exactly what the Gothic haunted houses under study stand for. The three houses transform what is supposed to be homely to an unhomely foreign space that brings about hysteria rather than peace. Hence, the characters find solace solely in the dreams and memories of childhood that become an alternative world to comfort their troubled reality.

#### **1.2.1.3 The concept of *Topoanalysis*: the intertwinement of the house and its inhabitants**

Although Bachelard considers psychoanalysis as too rigid and too scientific to analyze the poetic dimension of the house, believing that phenomenology can be a suitable alternative, he uses some concepts that are directly related to psychoanalysis; notably the concept of the *verticality* between cellar and attic and *topoanalysis*. The concept of *topoanalysis* is first defined as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (Bachelard 8). It aims

to study space as an intimate realm where protection is provided and where the subconscious is revealed. *Topoanalysis* refers to the study of a mental experience in which the unconscious is mapped or as Bachelard writes "housed" (10). Hence, what is considered to be the past memories of the house becomes an amalgamated part of the present. Bachelard explains that the particular characteristic of the house as a shelter lies in its composition of a group of memories and images that provide protection and peace. The Bachelardian house presents first and foremost an intimate space, a world of personal memories and private dreams. In order to analyze this complex space, *topoanalysis* serves as a psychoanalytic tool to study the world of imagination and what the unconscious reveals. To highlight the importance of *topoanalysis* in analysing the house as a world of dreams and imagination, Bachelard studies the concept of *verticality*. It refers to the imagined architectural design that connotes a psychoanalytic meaning. Bachelard refers to the duality of the attic and cellar, associating it to rationality and irrationality (18). The rational aspect of the attic is related to its architectural design as it is closer to light which denotes clarity and rationality, while the darkness of the cellar refers to the hidden, irrational side. Thus, the concept of *verticality* seems to echo the Freudian tripartite psyche, particularly the *superego* which is the voice of moral 'wisdom' and the *id* as the site of repressed irrational desires. This vertical image of the house presents for Bachelard a quintessential element that guarantees intimacy.

In the three novels under study, dreams and past memories of both house and characters play an important role in the study of the haunted spaces. Past memories of the different settings, engraved in every single room and furniture and entwined with reality, present a fertile ground to trigger the unlimited horror. Belasco's house is a typical example of the everted image of the Bachelardian house as it is shown as a dreadful "cosmos" of unimaginable horrific past amalgamated with a twisted reality where characters are under the pressure of their darkest desires and thoughts exploited by the haunting figure to revive the past

and turn it into a present reality. However, *Burnt Offerings* introduces a different space from the other two houses under study as Long Island house is seemingly portrayed as a Bachelardian house par excellence. It is firstly described as a homely dream house for Marian Rolfe, the protagonist. The setting becomes quickly an intimate space where Marian can realize her dreams. However, a horrific reality lies under this ideal image of the dream house. Marian finds herself torn away from the homely as she realizes the hypnotic effect of the insane entity that gains power from the characters' memories and dreams to revive its decayed architecture. In the three novels, *topoanalysis* is used as a tool to study the psychology of characters mapped by the house they live in, a psychology characterized by different instances of hysteria, phobias and nightmares.

In the opening chapter of Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the setting is described through highlighting the relationship between sanity and dream. If Bachelard points out the importance of imagination and daydreams to keep the house alive (59), Jackson highlights from the beginning of her novel that Hill House is insane without dreams. Unlike the typical Gothic description of settings, Hill House is not firstly portrayed architecturally to highlight its bleak design. The description underlines first and foremost the complex nature of the Hill House, and in order to survive its harsh, dark reality, dreaming is indispensable: "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" (Jackson 3). Through this initial description, the formula of the haunted Hill House along with the key to survive its darkness are presented to the reader. The description gives the hint that the setting is a harsh dreamless place, a void-like place, cold and dark enough to destroy any living creature and to lead it to a state of psychological chaos and insanity. The description also gives the hint that dreaming provides the self with a shelter, an armor that protects it from the unhomely home.

The opening descriptive sentence can be considered as a synopsis of the whole novel as it condenses the conflict between the darkness of the haunted space and the brightness that

dreams can offer. This summarizes in fact Eleanor's journey in Hill House and the way dreams protected her to a certain extent. From her first steps in the Hill House, Eleanor felt the bleakness of the space as "the house had caught her with an atavistic turn in the pit of the stomach, [...] her hands turned nervously cold [...], she was afraid, listening to the sick voice inside her which whispered, *Get away from here, get away*" (Jackson 35). Eleanor's reaction towards this mysterious, baffling sensation was her use of imagination and daydreams as weapons to fight this uncanny space. Eleanor and Theodora shared the same daydreams, which revolve around one special part of the Hill House, that is, the garden. Hill House's garden is as massive as the house itself. It catches Eleanor's attention from the first day, who thinks that the idyllic natural landscape will make the house warmer. The landscape is rich and lively as "the water of the brook moved quickly in little lighted ripples; on the other side the grass grew down to the edge of the water and yellow and blue flowers leaned their heads over" (Jackson 51). This description comes as the opposite side of the claustrophobic dark house, as shown by the use of lexical items of colors and brightness. When they first discover the garden, Theodora and Eleanor use their own imagination, creating a fairytale context "where the princess comes to meet the magic golden fish who is really a prince in disguise" (Jackson 52). This imaginative world created and lived by both characters presents a shelter that helps forget the dreary space. It also shows their repressed girlish desires to be loved and to be treated like princesses. It shows one aspect of the characters; being romantic, a feature that was mainly revealed through their daydreams. Daydreams<sup>31</sup> are an integral part in the female characters' life in Hill House and especially in Eleanor's attempts to survive the harsh reality of the place. In one instance in the novel, Eleanor and Theodora witness what seems to be a typical familial picnic scene in Hill House's garden. The scene was presented as an idyllic image, so vivid and joyful that "they could hear the laughter of the children and the affectionate, amused voices of

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<sup>31</sup> In her article "Psychoanalysis and the Gothic", Michelle A. Massé defines daydreams as "stories written by ourselves for ourselves" (307). This concept, of a tremendous importance in literature generally and mainly in Female Gothic, presents a defense mechanism, created by female characters in order to bring them calm and comfort. It is a response to a need, a desire, or an impulse expressed in the waking state.

the mother and father” (Jackson 176). The picturesque image of the happy family, enjoying the spring breeze, is blemished by the sudden high scream of Theodora warning Eleanor: “Don’t look back – don’t look – run!” (Jackson 177). This instance raises the question over the nature of what Eleanor witnessed: Was it a dream, a fantasy<sup>32</sup> created by the character as a shelter or a past memory of the house entwined with the present moment? In fact, both cases could be possible. The description of the garden seems to be in complete contradiction with the dreadful nature of the house. However, it does reflect one bright side of the Hill House’s past since, as Dr. Montague explained before, Hugh Crain, the owner of Hill House, was a family man. He designed the house for his little family to live in comfort and everlasting happiness. The picnic scene can be explained as a past happy memory captured and interlinked with the present. It presents one intimate halcyon day of the house resurrected in the present tense. The family represents Hugh Crain, his wife and his two daughters. However, the monstrous thing seen by Theodora, which seems too atrocious to be described, can be a reference to the manifest darkness of the Hill House.

The picnic scene can also be studied as a nostalgic moment for both Eleanor and Theodora. A happy family is the common element that lacks in the lives of both characters. For Eleanor, this image represents a longing to be reunited with her father, sister and mainly her mother. The image of caring, warmhearted mother who would “lea[n] over to take up a plate of bright fruit” (Jackson 177) presents a reconstructed portrait of her mother, that would compensate for her lack of love and affection. The fantasy shows Eleanor’s longing for a normal, happy childhood since she did not enjoy her childhood, being overwhelmed by the duty

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<sup>32</sup> Fantasy is a major concept in psychoanalysis. It can be defined as an imaginary construction that can be either conscious or unconscious. It allows the subject to express and to satisfy a repressed desire or to overcome an anxiety. (Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 61). Jacques Lacan highlights the protective role of fantasy as he points in Book XI of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* that “the real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real” (41). It is a defense mechanism that aims to protect the subject against castration. He goes further as he studies Freud’s writings “The Wolf Man” to suggest that fantasy changes and reconstructs memories of the real (54).

of taking care of her disabled mother, a situation that left her with a dearth of cheerful childhood memories. The picnic scene is also shared with Theodora, the only character with no family name. Even if her description does not involve her family background, the emphasis on her first name: “the name was always only Theodora” (Jackson 8), implies that family is absent in her life. In this context, the picnic scene can be explained as a fantasy that aims to show the repressed desire of both characters to have a loving, typical family. Following the Bachelardian theory, Hill House is an oneiric house, where every room is loaded with past memories. The library, the nursery, and the garden are three places where characters can feel the traces of the past. Eleanor uses dreams as a way to transform the gloomy house into a family homely space. She projects her repressed infantile desire to be unified with her mother, a desire that can be interpreted in light of Lacan’s *Imaginary* <sup>33</sup>. This nostalgic wish to return to the mother as a source of life and shelter (womb) and food (breastfeeding) is considered by Lacan as one form of the weaning complex<sup>34</sup>. For this reason, and in different instances, Eleanor identifies these spaces with the presence of her mother, creating firstly a sense of shock that is transformed into warmth and happiness as the plot develops. Yet, as the haunting episodes are intensified, Eleanor starts to be confused since she feels that this cradle-like house is smothering her, morphing into a tomb-like space. Here, Jackson highlights the horror of Hill House that comes mainly from Eleanor’s confused perception of the house as a womb and a tomb.

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<sup>33</sup> According to Lacan, the Imaginary refers to a period that precedes the linguistic development of the child’s mind. During this period, the child thinks that he and his mother are one unified person. In *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Dylan Evans introduces the Lacanian concept by highlighting its basic aspects. He underlines the importance of identification as a pillar of this order; the child seeks identification with the mother’s image as adults seek identification with images and ideas, avoiding any form of aggressivity resulted from incoherence and deception (84). The imaginary is the world of images (the perceptual of the self) and imagination (connotation of illusion), “the order of surface appearances which are deceptive, observable phenomena which hide underlying structure [...]” (84). In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I”, Lacan accentuates the idea that the imaginary is a narcissistic phase, as there is a dual relationship between the ego and the specular image. It is also a phase of alienation, resulted from “the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*” (*Ecrits*, 4). Yet, this fusional narcissistic relation can trigger aggressivity, since there is a contrast between the holistic reflected image and the real body, leading to self-destruction (suicide).

<sup>34</sup> Lacan considers the weaning complex as the shock of being impoverished from the mother’s milk. In his article “Family Complexes in the Formation of the individual” (1938), Lacan thinks that the weaning complex “leaves in the human psyche the permanent trace of the biological relationship it interrupts” (*Encyclopédie Française*, 16).

### 1.2.2 Hell House: a labyrinth of tormented psyches

Twelve years after the publication of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971) was published as a Gothic novel, whose narrated events seem to have been inspired partly from Jackson's tale. Richard Matheson's name is not as famous as his works. As his editor Stanley Wiater explains, Matheson "may be the most influential fantasy writer in the world whose name is not recognized by most people, although when asked, they invariably know his work" (xiii)<sup>35</sup>. The novel's frame shares the same context as Jackson's *Hill House*. A wealthy man, Mr. Deutsch asks Mr. Barrett to lead a scientific investigation on Hell House; a place that he newly purchased, known for its dark history and haunting present. Desperate to find a clue about the house, he asks for scientific and spiritual answers, by appointing among others and in addition to the physicist Dr. Barrett, a spiritual medium for this mission. The theme of science vs. spirituality, presented in Jackson's work, is further explored in *Hell House*. In fact, throughout both novels, science and spirituality, represented generally by male characters (Dr. Montague and Dr. Barrett) and female ones (Florence Tanner and Eleanor Vance), are tightly contested to prove their efficiency in finding the reality behind the haunting nature of the settings. This gendered attribution aims, in addition to the presentation of the classical Gothic dualistic view of the world, to reflect the double side of the United States during the 1970s, with the flashing scientific development on the one hand and the popular belief in mediumship on the other hand (the example of Morris Lamar Keene, the Prince of Spiritualists). Hell House proves to be an epithet of Belasco's house that summarizes the atrocity of the setting and the monstrosity of its owner. It is introduced as a typical Gothic setting, encompassing the fundamental features of gloominess, the presence of a haunting force, curses and omens. In the opening pages of the novel, the description of the setting highlights several characteristics that make it a fertile ground of horror. The house has

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<sup>35</sup> Wiater, Stanley. *The Twilight and Other Zones: The Dark Worlds of Richard Matheson*. Citadel Press, 2009.



an aristocratic name that recalls the castles of the early Gothic works. Situated in a foggy, unclear valley, “trees or bushes or boulder formations would appear beside the car, then disappear” (Matheson 27), the uncertainty to locate elements of the general landscape of the setting reinforces the symbolic idea of a hazy end of the experience. Besides, the initial emphasis on the fog highlights the duality of visibility and invisibility. In their way to the Hell House, Dr. Barrett’s group was surprised by the fog as “the car was suddenly immersed in greenish mist” (Matheson 27). The density of the fog is further accentuated by the recurrent use of metaphors and similes: “[...] it was as though they rode inside a submarine” (Matheson 27), “[...] already the limousine was swallowed by fog” (Matheson 29). The emphasis on the mist as an important part of the description of the setting reveals that the mysterious nature of the setting lies in the duality of the seen vs. unseen, appearance vs. disappearance or, to use the philosophical terminology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the visible and the invisible<sup>36</sup> (this duality that is strongly related to the panoptic dimension of the setting will be studied thoroughly in the second chapter).

With the description of the interior decoration, the house's design turns out to be like a fancy labyrinth. The castle contains secret chambers, complex hallways, bricked up windows, and has no source of aeration. Despite the fact that it is well furnished, the house’s complex

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<sup>36</sup>The dialects of the visible and the invisible is dealt with in the context of Merleau-Ponty’s work on perception. Perception presents for Merleau-Ponty the primordial aspect of the human being that rules all his actions and reactions. In her article “The Blind Spot of the Sovereign Eye: On the Gaze in Merleau-Ponty and Lacan”, Lysane Fauvel explicates Merleau-Ponty’s vision of our experience in the world and our contact with different objects as controlled by our perception (453). The Pontean concept transcends the simple act of seeing as there is a heteroglossia of perspectives, since “the object is seen at all times as it is seen from all directions” (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 80). By stating that the object is seen from everywhere, Merleau-Ponty highlights the role of the background in forming perception. Our perception is constituted of a field of visibility and a background. In his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty asserts that despite the fact that the object is in the field of visibility, the background, hidden objects “remain abodes open to my gaze, and, being potentially lodged in the, I already perceive from various angles the central object of my present vision”(79). He develops further his conception in relation to the body, revisiting the old, traditional well-known philosophy of René Descartes who defines human subjectivity by consciousness, summarizing his attempt to centralize consciousness by saying “I think, therefore I’m”. Merleau-Ponty updates this theory by highlighting the role of the body in defining subjectivity. Hence, the body becomes the primordial field of perception as our perception of a particular object depends on the degree of integrity of the body in the world. Perception does not present a fixed, rigid process but rather an active experience open to change and amendment; and the body presents the core of the perception. Merleau-Ponty introduces the concept of *flesh* in relation to the body’s faculty

design with nested areas reflects the fact that the setting is an unsolved puzzle and a maze where tormented souls and paranoiac psyches are entombed. The first paragraphs describing the setting highlight the gigantic dimension of the house. It includes a massive garden with a “narrow concrete bridge” (Matheson 29) where the thickness of the fog veils the natural landscape. The exterior description of the house, which includes a tarn with “a miasma of decay [that] hovered above it” (Matheson 29), reveals the enormousness of the setting. Besides, the extravagance of the house is further presented with a detailed description of the interior design. The description includes the use of the lexical field of hugeness “immensity”, “gigantic”, “massive”, “giant”, “great” .... The house is presented as a sophisticated colossal place, a labyrinth-like house that includes a plan to be able to dwell in. Visiting the different rooms, kitchen and the massive theater and church, the characters feel that they are miniature creatures, lost and absorbed in a vile place: “[...] as they moved, the flickering illumination made their shadows billow on the walls and ceiling” (Matheson 34). The image of the labyrinth and its implication of losing the temporal and spatial parameters can be mainly studied through the presentation of Hell House as a bridge between present and past. As Catherine Spooner writes in *Contemporary Gothic* (2006), the convoluted haunted setting developed to be, during the twentieth century, a reflection of the tormented psyches:

As Emily Dickinson, a poet with a frequently Gothic awareness, wrote, “One need not be a chamber – to be haunted”: in twentieth-century film and fiction, the troubling ghosts of past traumas were not restricted to architectural locales, but made the mind itself a kind of prison. [...], One of the favorite tropes of contemporary Gothic is the repressed memory of childhood abuse, [...]. So, these psychological prisons characteristically disintegrate under repeated mental strain, terminating in madness and breakdown. In Gothic texts, therefore, the past is a site of terror, of an injustice that must be resolved, an evil that must be exorcised. (18)

Being referred to as “the Mount Everest of haunted houses” (Matheson 15), Hell

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to be active and passive at the same time. In his unfinished book *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964), Merleau-Ponty stresses that the body can be both a seeing body (active) and an object of seeing (passive) as “I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity [...] the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know who sees and which is seen” (139).

House's uniqueness lies in the complexity of its architecture, the extravagance of its decoration and the horror of its past that is still engraved in the furniture. The house's curse lies in the monstrosity of its owner, Emeric Belasco, whose sexual perversion led to the creation of a history of violence and barbarism, transforming the sophisticated place into a decayed one, haunted by tormented souls. The sexual perversion and profanity are presented from the beginning of the novel at two levels, namely, the setting and the characters. The opening descriptive passage of the setting includes a reference to profanity and sexual perversion as the castle comprises what looks like a chapel with a profaned account of Jesus with "an enormous phallus jutting upward from between the legs" (Matheson 36). This shocking place mirrors in fact the sexual obsession and perversion of its inhabitants. Emeric Belasco, whose name is associated with the Hell House, is a typical villain as he is described by Fisher as a son, born out of wedlock of "Myron Sandler, an American munitions maker, and Noelle Belasco, an English actress" (Matheson 55). The choice of the familial background seems to be non-arbitrary since the professions of Belasco's parents have ethical and moral symbolism. Despite being a widespread, prosperous industry in nineteenth century United States, the father's job connotes the world of violence and death, while, an actress in England, in the same period, was treated like a prostitute since this job was considered as a symbol of moral decay<sup>37</sup>. Emeric Belasco's first signs of violence and perversion were recorded at the age of five as he killed a cat and cut it into different pieces. As he grew up, he even sexually assaulted his sister (Matheson 56). Belasco was portrayed as a mixture of pulchritude and satanic appearance:

His teeth are those of a carnivore. When he bares them in a smile, it gives one the impression of an animal snarling. His face is white, for he despises the sun, eschews the out-of-doors. He has astonishingly green eyes, which seem to possess an inner light of their own. His forehead is broad, his hair and short-trimmed beard jet-black. Despite his handsomeness, his is a frightening visage, the face of some demon who has taken on a human aspect. (Matheson 56)

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<sup>37</sup> In her book *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*, Tracy C. Davis states that English actresses in nineteenth century had a complex image; the image of an independent artist with a strong sexual symbol (69). Despite the fact that they were able to integrate the English society, Davis highlights that "the public readily believed in actresses' immorality and worthlessness" (77).

This description, presented by Belasco's wife before her suicide, along with his shadowy presence throughout the novel, show a great resemblance with the character of Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. Being offstage, the real presence of Belasco is not revealed until the end of the novel. Yet, his threats to the different characters and mainly Florence Tanner are ubiquitous and intensify as the novel progresses. Belasco, like Dracula, is portrayed as an attractive character whose aim is to revive the curse of his house, by haunting new characters, searching for a new fresh "blood". His power lies mainly in his capacity to seduce and manipulate his victims' minds. He has "the power of the mind to dominate, [...] The control of one human being by another. He obviously had the kind of hypnotic personality men like Cagliostro and Rasputin had: "No one ever went too close to him, lest his terrible presence overpower and engulf them." (Matheson 57). The focus on his mysterious attractiveness and charisma, in addition to his comparison to two historical figures as Cagliostro and Rasputin, foreshadow the fact that Belasco will face the same destiny: from a sudden popularity and wealth to a hideous, tragic end. Belasco is presented from the beginning as a predator who is obsessed by sexuality, as his perversion started from an early age and continues till his death. This direct association between the character of Belasco and sexuality is further highlighted through the different incidents that occur in the haunted setting.

Hell House's curse started when Emeric Belasco moved gradually from holding receptions and parties for the social elite to the creation of a club named "Les Aphrodites"<sup>38</sup> with whom, he indulges in drug consumption and sex. This daily meeting is named Sinposium (Matheson 58). The choice of the club's name and the meeting reflects literary allusions that highlight Belasco's obsession with sexuality and pleasure. The club's name presents an allusion to the erotic book of André-Robert Andréa de Nerciat<sup>39</sup> *Les Aphrodites ou*

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Matheson. *Hell House*, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> De Nerciat is a French novelist of the eighteenth century, known for his erotic writings that revolve around open

*Fragments thali-priapiques pour servir à l'histoire du plaisir* (1793), that presents the world of hedonism. Besides, the word “Sinposium” used to describe his meeting of absolute pleasure recalls the Greek and Roman Symposiums where philosophers and artists shared wine while talking about a variety of literary, artistic and philosophical topics. Despite the social and cultural importance of symposiums in both civilizations, and its apparent seriousness, the presence of pleasure was valuable as prostitutes were paid to entertain guests. These daily meetings that end with an orgy were not enough for Belasco’s growing appetite. He uses his talent in manipulating people’s mind to widen the circle of his guests, by inviting people from around the world and offering them a world with limitless pleasures until they feel entrapped in Hell House that “became their way of life. A way of life that grew a little more insane each day. Isolated from the contrast of normal society, the society in this house became the norm. Total self-indulgence became the norm. Debauchery became the norm. Brutality and carnage soon became the norm” (Matheson 58). However, this excess turns out gradually into sadism, barbarism and cannibalism. Here, Matheson shows Belasco’s extremism and obsession with sexuality by using the technique of intertextuality, when he refers to Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* (1785). This erotic novel presents one of the most famous writings of Sade, the controversial French novelist, philosopher and politician. *120 Days of Sodom* was banned in France and other countries as its content was too explicit and pornographic. Sade’s style and theme as presented in the novel was seen as boorish vis-à-vis the literary and artistic standards of his era. Benjamin Franklin Fischer’s description shows a great resemblance between what happened in Hell House and the different monstrosities in Sade’s château de Silling. Like the unreachable castle of Sade, Belasco’s house presents a setting whose remoteness is emphasized, as it “is isolated; really isolated. There were no outside telephones” (Matheson 59). The spatial unattainability of the house helps Belasco to realize his experience. Besides, Belasco seems to be concretizing the fictional experience in Sade’s work

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sexuality and debauchery.

as he decided to have as many participants as he can, of different genders, ages and cultures, all involved in this experience for months and even years, in which there is total challenge and defiance of ethics and codes of behavior in favor of total moral laxity and the rule of desires and lust. According to Fischer, Belasco's experience was gradually intensified till "everyone but Belasco was at an animal level, rarely bathing, wearing torn, soiled clothes, eating and drinking anything they could get their hands on, killing each other for food or water, liquor, drugs, sex, blood, even for the taste of human flesh, which many of them had acquired by then" (Matheson 61). Hence, Belasco presents, like Sade's protagonists, a wealthy libertine whose philosophy and perception of desire and sexual liberty developed gradually to reach violence, necrophilia and cannibalism. His longing to lead an experience on different persons from different backgrounds, in an environment of limitless freedom without being directly involved, cannot not hide the truth about him as "a latter-day Satan" (Matheson 61) who creates an earthly hell to satisfy his perverse ego. The analysis of Belasco's character cannot be separated from the use of Lacan's theory on perversion. Lacan starts his study on perversion by asking:

What is perversion? It is not simply an aberration in relation to social criteria, an anomaly contrary to good morals, although this register is not absent, nor is it an atypicality according to natural criteria, namely that it more or less derogates from the reproductive finality of the sexual union. It is something else in its very structure. (*The Seminar*, 221)

Lacan studies perversion in relation to the concept of the Other and castration. In her book *Perversion: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Subject*, Stephanie S. Swales points out that perversion, like neurosis, is a particular way through which the subject may react with others, acclimate disavowed castration and his alienation from the mother (xiii). For Lacan, perversion is directly related to the pre-oedipal imaginary triangle of mother, child and phallus. It is a period during which the child realizes that the mother desires something else (phallus). Perversion occurs when the child refuses to be independent with his own desires and keeps identifying himself as the object of the Other's (mother's) desire. Here, Swales

asserts that:

Most perverts are male, and so they identify with the penis as the actual object of the mOther's desire. The pervert's structural position is defined by his unknowingly constituting himself as the object that causes the Other's *jouissance*. As a result, in the context of the clinic the pervert is a master at evoking strong feelings of countertransference. The *jouissance* the pervert aims to cause in the analyst can take the forms of anxiety, laughter, annoyance, frustration, horror, self-satisfaction, and surprise. (xiv)

Relying on Lacan's definition of perversion and Swales' description of perverts, Belasco's choice to organize the boundless sexual events conveys his perverted self. As a pervert, Belasco never questions his deeds, he always believes that his acts serve the Other's *jouissance* (*jouissance* is a French term used by Lacan to refer to the combination of sexual pleasure (orgasm) and pain). For this reason, Belasco's hauntings are sexual. He takes advantage of the sexless life of Dr. Montague's and his wife Edith to quench her frustration through unveiling her sexual repression. Belasco's sexually perverted hauntings are noticeably focused on female characters (Edith and Florence), evoking all forms of physical violence, anxiety and horror. Besides, Belasco tries firstly to sexually harass Florence, in an attempt to destabilize her as he directly threatens her to lose what she considers as precious (her body). Belasco's haunting techniques echo the Lacanian description of sadism as one of the substructures of perversion (xii).

Belasco's experience of overindulgence in incest, sexuality and drugs made the house a land of unrested souls. Before the arrival of the group led by Dr. Barrett, Hell House was already known for being a place marked by its history. The story told by Fischer and the different incidents experienced by the different characters and mainly Florence Tanner show that Hell House has become a timeless place, a bridge between past and present. Being obsessed by controlling women, Belasco wanted to reinstall his laboratory by haunting and possessing female characters in particular, dominating their minds and stimulating their repressed desires. Belasco presents a round character who is described from the outset as a sex

monster, a maniac who haunts and manipulates the other characters through sexual phantasms<sup>40</sup>. His traits reflect the symptoms of a Sadistic Personality Disorder, defined by Roger J. R. Levesque in the *Encyclopedia Adolescence*, as “a pattern of cruel, harsh, aggressive, intimidating, humiliating and demeaning behavior” (2445). The haunting of Emeric Belasco is based upon his behavior as a sadist as he enjoys controlling and manipulating his victims through sexual dominance and violence. Through the presence of Edith Barrett and Florence Tanner, Belasco’s ghost was able to terrorize the rest of the group by manipulating the female body, exercising his sadism. He has certainly attacked Florence physically as “there were deep teeth marks ringing the nipples on [her] breasts” (Matheson 120). His assaults reflect in fact his deviance and sexual violence (as it starts with unwanted touching and intimidation and develops to rape). In one instance, Florence lived an experience that can be assimilated rape:

She was naked, lying on her back, her legs spread far apart, her eyes wide open, staring upward with a look of total shock. Her body was bruised and bitten, scratched, gouged, and running with blood. [...]. Her lips stirred feebly. [...]. At first there were only rattling noises in her throat. Then she whispered, “*Filled.*” She stared at him with wide, unblinking eyes. “*Filled.*”  
 He was unable not to ask. “With what?”  
 With hideous abruptness, she began to smile. (Matheson 213)

This description shows that Florence experienced a shocking scene that drove her insane: an experience that unveils Belasco’s sexual violence and even misogyny as “one of his favorite hobbies was destroying women” (Matheson 59). His manipulation is not only physical but also mental as he succeeds in controlling her visions, presenting hints about the house’s past: “The corruption deepened. Drunkenness. Despair. [...]. She saw him in the great hall, naked, sitting at the huge round table, watching avidly. [...], [she] saw him venting sexual desires that made her tremble in the darkness” (Matheson 130-31). The multiple sexual haunting of

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<sup>40</sup> Phantasm refers to the scenario-like imaginary images, created to fulfill a desire. In his book *La Raison Psychanalytique ; Pour Une Science du Devenir Psychique*, Roger Perron distinguishes between ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ phantasms. The former being compared to daydreams to be satisfied sexually (for example in case of erotic phantasm) and the latter being compared to night dreams (26).



Florence ends up tragically, which shows again the way Belasco indulges in his deadly sadism. Florence experienced what women lived in Hell House in the 1920s. Her tragic end reveals a sexual monster who reincarnates the past atrocities<sup>41</sup>: “Her eyes were open, looking upward, her face the hue of pale wax. His gaze shifted to her genitals. They were caked with blood, the outer tissue shredded” (Matheson 249). Even though Edith did not experience the torments that Florence witnessed, she is still a victim of Belasco’s power over her mind. He awakens her repressed sexual desires, turning her into a fiend. She shows her increasing sexual appetite as she undresses in an attempt to seduce Fischer. She also insists fiercely on an intimate relationship with her husband, which drives him to conclude that “the house *must* be affecting her” (Matheson 152). Here, the house proves to be a figure of the characters’ unconscious and repressed desires. It echoes Belasco’s identification with phallus as an object of desire. The house becomes then a site of Belasco’s perverse acts that unveil his unconscious disavowal of castration. The different haunting scenes prove that Hell House is a space where the fine line between past and present is blurred, creating renewed experiences that approve Belasco’s limitless power. As Hell House was a place that unveils the atrocity and dreadfulness of the human indulgence in pleasures, it seems to be reincarnated to become a maze of unrested souls and tormented psyches of female characters.

### 1.2.1. *Burnt Offerings*’ Long Island House: The Representation of the American Domesticity

*Burnt Offerings* presents Robert Marasco’s first Gothic novel after the successful horror play *Child’s Play* (1970). It was published in 1973 and adapted for a film in 1976. Despite the limited success of the novel in comparison with his first work, Robert Marasco has succeeded in creating his own formula to be among the unorthodox Gothic novelists of the twentieth

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<sup>41</sup> In his first experience of 1928, inspired from Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*, Belasco did not directly participate and preferred to watch his guests’ gradual downgrade. Yet, with the haunting episodes, Belasco seems to reproduce the same sexual violence, echoing the same atmosphere of inebriety and chaos.

century. He creates a mélange of a classical outline of a Gothic novel and subverted, reconstructed conventional elements which results in an uncanny novel which is both familiar and unfamiliar. Unlike Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* or Richard Matheson's *Hell House*, in which the settings' past memories played an important role in the process of haunting, the setting in the third novel under study presents an eerie domestic space, where the protagonist is entrapped and haunted by her own domesticity. Accordingly, in this part, the focus is mainly on Robert Marasco's subverted image of the classical haunted houses, studying the representation of the different reconstructed values of the American domesticity<sup>42</sup>, a concept redefined psychologically and symbolically.

From the beginning of the novel, Marasco presents the basis to subvert the conventions of the formula of the haunted house and to create an exception by highlighting different hidden sides of Gothic literature. The beginning of *Burnt Offerings* is not a classical description of a gloomy atmosphere or a looming bleak old mansion, but rather a presentation of a modern American middle-class couple who are looking for a perfect place for their holidays. As the novel begins, Marasco presents the Rolfes family, a typically nuclear American family: Ben, an English school teacher who is always complaining about his career, Marian Rolfe, a loving wife and caring, devoted mother who is trying to change drastically her life into better, and their

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<sup>42</sup> Domesticity presents one of the most clichéd values used by authors and analyzed by critics to understand further the context of the different works of art. It refers to the various social values and codes of behavior that were the keys to be socially accepted and respected. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, domesticity was defined in reference to the submissiveness, purity and total devotion of women. These norms or codes of conduct were strictly applied in the 19<sup>th</sup> century women in different countries of Europe and in the USA. Surprisingly, these norms continue to be commercialized throughout the twentieth century, despite the social, economic and cultural development of the American society. In the 1970s and despite the different movements that show the noticeable awareness and the rebellious thoughts of the women during that decade and the preceding one, the American media went on promoting the old values of domesticity which is in fact one of the pillars of the American way of life. Family was focused on as a duty and as a fundamental element of the American society. Women were described as devoted creatures whose real world revolves around family and housekeeping. A nuclear family with a hard-working father and a devoted mother whose ultimate concern is preparing dinner and taking care of children was a typically American portrait presented in the different advertisements, series, and even cartoons which reflects a subconscious value that is deeply rooted in the American mentality. This schizophrenic duality of anti-feminist cult of domesticity and the different women's right movements that present the landmark of the era was presented by the different authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who tried to deconstruct the cult and accentuate the different cultural and social changes.

eight-year-old child David. This family presents a microcosm of the American middle class who is looking for realizing a better financial status. Marasco presents a typical image of the 1970s American family who struggles with the economic difficulties and tries to achieve the dream to escape the hustle and bustle of big cities to live in the quiet of the countryside. This opening presentation serves in fact a basis for the formula of the house-hunter. The presentation of the main character Marian Rolfe as a very ambitious housewife who is frustrated for being unable to fulfill her material ambitions, summarized in a fancy house, presents an essential element to put forth the reasons behind choosing her as a perfect prey to be consumed by the house. Marasco focuses along the first part of the novel on the Rolfes family, describing each member in detail and highlighting the different relationships between each other. This non classical beginning serves as an explanation of upcoming events and the reason why the Rolfes are considered as “the right people” (Marasco14).

Throughout the first part of the novel, Marasco tries to emphasize the difference between two settings: namely the Rolfes’ apartment and the Allardycyces’ mansion. The apartment is considered as a prison to Marian, a symbol of her failure to fulfill her dreams. Her ultimate goal was to have a summer holiday in a fancy house near the beach where she can enjoy her ambition even momentarily. Marasco starts his novel with this contextualization in order to explain implicitly the reasons behind Marian’s illogical choice of a decayed summer house (in fact, the next events will show that Marian is the chosen one to be the sacrificed prey). In the opening chapter of the novel, Marasco highlights the life of the Rolfes in the apartment, with a special emphasis on Marian Rolfe. She is presented as a typical middle-class character, obsessed with her domestic role as a housewife. Throughout the chapter, she is described in several instances doing several tasks at the same time, trying to put everything in the right order:

she found a white thread and picked at it; then a bit of soot which smeared her fingers; and then; leaning forward on her knee now and digging under the pile, a small patch of blue fiber, the color of her bedroom rug. Empty the vacuum, she reminded herself. She spread her hand over the rug, straightening the pile, then stood up, went to the closet and rehung David's clothes. (Marasco 3-4)

The description shows the way the culture of domesticity that has prevailed in the United States for centuries still haunts in fact the character who can be seen fulfilling obsessively her chores. Besides, Marasco draws the social portrait of the United States during the 1970s by highlighting the idea of consumerism that presents one side of the 70s pop culture. In addition to her obsession with cleaning and putting everything in order, Marian is also described as obsessed with buying luxurious unnecessary things “three or four times a year she would sign up with Office Temporaries to help pay for some new and irresistible buy – a French Provincial buffet or, her proudest possession, a mahogany and bronze doré desk” (Marasco 5). This obsessive behavior reflects what the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) calls “conspicuous consumption”<sup>43</sup>. By buying fancy, expensive items, Marian is aiming in fact at displaying a social status. Her insistence on renting a summer house presents another instance of the compulsive consumerism, driven by the social status and not out of necessity. Marasco starts his Gothic novel with this non-conventional beginning to show that the horror in this work, is the culture of obsession that pervaded the American society, becoming the middle-class nightmare<sup>44</sup> and the new haunting force.

The second half of the novel revolves around the gradual, yet drastic change of Marian when she moved to her dream house. In this part, Marasco straightforwardly relates the Long Island Mansion with the concept of the American Dream. The devoted Marian becomes gradually consumed by the house. She realizes that the house may be an exemplar of her dreams and long list of wishes. Marian's fascination with the mansion is emphasized several

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<sup>43</sup> This concept was coined in 1899 by Thorstein Veblen in his book *The Theory of Leisure Class*. In Encyclopedia Britannica, the concept is defined by Ronnie J. Phillips as a term that “describes and explains the practice by consumers of using goods of a higher quality or in greater quantity than might be considered necessary in practical terms.”

times all through the novel. She repeatedly uses the word “incredible” to express her admiration. While Marian’s husband, Ben is foreshadowing the tragedy, Marian was completely absorbed by the house, which concretizes her dreams and fulfills her consumerist self: “The closer she looked at those windows, the lovelier and more irresistible the house became” (Marasco 24). The hypnotic effect of the house is strong enough to make Marian unaware of all different defaults. She is in fact hypnotized by the idea of living her dream to own such sophisticated mansion. The Long Island house is not a simple setting. It is in fact a symbol of the American Dream, a myth that has absorbed the minds of the American people for centuries. Different critics refer to the idea of domesticity in relation to the obsessive pursuit of the American Dream. In the fifth chapter of his book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, Dale Bailey goes further to consider the Long Island mansion as the epitome of the American Dream and that the hum sound refers actually to the hypnotizing effect of the consumerist society that makes Americans unconsciously absorbed by the ideology of buying and consuming, which may lead to sacrificing family (77). As the house presents an unmissable opportunity as it was a bargain of 900 dollars for the whole summer, the mansion presents a metaphorical representation of the American Dream that could be realized after long years of suffering. Bailey goes further to state that the owners of the mansion were in fact the representatives of the society’s elite who would destroy the unity of the American family through their commercialized image of what the American Dream should be.

Unlike the classical formula of the haunted house in which the setting is a decorative element that enhances the horror, the Long Island house proves an active hunter from the outset. Through the characters of Walker, Miss Allardyce and Brother, who manifestly represent the house, Marasco gives hints that the house is not passively chosen by Marian but it rather indirectly chooses its burnt offering. In different instances of the novel, the Allardyses treated

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<sup>44</sup> it is the title of the fifth chapter of Dale Bailey’s book *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*.

the Rolfes generally and Marian particularly as preys to be examined before sacrifice. They “seemed to be studying Marian especially. “I like ‘em, Roz’”, he announced” (Marasco 42). The Allardycs presented at the beginning of the novel serve as the basis to guarantee the hypnotic effect of the house. By repeating words like “yours” and by stressing on the idea of the different tasks to be done, focusing mainly on the importance of the mother, the absent yet present figure of power, the Allardycs become finally sure that Marian is under-control and fully absorbed by the house, guaranteeing the success of the sacrifice. The choice of Marian is not whimsical as they know that her perception of domesticity, that is summarized in chores and looking after children, will be her tragic fall. For this reason, the Allardycs do not ask for an expensive rent, but for a good upkeep of the house, which Marian took for granted. They were sure that by cleaning the house, Marian will be gradually connected to it and to its fancy furniture. In fact, Marian’s admiration of the house leads to her self-negation and to a gradual apotheosis of the space. She first considers her housekeeping as a mechanical activity and a duty that should be done. However, she gradually becomes absorbed by the different domestic tasks, reverencing the mansion and considering it as a refuge from her own family. Marian is absent in the most important events, sacrificing her role as a wife and mother and reducing it simply to the rank of a housekeeper. Throughout the different climaxes, Marian chooses the house over her family. Her radical change starts first at the level of her intimate relationship with her husband Ben. The house starts attacking Marian’s purity, the first pillar of the cult of domesticity. Her character develops from faithful and submissive into a neglecting wife. Marian denies herself as a woman and as a wife as she is indulged into her new duty. Her rejection morphs into a sense of repulsion from the first night in the mansion:

Marian came out of the bathroom in a short blue nightgown, thought, *Oh, no, Ben, not tonight, please*, when she saw him naked, and delayed getting into bed as long as she could, adjusting windows, inspecting the gas heater [...], and passing her hand reverently over the wood of the highboy.

“Come to bed”

She went to the windows again, luxuriating in the space and the quiet. (Marasco 80)

Marian's realization that she finally finds her dream house along with her admiration of the different fancy furniture, make her feel satisfied enough to forget her intimacy and family. The house succeeds in being her new world as she finally finds all the luxury that she dreamt about. The haunted mansion grows stronger as Marian dedicates herself physically and mentally. She breaks further the codes of domesticity since she becomes fully hypnotized, neglecting her role as a protective mother: "Somewhere beyond the closed windows she thought she heard David's voice calling her. She didn't move, except to bring her hands up to her head and brush the hair back against her temples. It was strange how the room insulated her; David, for the moment, seemed as distant to her as the sound of his voice. The hum was closer, more insistent" (Marasco 91-92). The humming sound<sup>45</sup> presents a recurrent motif that hypnotizes Marian and changes her perception of domesticity. The house becomes Marian's own world, an integrated part of her life, a solace without which "a wave of depression [...] come[s] over her" (Marasco 128). Marian drastically changes from a typical American housewife to a woman totally blinded by the sophisticated house and obsessed by its every single element. She sums up her understanding of domesticity to housekeeping, disregarding her importance as a mother and a wife. Marasco shows the gradual development of her obsession by listing different instances that shock the reader. Whenever Ben or her child David needs her urgently, she finds herself justifying her choice to be in the house rather than supporting them. When Aunt Elizabeth, Ben's Aunt, passed away in the Long Island mansion, Marian refuses to attend her funeral, making the house her ultimate priority and justifying this by simply saying: "How can I leave her, Ben? You know how she depends on me for everything" (Marasco 183). The idea of hypnosis and even possession, related to the American Dream by some critics, like Dale Bailey in *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, may be explained differently. Marasco echoes the cultural and social changes of the 1970s United States by presenting the Rolfes in different

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<sup>45</sup> The motif of the humming sound is going to be further analyzed in the following chapter.

settings with different situations. First, he presents the typical domestic life with the conventional codes and norms respected by Marian as she is portrayed as a full-time mother. However, her sudden change when she moves to the Long Island mansion may be explained as a reference to the rebellious reaction to her past life and a yearning to have a private space where she can fully enjoy herself. Finding her sanctuary, Marian redefines the norms of domesticity, trying to build her own world away from the sense of duty that chained her freedom. The hum sound that recurs throughout the novel refers to Marian's inner, revolting self who tries to wake up the old Marian whenever she fades her independent self away. Marian's longing to be in the sitting room is a metaphorical reflection of her real yearning for privacy and independence. Marasco tries to draw an image of the development of women's perceptions of "true womanhood", reconstructing and redefining the 1970s American Dream as yearning for having one's own space.

Yet, Marian's longing to be free is also a source of her own misery as she loses her family at the end of the novel. Long Island house presents an eerie domestic space, where Marian is entrapped and haunted by her own domesticity. Her maniacal housekeeping presents an instance of the strategic way that the house adopts to possess her through haunting her dreams and wishes. Marian's devastated marital life is compensated by the house's fancy furniture and silver decorative items. Her affectionate family life is replaced by a materialistic empty life in an attempt to contain her soul by weakening her. Despite the numerous occasions in which Ben warns Marian of the fatal ending of her choices, she keeps insisting on choosing her new world over her family. At the end of the novel, when Marian finally decides to wake up and to choose her family and to save Ben and David by escaping the haunted mansion and going back to her old world, she finds herself unable to break loose from the powerful house. She loses her family only to find herself eternally entrapped within the walls of the haunted house due to the radicalism of her choices. In the 1970s, an era of growing waves of feminism, *Burnt Offerings* comes as a Gothic novel in which domesticity becomes the hunter. Marian is



a typical middle-class wife who is a victim of blind consumerism, a new social trait of the 1970s culture of domesticity. Running after the American Dream, Marian finds herself an easy prey to Long Island mansion: “a hungry house [that] has to seduce you into its long embrace”<sup>46</sup>. Marasco shows that the radical change from strict codes and norms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the ultimate revolutionary ideas of freedom and liberty, may affect the unity of the American family. He goes further to metaphorically present the causality between the American Dream and the unfortunate denouement of the characters’ situations, highlighting the gradual collapse of the American family due to the blind pursuit of the ‘hollow’ dream.

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<sup>46</sup> Stephen Graham Jones. Introduction to *Burnt Offerings*, vi.

## CHAPTER 2

### **The panoptic dimensions of the settings**

Being a literary genre based upon horror and the emotions of both characters and readers, Gothic literature depends on the architecture of settings to enhance the claustrophobic atmosphere and to stress the idea of paranoia that presents one of the commonest motifs of the genre. Haunted houses present one example of the Gothic indispensable settings that emphasize the idea of the presence of controlling invisible forces that may manipulate everything within the realm of the frightful place. However, throughout the history of the Gothic genre, one common aspect of the settings has remained unchanged, namely the panoptic dimension of the haunted settings. Within this context, the panoptic dimension refers to the architectural and metaphorical aspects of the haunted houses that enhance the characters' constant feeling of being watched and threatened by supernatural entities. The concept of *panopticon* was coined by Jeremy Bentham in reference to a design based upon the centrality of the invisible supervisor and the constant feeling of supervision in order to guarantee discipline. Though Bentham defined this concept in relation to different institutions (schools, hospitals, industries ...), the term is strictly related to prisons. Even though the panopticon appears in the nineteenth century, the essence of this architecture, along with its metaphorical and figurative meaning, has been manifested in Gothic literature since the seventeenth century. The earliest examples of the Gothic novels highlight the importance of the unique architecture to convey the morbid atmosphere. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the Gothic setting witnessed different changes as the genre developed. Horace Walpole, Matthew Lewis, and Bram Stoker use the same architectural traits for the Gothic castles, emphasizing the claustrophobic ambience that characterizes the setting, despite its vastness, as there is

an inexplicable constant feeling of being observed and haunted. With the development of the Gothic genre, authors modernize the setting respecting their era, but still respecting the panoptic atmosphere. The haunted house formula developed to be a mixture of architectural maze and psychological torture. In this context, the present chapter studies three examples of settings; Hill House, Belasco's House and Long Island House as manifestations of the panoptic setting. Here, being panoptic will not be necessarily architectural but can be also psychological.

### **2.1. Hill House: The architectural reincarnation of the panopticon**

In Shirley Jackson's novel, the description of the setting is ramified to include, in addition to the architecture and the interior design, the detailed description of the road that leads to it and the village where it is situated. The first lines, mentioning Hill House, are an unconventional description of the setting. The novel starts with a short paragraph in a portentous descriptive style, foreshadowing the evil coming events. The incipit indicates that Hill House is a harsh place "not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within" (Jackson 3). Standing for "eighty years and might stand for eighty more" (Jackson 3), the house is firstly and broadly described as a mythical setting with an invincible power. The predictive style is further highlighted as the description reveals different omens with the "DARE" and "EVIL" signs that Eleanor saw on her way to Hillsdale, where Hill House is situated. Besides, during one of her multiple stops, Eleanor met an old man who was silent throughout her discussion with the girl at the coffee shop and ends up by saying in a sobering tone "People leave this town [...] They don't come here" (Jackson 26). These different omens pave the way to the upcoming events and descriptions that present the Hill House as an unlivable place.

As Eleanor arrived to the Hill House, the bleakness of the setting is enhanced further by its detailed description, starting from the outside design to the interior architecture. The detailed account of the house's different rooms and its overall design shows a parallelism with

## Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon.

### 2.1.1. Jeremy Bentham's concept of Panopticon

The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham is often referred to as the founding father of utilitarianism. However, Bentham is frequently associated with an architectural design that reflects in fact his philosophical ideas and thoughts. By utilitarianism, Bentham refers to the theory that human life is mainly governed by the duality of pain and pleasure, and every human action is strongly related to the innate constant search for happiness and the natural repulsion of pain (14). In the first chapter of his book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham refers to the concept of utility as “[...] that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness” (14). Believing in humanitarianism and the importance of social change, Bentham attempted to reflect his philosophical ideas on an architectural design that may be used for political and economic reforms. He invented the panopticon at the end of the eighteenth century, as a revolutionary modern architectural alternative to the classical design of factories, hospitals, and schools. This design was first believed to be intended for economic profits as it guarantees the discipline of workers and thus their work productivity. However, Panopticon was later strongly related to the context of law enforcement as it was believed to be a humanitarian alternative for the physical abusive punishments of the era. The Panopticon is a circular design with a watchtower situated in the center to permit the inspector to have an eye on prisoners without being seen or identified, giving him a God-like existence, a presence through absence. Through this design, applicable to different sectors, Bentham wanted to prove that the “absent” constant look of the inspector will create a sense of self-policing which will diminish the probability of disorder and unrest. In his book *The Panopticon Writings* which consists

of a series of letters, sent to an anonymous addressee, Bentham widens the scope of the panoptic design to include, in addition to prisons and custody houses, hospitals, schools and manufactories, highlighting the fact that the design's pillar is the duality of light and shadow, the visibility and invisibility of the inspector's presence which guarantees disciplined confinement instead of using abusive physical violence. Panopticon presents Bentham's idealistic vision of a design that may gather punishment and discipline with humanitarianism and democracy. He aims to create a revolutionary perception of settings which are generally related to confinement and tension, by realizing the same aims with less suffering. Besides, Bentham discusses the universality of the design by showing the economic productivity that may be increased by adopting this scheme. The all-embracing circulation of the omnipresent, invisible gaze guarantees the discipline and order of the workers since this gaze, which is gradually interiorized, leads to self-surveillance. Bentham believes in the panopticon as a solution for many social, economic, educational and political problems. He summarizes the essence of his invention in his book *The Panopticon Writings* by asserting that "morals reformed, health preserved, industry invigorated, instruction diffused, public burthens lightened, economy seated as it were upon a rock, the Gordian knot of the poor – laws not cut but untied – all by a simple idea in architecture" (95). Designing the panopticon, Bentham thinks about reforms and rehabilitation rather than punishment as he often uses the term "custody" to refer to the panopticon or *the penitentiary house*. The choice of the term custody, which is polysemous, is far from arbitrary; it refers at once to protection, supervision and confinement. The Benthamian panopticon is a non-orthodox design based upon the duality of non-physical punishment and education. It allows a constant, automatic surveillance by an invisible inspector. Even though the Benthamian project is presented as a nonviolent form of punishment, Michel Foucault insists that this design is the epitome of psychological torture. He studies the fact that even though panopticon has no physical abusive effects, it damages the prisoners' psychology as it interiorizes the inspector's gaze; consequently, the prisoner is

supervised by himself and by the other prisoners. This situation creates an automatized cosmos of surveillance that may literally kill the human imagination and spirit.

Hill House, with its medieval architecture, solid stone wall and high tower, seems to be an unbreakable prison in which the characters are entrapped. This design, which corresponds in numerous instances to Bentham's panopticon, presents the primary raw material used to intensify horror and to create a claustrophobic atmosphere despite its vastness. The first itemized description is dedicated to the house's gates which are significantly attractive thanks to its enormousness. Words like "tall, heavy, padlock, chain, bars, locked and barred" (Jackson 28) suggest that the gate is more likely to be a prison's gate than a house's. With the presence of Mr. Dudley as a caretaker, the first impressions of both Eleanor Vance and the readers suggest the idea that Hill House is a prison-like setting and that Mr. Dudley is its prisoner. Besides, the primary focus on the house's gate highlights the theme of entrapment. In fact, different elements in the novel suggest the idea that the haunted setting is not a simple place where characters can enjoy their freedom of moving in and out of it. It is rather a huge prison-like place. This idea is highlighted by the presence of numerous narrow rooms— with closed doors, or as the narrator has it, "with no direct way to the outside" (Jackson 100). With the omnipresence of Mr. and Mrs. Dudley who insist on closing the different doors, preventing the characters from leaving the house, the different characters start feeling themselves in custody, constantly confined and supervised. This idea is further underlined by Dr Montague's claims that the house refuses to let its inhabitants out, punishing whoever tries to escape from its "insistent hospitality" (Jackson 67).

Throughout the novel, there are numerous instances that show how Hill House is designed and serves as a Benthamian panopticon. The parallelism between panopticon and Hill House can be studied at the level of the interior design, the duality of light and shadow and most importantly the symbolism of the tower. In the second chapter of Jackson's work, a thorough description of the haunted setting starts with a personification that highlights the

wakefulness of the house, a place that seems to be vigilant, and that oversees haughtily the town of Hillsdale. The narrator describes the house as a living entity “a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice” (Jackson 34). The narrator goes further by attributing typically human adjectives like “arrogant, hating” (Jackson 35) to the house, and giving it a mythical aspect by suggesting that it cannot be a human creation as it “seemed somehow to have formed itself, flying together into its own powerful pattern under the hands of its builders, fitting itself into its own construction of lines and angles, reared its great head back against the sky without concession to humanity” (Jackson 35). The house’s bleakness leaves the protagonist, Eleanor, speechless and unable to describe it, feeling mysteriously restless. Moving to its interior design, the house is firstly presented as “a masterpiece of architectural misdirection” (Jackson 106), composed of many rooms, each one with a different color and some of them with no source of ventilation, arranged in “concentric circles [...], at the center is the little parlor” (Jackson 100). This description echoes the concentric rings of cells in the Benthamian panopticon, where prisoners are placed according to their level of danger. This unusual design is further elaborated by an architectural deformity as all angles in the Hill House “are actually a fraction of a degree off in one direction or another” (Jackson 105). This deformity leads the characters to be disoriented and awkwardly unbalanced. The house’s design is misleading as visibility and invisibility are hazed, leading each character to see the house from his/her own perspective. In addition to its labyrinthine interior design, the description of the Hill House is based upon the duality between light and shadow, a basis upon which Bentham built his design. Being architecturally distorted, Hill House is designed as a dark place par excellence. Composed of different passages, halls and rooms with no windows, the house lacks airing and light. This characteristic intensifies further the characters’ disorientation. Throughout the novel, the narrator tries to show the opposition between light and darkness in different instances. In one example, the narrator shows the

opposition between the vivid outfit of Eleanor and Theodora and the bleakness of the house: “They ran downstairs, moving with color and life against the dark woodwork and the clouded light of the stairs” (Jackson 48). The darkness seems to be so thick that a “fading sunlight” can penetrate it to bring some freshness. The idea of light and darkness can be further studied in relation to the duality of the visible and invisible that characterizes both the Benthamian panopticon and the Hill House.

While discovering Hill House, the characters can see that some parts are both visible and invisible. Dr. Montague explains this as a form of a faulty design. One of the weirdest parts of the house, whose design is controversial, is the tower. The tower is first described in the fourth chapter, with an insistence on the suddenness of its appearance:

It rose up before her suddenly, almost without warning, as she came around the curve of the veranda. It was made of gray stone, grotesquely solid, jammed hard against the wooden side of the house, with the insistent veranda holding it there. [...] then thought that of the house burned away someday the tower would still stand, gray and forbidding over the ruins, warning people away from what left of Hill House, [...]. (Jackson 112-13)

The tower is presented as an absent part of the house that appears unexpectedly. However, it is present from the beginning. The tower can be considered as a parallel image of the panopticon’s watching tower where the supervisor enjoys his unverifiable presence. More importantly, the image of the visible and invisible tower, created out of an architectural trick, can be studied as a symbol of the invisible power of surveillance. The characters are under the illusion that they are supervised by its immense height. In fact, the tower is a horror intriguer as the protagonist Eleanor related the tower and the library within to the past memories that haunt her. Being both present and absent, the tower presents a symbol of the dark past of both Hill House (since Mrs. Crain’s companion “hanged herself from the turret on the tower” (Jackson 81) and Eleanor (a reminder of her mother). In this context, the tower is used by the haunting force as a way to attract Eleanor who dared to climb it hypnotically thinking that she can finally be reunited with her motherly home:



Climbing the narrow iron stairway was intoxicating – going higher and higher, around and around, looking down, clinging to the slim iron railing, looking far far down onto the stone floor. [...] Looking up, she thought of the tower of Hill House rising triumphantly between the trees, tall over the road which wound through Hillsdale [...]. (Jackson 232)

To crown it all, the setting in Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* shows resemblance to the panopticon. An ominous prison-like house with closed doors that shut off the sunlight. With the veranda that looks like a belt that hems in the house, the setting assumes a circular form with a concentric design. The presence of the tower highlights further the panoptic dimension of the house and conveys the idea of an oppressive omnipresent surveillance as its visibility is manipulated thanks to its destabilizing design.

## **2.2. The Watcher's manipulation in Richard Matheson's *Hell House***

The panoptic dimension of the setting in Richard Matheson's *Hell House* lies mainly in relation to the invisible gaze rather than to the prison-like design. In spite of the absence of the central tower, the house still presents a panoptic space as the voice of the unseen owner is heard to welcome the characters and to remind them to "[t]hink of me as your unseen host and believe that, during your stay here, I shall be with you in spirit" (Matheson 38). Belasco's words serve the idea of the illusory freedom of the prisoners of the panopticon whose conduct is observed constantly and even manipulated by the watcher's unverifiable presence. Hell House presents the metaphorical dimension of the panopticon as there is a multiplicity of references that show the hierarchy of the unseen force (the presence of Daniel Belasco as a second haunting force who is used by his father to manipulate Florence's mind). This part will study the way this haunting manipulative power is exercised, using the Foucauldian theory of Panopticism.

### **2.2.1. Michel Foucault's perception of discipline: panopticism as power operation**

Inspired by Jeremy Bentham's design of panopticon, Michel Foucault created the theory of *panopticism*. The term *panopticism* was first coined by Foucault in 1975 when he used it in

his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, relating it to two other major concepts of his, power and discipline. In the aforementioned book, Foucault defines the concept of discipline as a technique to regulate and adjust the behavior of individuals according to a set of predetermined norms (150). This regulation is feasible with the adjustment of space and architecture to convey the control of behaviors and attitudes. Foucault studies further the concept of discipline in relation to a second concept of power. He highlights the fact that the two concepts are not synonymous but rather complementary. Discipline is a tool used to exercise power, being based upon the idea of surveillance and control. The French philosopher goes on conceptualizing discipline by giving the example of the *disciplinary society*, a modern society that uses discipline, surveillance and constant control as a general norm of its different institutions, including even schools and hospitals. He strictly related discipline to enclosure as a way to control behaviors and creating hierarchies within a well-studied design that guarantees confinement. He gives the example of prison which he defines “like a rather disciplined barracks, a strict school, a dark workshop, but not qualitatively different” (223). Foucault uses prisons as examples of the way individuals are distributed and categorized in a confined space to exercise power through maintaining discipline. He uses the Benthamian design of panopticon as an example of utopian perception of discipline and power that undoubtedly revolutionizes the world of punishment. Foucault defines the Benthamian panopticon as the epitome of the disciplinary mechanism as it presents a confined, enclosed space where different individuals are constantly supervised and strictly observed by an unseen inspector. Panopticon presents then a perfect example of what discipline stands for: functionality (a circular, enclosed design) and hierarchy.

In his book, Foucault theorizes the new concept of panopticism by firstly presenting a historical overview of how it gradually developed in the seventeenth century as a preventive measure to stop a contamination or to guarantee discipline and to increase productivity to a

technique incorporated in all sectors. This gradual extension is justifiable as panopticism is a technique based upon the automatization of surveillance which guarantees power and control. It is based upon the space management rather than the use of numerous expensive tools. It is a manipulation of individuals' perception through the dichotomy of visibility vs. invisibility and the good management of space which leads to a large, complex web of what Foucault calls "micro power", all related to a centralized, sovereign apparatus. Foucault highlights further this complex mechanism of surveillance by giving an example of the eighteenth-century French police who illustrate an instance of the way surveillance became a hierarchal network under which individuals were under a ceaseless control of a complex hierarchy of different members of inspectors and officers who are all linked to a powerful center, symbolized by the monarch (214). The Foucauldian panopticism describes the way individuals are arranged, categorized and stigmatized within an enclosed, prison-like society, using different tools of constant, perpetual surveillance. It is based upon the concept of gaze and the combination of the enforced visibility of individuals and the chosen invisibility of the supervisor whose unobtrusiveness presents a strategy to intensify the individuals' confusion, fear and uncertainty which guarantees discipline and power.

Foucault develops the theory of panopticism by elaborating Bentham's view that people of democratic societies need to believe in their constant surveillance in order to guarantee power and order. He believes that the supposedly democratic societies use a kind of mind control by giving an illusion of freedom while they are constantly observed and controlled. The Foucauldian theory highlights the psychological effects of the surveillance since the prison that the individual lives in is both concrete and figurative. The theory of Panopticism is based upon the idea of an interiorized constant surveillance. Hence the pillar of panopticism is mainly a mental power or as Jeremy Bentham refers to "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind" (*The Panopticon Writing* 31).

In Richard Matheson's *Hell House* (1971), the setting is presented as a classical bleak castle, where darkness is propagated among its different vast, sophisticated rooms. Even though there is no architectural resemblance with the Benthamian panopticon, Hell House can be still considered as a panoptic space following the Foucauldian theory of panopticism. The haunted setting can be studied as a place of enclosure where its inhabitants are confined like prisoners and where the different relations of power, surveillance and discipline can be recorded. As the house presents a bridge between the past and the present, panopticism can be traced in both times. The history of the house shows that Belasco created its house as a fancy prison to exercise his fantasy of power. The house is described as a place with bricked up windows (30), where fresh air and sunlight are shut off. It is situated in a cloistered area in the Matawaskie Valley. The choice of the deserted area shows that Belasco aims to create his own society confined in his place that transforms soon to their one and only world. Hell House's design reminds the reader of the cloister<sup>47</sup> as it is massive, vast and well-furnished but still presents a place of seclusion and confinement:

They moved beneath an archway six feet deep and stopped, Edith and Florence gasping almost simultaneously. Barrett whistled softly as he raised his candle for a maximum of light. The great hall measured ninety-five by forty-seven feet, its walls two stories high, paneled in walnut to a height of eight feet, rough-hewn blocks of stone above. (Matheson 34)

The above description reminds the reader of the long-paved walkways of the cloister, especially when the characters discovered the presence of a chapel in the house, something that is not usually present in the Gothic settings. The idea of the setting as a panoptic space where the watcher manipulates his "prisoners" can be traced both in the history of the house and the present adventure of the novel. Emeric Belasco provided everything for his guests to entrap

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<sup>47</sup> According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, a cloister is a "quadrilateral enclosure surrounded by covered walkways, and usually attached to a monastic or cathedral church and sometimes to a college. The term used in a narrow sense also applies to the walkways or alleys themselves (the central area being the cloister garth), in a general sense to the houses of religious orders, and in a generic sense to places of retreat for religious purposes".

them in his luxury. To welcome them, he left a record of his welcoming speech, insisting on his physical absence and giving them the illusion of freedom:

“Do not let my physical absence disturb you, however. Think of me as your unseen host and believe that, during your stay here, I shall be with you in spirit.”

[...]

“All your needs have been provided for,” Belasco’s voice continued. “Nothing has been overlooked. Go where you will, and do what you will [...]. Feel free to function as you choose. There are no responsibilities, no rules”. (Matheson 38)

Emeric Belasco exercises his power over his crowd through his physical absence, believing that vision and surveillance are the keys of dominance. He is not involved in the different pleasures provided for his guests, preferring to take the role of a supervisor “to make a study of evil” (Matheson 60). Belasco’s watching from afar allows him to adjust the amount of free debaucheries, pushing his guests to their limits gradually and reaching the state of chaotic lifestyle, murder, rape and even cannibalism. What is striking to know is that this inhuman experience was not discovered by anyone, including detectives who tried to investigate but “they never found a thing. Everyone was on their best behavior while the investigation was taking place” (Matheson 59). Belasco’s physical presence is not important to guarantee discipline and discretion. He exercises the invisible panoptic gaze<sup>48</sup> which Foucault considers the essence of the panoptic power. The secret behind the success of Belasco’s perverted experience is the fact that everyone feel that they are subject to the omnipresent gaze. This power is enough to guarantee the discipline of his guests as no one dared to stop or to escape from the earthly hell created along different years. After long years of this experience and as Belasco’s house becomes known as a haunted Hell House, Dr Barrett’s group comes to investigate the reality of the setting. Here, Belasco exercises his panoptic power again, even

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<sup>48</sup> The panoptic gaze presents for Foucault a complex operation of power based upon psychological entrapment and delusion, and functions within an architectural realm that triggers the effect of the panoptic gaze and guarantees discipline. This pattern is applicable not solely at the political level but also at the social level, in which gaze presents an effective way for the social institutions to guarantee domination and power. The presence of the eye as an organ or the physical presence of the observer is no longer necessary as the fear of being constantly observed is internalized in the subject’s psyche, which obliges him to abide by the norms and the rules of space.

though the context is different. Being investigators, the different characters are presented throughout the novel as active seers who are watching and surveilling the haunting force. However, as the novel develops, the reader notices that these active agents are in fact under the spell of Belasco's panoptic gaze that succeeds in objectifying them, transforming them into passive object to be seen. Being present-absent, Belasco succeeds in manipulating the different characters, showing them in different instances that he was surveilling them. At the beginning of the novel, there is an incident of the phonograph that works accidentally by its own, diffusing Belasco's welcome message, recorded years ago. This incident triggers a number of questions about the possible presence of Belasco. The incident shows that Belasco works on the duality of visibility and invisibility to manipulate them and pushing them to think that they are under constant surveillance. Belasco's strategy aims to let the different characters feel that the situation is under their control and that they are the ones who decide the different steps of the investigation. However, Dr Barrett's group are in fact unable to escape the steady, abiding gaze of the watcher. He tries regularly to remind them of their status as objects through different invisible hints like breathing, reacting to their attempts to unveil the reality of the house. Despite the fact that the different characters were aware of Belasco's aim to "turn [them] against each other" (Matheson 107), they were hopeless and unable to keep his panoptic gaze away. Furthermore, Belasco's manipulation lies in the fact that he puts each character in scrutiny, leading them to feel that they are watched everywhere from all directions. He starts mainly with the female characters, manipulating their mind and body in an attempt to revive the atrocities of 1940. Sexuality is the key to divide the characters and trigger different conflicts to weaken them. Through his panoptic gaze, Belasco is able to study the group from

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In his book *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (1994), Martin Jay highlights the relationship between the psychological effects of the panoptic, manipulative gaze, and the architecture of the panopticon, asserting that "[t]he Panopticon, with its hidden and invisible God, was an architectural embodiment of the most paranoid Sartrean fantasies about the "absolute look". The object of power is everywhere penetrated by the benevolently sadistic gaze of a diffuse and anonymous power whose actual existence soon becomes superfluous to the process of discipline" (410).

the beginning of their adventure. The group, composed from different background, is based upon the duality of science/ spirituality, a characteristic that presents a source of division rather than unity. Florence Tanner in particular presents an interesting character through whom Belasco decided to weaken and manipulate the group. Belasco's interest in Florence comes as a result of his awareness that his monstrosity can be revived and exercised easily through the female body and sexuality. Florence unconsciously shows her vulnerability as she firstly tried to communicate with Belasco's ghost erotically as she "began to rub both hands over her arms and shoulders, down across her breasts, and over her stomach and thighs. The strokings were almost sensual as she massaged herself, lips parted, eyes half-closed, an expression of torpid abandonment on her face" (Matheson 64). By surveilling the group and mainly Florence, Belasco realizes that Florence's sexuality will be the key to manipulate the group and guarantee their discipline. He recreates his laboratory where the female characters are under study, watching their reactions and responding to them instantly. He focuses on the female body and liberate their subconscious sexual desires inhibited for different social and psychological reasons. Florence starts to be attacked sexually, being a victim of several attempts of rape, while Edith starts to be sexually free as she tries to seduce all different characters including Florence. Belasco's omnipresent gaze is strong enough to make the female characters manipulated. In fact, in different instances in the novel and after every sexual accident, the characters blame repetitively the house to be the source of this unusual behavior. In one instance, Edith, the faithful, loyal wife tries to seduce Fischer with blank eyes (Matheson 115), suggesting her absent-mindedness. Realizing what she did, Edith was in a state of complete shock and fear as she realized that "the house was getting to her as well" (Matheson 115). Even though Hell House is not architecturally presented as an example of Benthamian panopticon, panopticism, as Foucault elaborated, can be traced in the fact that Belasco uses his omnipresent gaze to be able to manipulate characters' mind and desires, affecting their decisions. As the investigation develops, the different

characters become aware of this effect, concluding that:

Belasco could act in any area without his presence ever being known. He could create an all but incomprehensible tapestry of effects by manipulating every entity within the house, shifting from one to the other, always in the background – as Florence had said, a general with his army.

He thought about the record suddenly. It had been no coincidence. It had been Belasco greeting them upon their entrance into his home – his battlefield. He heard the eerie, mocking voice inside his mind again. *Welcome to my house. I'm delighted you could come.* (Matheson 179)

However, at the end of the novel, the author presents a deconstructive image of the watcher, as the group discovered his ugly truth. Belasco, or the giant, as it was presented at the beginning of the novel, is in fact a small, physically weak man who suffered from different complexes due to his shortness. The different medical surgeries done changed his appearance as it gave him height but did not heal his complexes. The image of the haunting watcher whose panoptic gaze gives him unlimited power to manipulate all characters is destroyed as the exorcism of Hell House succeeds. The haunting of Emeric Belasco is based upon his behavior as a sadist who enjoys controlling and manipulating his victims through sexual dominance and violence. In fact, his sadism can be explained in reference to the ego defense mechanism<sup>49</sup> (using Freud's concept) against his Napoleon complex<sup>50</sup>. As he had a short-heighted body, Belasco tried to compensate his complexity by pretending to be virile and even sexually violent. Belasco was inspired by Sade to create his own paradise in which he can successfully hide his different complexes.

### **2.3. Mrs. Allardyce in Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*: the invisible surveillance**

Unlike Richard Matheson's *Hell House* and Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, which share the same storyline of a group of investigators whose aim is to discover the

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<sup>49</sup> A term developed first by Sigmund Freud in his work *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense* (1894), and later on by his daughter Anna Freud. The term refers to a set of strategies developed unconsciously to protect the mind from anxiety resulted from unacceptable or undesirable situations.

<sup>50</sup> It is an inferiority complex, named after Napoleon Bonaparte. It refers to the complex of being small sized, compensated by a socially aggressive behavior and an overuse of lies about wealth, physical potency, etc.



secret behind the haunting nature of the setting, Robert Marasco presents a new formula, studying the Gothic setting from a revolutionary side, by starting from the classical formula of a haunted house and challenging it to create his own unique vision of this Gothic benchmark. *Burnt Offerings* is the haunted house novel par excellence. It starts and ends with the Long Island house that transcends the simple function of a setting to be an active character. Marasco's novel presents a hybrid of the classical Gothic story with the presence of supernatural elements and the Poean psychological Gothicism in which horror comes from the inside of the human being. Despite the anaphoric reference to the uniqueness of the house as alive, active and intelligent enough to choose and hunt its preys, the first descriptions are typically classical and conformist. Long Island house is firstly presented as:

[a]great, rambling mass of gables and dormers and rounded bays, the house was set on the highest point of land [...]. Gray and massive, with the look of generations about it, it made Marian think of buttresses and spires. And like a cathedral there was something that ordered its complexity, a spine running the vast length of the house (Marasco 23).

The above description reflects the Gothic settings presented in the canonical writings of the eighteenth century. Characterized by a medieval architecture; a gloomy, mysterious design that enhances the dreadful atmosphere of the novel, settings were typically old castles or decayed cathedrals that contain secret chambers, high walls, and bewildering, labyrinth like design. This design is chosen by authors for thematic reasons as the setting conveys the theme of horror and haunting. However, the old mansion with the medieval architecture is in fact situated in the modern context of Long Island. The choice of an urban modern setting, despite its secludedness, reflects a Poean strategy of urbanizing the Gothic setting, in an attempt to internalize the readers' horror experience. In this way, horror becomes domesticated as the bleakness of the haunted setting echoes the monstrosity of its past, transforming the familiar symbol of shelter and sanctuary to an unfamiliar place where horror pervades and danger becomes the norm.

Unlike Jackson's Hill House and its tower that reminds the reader of the watchtower of the Benthamian panopticon, Long Island House's design does not suggest an architectural resemblance to the panopticon. Yet, panopticism is presented through the character of Mrs. Allardyce, an old woman who is supposed to be a subject of care. However, this elderly remains invisible in her upstairs room. Mrs. Allardyce is described in absentia as there is no indication about her physical appearance nor her age or background. She was rather described in relation to her importance for her daughter and son (Miss Allardyce and Brother). Mrs. Allardyce is presented as a character of a great importance as "her word is *law*. Always was and always will be" (Marasco 49). Miss Allardyce and Brother tried to focus on the unity between their mother and the house insisting that:

"This house is just about all the world she knows. It's her life."

"And vice versa," Brother said. "The whole thing would just come down without her." (Marasco 48)

The above description of Mrs. Allardyce along with the choice of her room, being in the attic, reflects the panoptic role of the mother. Through her invisible surveillance, Ben and Marian will be constantly under her gaze as the choice of location echoes the height and centrality of the panoptic power which permits an unlimited scope to supervise the subjects. Mrs. Allardyce's room presents a source of mystery as there is a constant sound of humming that makes the physical absence of the watcher an actual presence. The procedure of h(a)unting Marian can be summarized in two words: the house's gaze and the constant hum. Marasco presents the house-hunter as a space in which the different roles are adverse: The passive becomes active and the subject becomes an object. This subversion of the different roles presents mainly a result of the omnipresent invisible gaze. In this context, the concept of the Lacanian gaze is going to be used as a reference to the house's most efficient weapon to control the different characters.

### 2.3.1. The Lacanian gaze: An enhancement of panoptic anxiety

Gaze is a concept that was studied by different philosophers from different perspectives. As I have already mentioned, it was studied by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, where he relates the concept of gaze to Bentham's panoptic design, defining it in terms of domination, manipulation and power relations. The panoptic gaze is a God-like gaze; omnipresent, unseen but felt by the subject. The power of this gaze lies in its effect on the subject who gradually adapts and interiorizes it as a result of a constant surveillance. The concept was also studied by Jean-Paul Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943), a book that inspired Lacan to build his own theory about Gaze. Lacan shares the same Sartrean idea that gaze is first and foremost independent of the eye, the organ of sight. It is in fact a way to recognize the subjectivity of the other as the subject understands that he can be an object of seeing of another subject, a process that leads to a situation of surprise. Jacques Lacan starts from the Sartrean account of the gaze and develops it further in relation to other key concepts like the mirror stage and the split of the subject into observer and observed.

*Gaze* represents for Jacques Lacan a concept of a paramount significance in his study of the construction of identity. The Lacanian gaze is related to the *mirror stage*<sup>51</sup> as it presents a step towards the creation of subjectivity. As the child sees himself in the mirror, he recognizes himself as a subject, seeing and being seen. However, this stage is not simply a moment of identification, it is also a moment of disturbance and alienation as the child considers his reflected image as defective and even distorted:

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<sup>51</sup> It is a psychoanalytic concept that was firstly presented by Jacques Lacan at a conference in 1936 and then developed in a panel entitled "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience", delivered at the sixteenth International Congress of Psychoanalysis (1949) and published in his book *Ecrits* (1966). This concept refers to a stage in an infant's life during which it recognizes its own reflection on the mirror. It is a period of identity building, "an identification [...] namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (*Ecrits* 76).

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an “orthopedic” form of its totality – and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure. (*Ecrits* 78)

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973), Lacan studies further *gaze* in relation to another concept which is *split*. It refers to the opposition between the ability to see from one point and being looked at from all angles. This situation leads to antagonist feelings: pleasure and disturbance. Gaze can be a source of pleasure as “this all-seeing aspect is to be found in the satisfaction of a woman who knows that she is being looked at, on condition that one does not show her that one knows that she knows” (75). However, it can be disquieting as the subject recognizes the fact of being looked at by the object of his/her gaze. This disturbance can be intensified to represent an anxiety trigger as we become an object of the gaze instead of being a viewer which leads to an uncanny feeling of awkwardness. Besides, Lacan defines gaze in relation to another concept which is *stain* (*la tache*) as a source of perturbation. With the presence of the stain (which can be a sudden movement or a sourceless noise), the scope of visibility is shortened which hastens the feeling of anxiety as there is a recognition of the status of being looked at. Lacan explains, stain presents an important part in the understanding of the gaze:

There is no need for us to refer to some supposition of the existence of a universal seer. If the function of the stain is recognized in its autonomy and identified with that of the gaze, we can seek its track, its thread, its trace, at every stage of the Constitution of the world, in the scopic field. We will then realize that the function of the stain and of the gaze is both that which governs the gaze most secretly and that which always escapes from the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness. (74)

Besides, Lacan develops the concept of *objet petit a* and relates it to our desires. This concept is coordinated to the gaze in a sense that since the *objet petit a* projects our ideal ego, being

indulged in it leads to the discovery of the harsh reality that the basis of our desire is lack. Both *objet petit a* and gaze are based upon lack, the former as unreachable desires and the latter as lack of visibility. This part presents an endeavor to locate the different instances of the important role of the gaze in the panoptic space. As the Lacanian gaze is presented in a field where the subject is "looked at from all sides" (72), it enhances a general atmosphere of manipulation, entrapment and exploitation.

### 2.3.2 The importance of the Lacanian gaze in *Burnt Offerings*

Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* presents an exceptional storyline, different from the other Gothic works of the era, as it shows from the beginning of the novel the instant connection between the protagonist Marian Rolfe and the Long Island House, strong enough to make the reader wonder if she really chose the house to rent or vice versa. The house presents for her the epitome of everything she dreamt of. Marian's fascination with the house and with everything that it can represent transforms quickly into an obsession. She is completely consumed by the house. However, this complete fusion comes through the idea of constant invisible and unverifiable surveillance which constitutes the essence of the house. The description of the supposed homely space is associated with Mrs. Allardyce; an old woman who is supposed to be a subject of care. However, this elderly remains invisible in her upstairs room. The choice of location (upstairs) echoes the height and centrality of the panoptic power which permits an unlimited scope to supervise the subjects. Mrs. Allardyce's room presents a source of mystery as there is a constant sound of humming that makes the physical absence of the watcher an actual presence. Marian's short journey in the Long Island house can be described as a mixture of pleasure and unsettlement. She takes the lead from the beginning, by following the house's mimeographed map and trying to reach Mrs. Allardyce.

With the first contact with Mrs. Allardyce's room, the hum was triggered, putting Marian in an uncomfortable situation:

The sound as well, which she had just become aware of: a very low and steady hum, barely audible, emphasizing the silence, like her own breathing. [...] It was the room, she told herself, that was intimidating: the stillness and the half-light and the hum. (Marasco 71)

At the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Allardyce is described as if she were present, despite the fact that there is no clue about her physical presence. This may be related to Marian's perception who ignores the hum, despite its constant presence, and keeps treating Mrs. Allardyce as an old lady who needs care, which shows that Marian is not aware of Mrs. Allardyce's surveillance as she completely indulged in the pleasure of living and taking care of her dream house. However, the hum sound seems to be effective as she starts to be repulsive towards her husband, thinking constantly about the house generally and the old lady particularly: "Obviously the old lady was on her mind for some reason; she must have been, if Marian thought about it, while Ben was trying to make love to her; like some disapproving presence, as formless and pervasive as an imaginary hum" (Marasco 82).

The novel is built upon the duality of object and subject: the house as an object of Marian's (the subject) look and care. The constant hum presented along the novel can be studied first as a way to hypnotize Marian, to strengthen the house's manipulative effect, and as a stain, an active reminder that Marian is watched. The house starts to consume Marian's life, mind and love for her family. It has become her new obsession, deleting gradually her motherhood as she starts to ignore her child's needs. The house's charming effect embraces Marian from all sides so much so that it becomes her achievement, her close friend, her family and her only solace whenever she feels depressed, remembering that "in less than two months now it would all, cruelly and unfairly, pass back to the Allardyses" (Marasco 129). Mrs. Allardyce, physically absent, but alive in Marian's mind, succeeds in manipulating her using her own dream: Whenever Marian seems to be overwhelmed, the house shows one

hidden charm that puts Marian under its spell once again. The house starts alienating Marian from the rest of her family, becoming her one and only world. As the plot develops, the house seems to be attacking the rest of the family. Aunt Elizabeth was brutally and slowly killed, after having been physically consumed. David was nearly killed while Ben seemed traumatized in a “state of shock that was as deep and paralyzing as a coma” (Marasco 205).

Mrs. Allardyce, the watcher, uses her panoptic gaze to control Marian and manipulate her mind whenever needed. This situation presents an example of what Lacan describes as a split between the eye and gaze: Marian looks and takes care of the house and Mrs. Allardyce, while she gazes back at Marian from her upstairs room, a place that Marian could not reach till the end of the novel. This situation presents an anxiety trigger, intensified by the hum. The constant faint hum is intensified whenever there is a need to hypnotize Marian. It is a constant reminder of the presence of the watcher. With this sound, Marian finds herself hypnotically at the doorsteps of the altar to be reminded that she is under the house’s control. The hum a way to perturb Marian’s visibility, a recognition that the panoptic gaze is omnipresent, leaving her in a ceaseless feeling of entrapment. Yet, as the hum is omnipresent in Marian’s life in Long Island house, she develops a feeling of pleasure and delight as her relation to the house and its furniture becomes intimate: “She could feel the hum coursing through everything she touched, vibrantly. Especially the door. She traced the carvings with her hands raised and her eyes closed, and it was like touching something or someone loved profoundly, and then feeling the touch returned” (Marasco 176). This instance of the growing intimacy presents the epitome of the watcher’s manipulation that leads Marian to complete submission. To realize this, another stain is introduced as a means to show Mrs. Allardyce’s surveillance and control. The new stain is a fragrance of roses that embraces Marian from all the house’s angles: “The presence directing her hands and imposing itself on her will was almost palpable, and she felt no desire to resist or question the force. She cut into the meat, and in a moment all she was aware of was the hum

and the incredible fragrance of roses riding around her” (Marasco177). Here, through the hum and the fragrance, Marian recognizes that she is not an active subject but rather an object gazed at constantly. This situation creates an initial pleasure, but it is quickly transformed into an anxiety, realizing the devastating effect of the house on her family. At that moment of weakness, the watcher shows the power of his panoptic gaze, reacting immediately to Marian’s resistance and sending Walker to hypnotize her for the last time.

To conclude, in the three novels under study, the authors present the panoptic dimension of the settings differently. While Jackson focuses mainly on the architectural parallelism between Hill House and the panopticon, Richard Matheson and Robert Marasco prefer to highlight the panoptic gaze that overwhelms the characters and affects them differently. In the three novels, the haunted setting is presented as the holder of the horror, an unhomely home in which characters are trapped, consumed and sacrificed. The authors revisit the classical elements of the haunted house, to create their own exceptional vision of a hungry house, which, according to Stephen Graham Jones, “isn’t complete without people to digest for seasons or decades or centuries. [...] It has to seduce you into its long embrace. [...] [It] knows the injuries you’ve been nursing in secret and it uses them against you” (vi)<sup>52</sup>. The haunted house transcends its architectural presentation, to represent the panoptic environment as Michel Foucault shows, through the ubiquitous gaze of the haunting force. The gaze was strong and disturbing enough to intimidate the different characters in the three novels leading them to a tragic fate.

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<sup>52</sup> Jones Graham, Stephen. Introduction. *Burnt Offerings*, by Robert Marasco, Valancourt Books, 2015, pp. v-vii.



## CHAPTER 3

### The effects of panopticism on characters

The panoptic dimension of the settings plays an important role in triggering the horror of both characters and readers, in the sense that it creates a claustrophobic atmosphere generated by the prevalent feeling of entrapment and confinement. This atmosphere is conveyed, as it was shown in the second chapter, not only through the circular design that reflects the Benthamian panopticon. It is in fact conveyed through an omnipresent invisible gaze that observes characters at every point. In the three novels, and regardless of the architectural representation of the haunted house, the different characters go through two different psychological stages. First, they feel that they actively control the haunted house as they discover the place and investigate its different parts. Soon, they move to the second stage as they feel watched and entrapped under a constant surveillance. This helpless situation can be compared to prisoners under the panoptic gaze:

This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and the periphery, which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchal figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed [...]. (Foucault 197)

In the three studied novels, the haunting force has a limitless scope and a pervasive look that can block the character, leaving her in a helpless situation. The haunted house presents in fact an enclosed environment from which the characters try hopelessly to escape. As I discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, the panoptic design, presented in one example of Hill House, is not imperative to guarantee the exercise of the panoptic power. In fact, the unverifiable presence of the haunting power (Hugh Crane, Emeric Belasco, and Mrs.

Allardyce) is a quintessential element along with another crucial element that Foucault studied: the consciousness of being visible “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. [...] For what matters is that he knowshimself to be observed” (201).

This final chapter of this second part aims to focus on the effects of the panoptic aspects of Hill House, Belasco mansion and Long Island house on the characters’ actions, studying the way being conscious of one’s own visibility can lead to tragic fates. This necessitates an analysis of the characters’ psychological and mental development throughout the novels. Under the spell of the constant unverifiable surveillance, the characters of the three novels share a common feeling of manipulation, mental disturbance and a total psychological disorder that result from the pressure of being constantly under the spotlight. However, while some characters like Eleanor Vance and Florence Tanner show signs of rebellion, other characters like Marian Rolfe seem to be totally absorbed by the panoptic power of the house. In this chapter I will refer once again to Foucault’s theory of panopticism to study Eleanor’s primary rebellion, along with Julia Kristeva’s concept of *abjection*.

### **3.1. Eleanor Vance’s development from challenge to hysteria**

Eleanor is as complex and baffling a character as the house’s design allows the reader to understand. Her reactions and decisions show that her personality is not stable and that she goes through different psychological phases. In the outset of the novel, Eleanor is presented as a woman who sacrificed her youth for the sake of her disabled mother. This initial presentation of her background reveals Eleanor’s torn character, split as she is between the call of duty and devotion, and the repressed jealousy and even hate she feels towards her sister who preferred to fully enjoy her life. As the novel progresses, Eleanor’s journey to Hill House is described in detail, unlike the rest of the characters. This description reveals another side of Eleanor’s

character: she is a daydreamer who is able to create a whole scenario and live it as if it was real. On her way to Hill House, a setting known for its ominous haunting nature, Eleanor is able to fantasize and to dream about her perfect life:

[...]in these few seconds I have lived a lifetime in a house with two lions in front. Every morning I swept the porch and dusted the lions, and every evening I patted their heads good night, and once a week I washed their faces and manes and paws with warm water and soda and cleaned between their teeth with a swab. [...] People bowed to me on the streets of the town because everyone was very proud of my lions. (Jackson18)

The detailed account of her daydream unfolds Eleanor's longing for a free, independent life away from the heavy burden that she assumed during years. Besides, the initial presentation of Eleanor insists on her shy personality as "she had no friends" (Jackson 6) and ignorant about the way to build social contacts and relations. However, starting from day one in the Hill House, Eleanor started unveiling private details about her life, her relationship with her mother and even her childhood memories, something that contrasts her blushful self. During her stay in the Hill House, and unlike the rest of Dr. Montague's group, Eleanor is the most vulnerable character who shows different reactions toward the watcher's influence. Eleanor's experience in the house ranges from resistance to weakness and insanity. In fact, from the beginning of the novel, the author focuses on Eleanor as her relation to the house seems to be different. She is torn between repulsion and love. As specified above, this relation can be studied in relation with Julia Kristeva's theory of *abjection*.

### 3.1.1 Hill House as Eleanor Vance's *abject*<sup>53</sup>

The theory of abjection is developed by Julia Kristeva in her book *Powers of Horror*, prima facie in reference to any physical or psychological reaction of a subject who cannot distinguish between the self and others, between himself or herself as a subject and the object.

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<sup>53</sup> Here, I will be using "abject" as a substantive adjective following Kristeva's idiosyncratic usage.

Kristeva develops this theory starting from the Lacanian concept of *the mirror stage*. She believes that one lives firstly an experience of unity with their environment (including the mother), and with the development of the mirror stage, the infant begins to realize the existence of the other. Here, the abject is developed as it refers to the rejected a part of the self. To concretize this theoretical abstract image, Kristeva uses concrete examples like food:

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk- harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring- I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spams in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me", who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. (2-3)

Kristeva goes further by using other examples like the presence of a corpse. Here, abjection is quite violent as it transgresses the boundaries between life and death. The example of the mother's body is also presented as the child experiences a tough moment between his or her longing to be united with the mother (as in the Imaginary), and his vital need to reject her to construct his or her own self. In this context, Hill House can be studied as a manifestation of the *abject* as Eleanor identifies it in several instances as her mother.

As mentioned earlier in the previous chapters, Eleanor's reaction to Hill House is different from the other characters. She feels the presence of her mother, relating different parts of the house like the library and the nursery to the mother figure. Eleanor becomes fairly sure of the uncanny connection between the house and her dead mother as the message "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (Jackson 146) is repeatedly written in the hallway. After the death of her mother, Eleanor led the Hill House adventure, looking for a brand-new life. However, this experience unfolds the fact that Eleanor is caught in a double bind situation between her need to be independent and her longing to reunite with her mother. Confronting the Hill House is in fact a resurrection of her past relation with her mother. Like her mother, the house

becomes a new abject with a looming, haunting presence. It haunts her own self and threatens her newly built independence. Eleanor's reaction to this abject is marked by two phases: challenge and hysteria. From the first days of the adventure, and as Eleanor identifies the Hill House with her mother, she tries to repress her reaction, avoiding to pass by the house's "motherly" parts. She reacts physically and psychologically in several instances. As she enters for the first time the house, she reacted nervously to its uncanny design as "the house had caught her with an atavistic turn in the pit of the stomach" (Jackson 35). Then, as she moves on to discover the other parts of the house, she feels physically repulsed as she realizes that her subjectivity is haunted and threatened by the abject (mother/house). For instance, as she enters the library, she "stood away from the wall; her hands were cold and she wanted to cry, but she turned her back to the library door" (Jackson 104). Her repulsion comes as a reaction to the abject that reminds her of the past union with her mother. The library reminds her of how she used to read books for long hours to her mother (Jackson 86). It reminds her of her union that despite she successfully renounces it, it still haunts her. In spite of the different instances of the physical repulsion that Eleanor experienced, as the watcher's gaze is intensified, she becomes aware of herself under her mother/house scope and tries to show her resistance, trying to empower herself:

[...] now, I will not endure this. They think to scare me. Well, they have. I am scared, but more than that, I am a person, I am human, I am a walking reasoning humorous human being and I will take a lot from this lunatic filthy house [...] I will yell I will I will yell "STOP IT," she shouted [...]. (Jackson 163)

Eleanor's reaction to the watcher's gaze and the different haunting experiences that prove that all characters are under the watcher's manipulation and surveillance, waves between power and fragility. With every experience, Eleanor tries to reason herself and to think properly to get out safely from the situation. However, as the novel develops and the pressure of the hunter's surveillance mounts up, Eleanor loses her sanity in a situation where the border between self and other is blurred.

Eleanor's doubts about the nature of the Hill House as, the reincarnation of her mother<sup>54</sup>, grow more powerful as the novel develops. The watcher starts manipulating her mind by controlling her past memories, phobias and repressed desires. Eleanor starts to be overwhelmed by the haunting presence of her absent mother as everything in the house reminds her of her presence<sup>55</sup>; the library, the nursery, the child's faint cry, the constant knocking on the nursery door and more importantly the call to come home. Eleanor starts losing her sanity and becomes driven by her repressed longing to reunite with her mother. Here, the object (the house) becomes both repulsive and seductive: repulsive as it presents a threat to her subjectivity, and seductive as it tempts her into merging together, both physically and psychologically. Just before the tragic end, two incidents take place that prove Eleanor's serious attempts to reunite with the house. At a moment of breakdown resulted from the loss of distinction between herself and the object, Eleanor decides to climb the tower, thinking that she can reach her ultimate goal: "I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home, she thought, and stopped in wonder at the thought. I am home, I am home, she thought; now to climb" (Jackson 232).

In this context, the tower can be a reference to the figure of the phallic mother, in the sense that, as Anika Lemaire' notes, "the phallus, which the child wishes to be in order to complete its mother" (174)<sup>56</sup>. The concept of the *phallic mother* appeared in Sigmund Freud's 1933 work "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis" (Lecture xxix: "Revision of the Theory of Dreams"). He refers to it as a concept that can be traced in dreams and fantasies as the child creates an imaginary portrait of the mother's body with a phallus. This primitive infantile

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<sup>54</sup> The motif of haunted house as a reincarnation of the mother can be illustrated in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. The house is associated with Norman Bates' mother as there is a figure that eyes constantly the motel and its inhabitants. Bates' relation to his mother is twisted as he keeps identifying with her castrative figure by wearing her clothes and adopting her personality. The presentation of the house mother is further highlighted architecturally. The vertical position of the house symbolizes the unlimited power of the phallic mother, exercised over Bates, symbolized by the horizontal workplace, the motel.

<sup>55</sup> Here, the way Eleanor identifies the house with her deceased mother can be explained as a failure of mourning work. This idea will be further developed in the third part (chapter1).

<sup>56</sup> Lemaire, Anika. *Jacques Lacan*. Trans.by David Macey. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

image can be maintained even during the phallic stage in which the child recognizes the differences between males and females, which can lead to the creation of fetishes as substitute of the mother's phallus. In her book *Remembering the Phallic Mother: Psychoanalysis, Modernism and the Fetish*, Marcia Ian presents a psychoanalytic definition of the phallus mother as:

[...] at once the object of every psyche's secret fear and its deep desire. She represents the absolute power of the female as autonomous and self-sufficient; at the same time she is woman reduced to the function of giving suck. She is neither hermaphrodite nor androgyne, human nor monster, because she is emphatically Mother. And yet she hardly resembles anyone's actual mother – except in one's own fervid imagination [...]. (8)

Eleanor's mother haunted her life for years; she seems to assume a patriarchal power while Eleanor's father, significantly enough, is never mentioned by her. Eleanor starts to enter into a hysterical phase where the fine line between reality and daydream, the self and the abject, is blurred. She is deeply immersed in the house to the point that she forgets the rest of Dr. Montague's group, wondering "had they been guests of hers in the house of the stone lions? Dining at her long table in the candlelight? Had she met them at the inn, over the tumbling stream?" (Jackson 232). Daydreams, which are a shelter that protects Eleanor from the coldness of her unhomely home, become her reality, the real place she dwells in. She reaches a point of no return when she realizes that she has succumbed to the power of the house, becoming convinced that she has found her home / mother, and ready to do whatever necessary measure to stay there, be it walling herself alive (Jackson 240). Eleanor's psychosis is intensified and becomes uncontrollable. Realizing that she is forced to quit the house for her safety, she decides to commit suicide by crashing her car into a tree.

The novel ends thus with Eleanor's suicide, a tragic conclusion that shows how far the house is responsible for this catastrophic ending, being a powerful attractive place drawing its inhabitants like a magnet. Out of her willingness, Eleanor finds herself completely under the spell of the house, thinking about it as an inseparable part of herself and her new identity. She

shows her ultimate affinity as she “closed her eyes and sighed, feeling and hearing and smelling the house” (Jackson 242). By committing suicide, she finally concretizes the ominous message conveyed by the phrase that she repeatedly utters throughout the novel: “Journeys end in lovers’ meeting”<sup>57</sup>. She finally reaches her aim to be reunited with her fantasized mother. However, the final passage of the novel shows that the journey does not end strictly speaking in lovers’ meeting; it does so, though, at the symbolical level which is highlighted by the hallucinatory nature of Eleanor’s troubled projections. The novel’s conclusion comes full circle as the final descriptive passage echoes exactly the initial one, which suggests that Hill House is a hungry house whose story is endless.

### **3.2. Florence Tanner’s failed path towards survival from the House’s resurrected traumatic past**

If Eleanor Vance’s heavy burden of her past has led to her death, Florence Tanner’s tragic end is caused by her persisting will to unveil the horror of Hill House and to exorcise it from the evil tormented souls entrapped in it. Unlike Eleanor, Florence’s relation to the haunted setting does not put in play the abject. It is rather a relation of resistance that unfortunately ends with her death, too. From the beginning of the novel, different instances have foreshadowed the erratic relation between Florence and the house. Presenting the character of Florence Tanner, the spiritual medium imposed by Mr. Deutsch, the author focuses neither on her past nor on her competences as a medium. The description underlines first and foremost the importance of religion and spiritualism. She is presented as a character whose life revolves around her dream to build a church for her congregation. Besides, the description highlights,

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<sup>57</sup> This phrase said by Eleanor Vance in numerous instances in the novel is taken from William Shakespeare’s romantic comedy *Twelfth Night* (1601). It is said by the play’s fool Feste, referring to the story of Viola and Sebastian who were searching for their true love on the island of Illyria. The sentence refers to the lovers as soul mates who look for each other continuously and whose love journey ends when they find each other.



in addition to her devotion, her remarkable beauty: “For several moments she was pleased to be reminded of her beauty. Forty-three, she still retained it unimpaired, her long red hair untouched by grayness, her tall, Junoesque figure almost as trim as it had been in her twenties” (Matheson 20). Spiritualism and femininity, upon which the portrait of Florence was based, turn her to a vulnerable victim and drive her to her calamitous fate. However, the author’s description of Florence’s ageless beauty is contradicted with her reaction upon seeing her photograph as “she smiled in self-depreciation then. Vanity of vanities, she thought” (Matheson 20). Here, the reaction foreshadows the character’s hamartia. The phrase “vanity of vanities” used by the character, is a quote from the book of Ecclesiastes from the Old Testament<sup>58</sup>. It refers to the futility of everything that the human seeks: wisdom, knowledge, youth, beauty and wealth. The only thing that is important to keep is God’s laws regardless of the end (happiness or sadness). This quote foreshadows the path of Florence who, throughout her adventure in Hell House, seeks to unveil the reality of the haunted setting and to help its tormented souls to rest in peace. However, her insistence to find and realize what she seeks regardless the different warning dangers she faced led to her tragic death.

Even though Florence was conscious of the difficulty of the mission and the threat she may face, she did not hesitate to be very close to the house unlike the rest of the group. Benjamin Fisher, a spiritual medium and the only survivor of a previous experience, tries several times and from the very first day of the adventure to warn Florence to keep herself away from the house and to stop indulging naively in the mission, believing that “exaggerated” spiritualism may lead to dire consequences: “Just watch your step, [...] The Lord may not have too much influence in Hell House” (Matheson 69). Yet, Florence started sensing every part of Hell House, denying the different warnings, believing that her approach will solve the house’s enigma. Florence’s fierce and relentless defense of her spiritualism

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<sup>58</sup> “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 1: 2-3)

presents one of the reasons to be a vulnerable character for the haunting force. Her failed path starts from day one as she was physically manipulated by the haunting force:

All three twitched as Florence cried out, "I don't know you people!" She looked around the table, her expression one of rabid agitation. "Why are you here? It does no good. Nothing ever changes. *Nothing!* Get out of here, or I'll hurt you! I can't help myself! God damn you filthy sons of bitches!" Edith pressed back hard against her chair. The voice was totally unlike Florence's – hysterical, unbalanced, threatening, [...] Florence's head shifted forward, eyes hooding, lips drawn back from clenching teeth. "I warn you," she told them in a guttural voice. "*Get out of this house before I kill you all.*" (Matheson 66)

Here, Belasco tactically chooses Florence since she shows signs of vulnerability through her spiritualism. Prior to this experience, Florence used some sensational erotic gestures as a phase of the rituals she had to go through in order to be connected to the house's haunting force. So, with the first experience, Florence opened the door of haunting through her exaggerated spiritualism and through her female body. This experience that transformed Florence into a physical medium is in fact a catalyst of a more aggressive, physical haunting that leads her quickly to a tragic death.

Realizing her new ability to communicate with Belasco, Florence thought that she could handle the situation, believing that her body has become a bridge between Belasco's world and the house. She did not hesitate to lead more experiences, seeking to know the complete truth behind the haunted Hell House and its owner Emeric Belasco. However, she never imagined that Belasco had attracted her to open herself further, physically and mentally, so that he could totally control her. The ghost starts to appear several times to Florence whenever she is alone in her bedroom. These different appearances are in fact a way to delude her and to make her believe that she is in the right path towards the truth. The ghost becomes gradually more reactive, assuming a clearer shape and trying to be more intimate: "Florence stared at it. It was the figure of a man. She started toward the bed, tightening as she saw that the figure was nude. She could make out every body contour, from the swelling broadness of the chest to the bulge of genitals. She felt a stir of sensual awareness in her body" (Matheson 96). The figure starts to

haunt Florence, to sexually harass her through unwanted touching and becoming gradually more violent. Here, the centrality of the novel moves from Belasco as the haunting watcher to the sadistic partner of Florence. Florence becomes a damsel in distress, a vulnerable feeble female, entrapped in Hell House and chased by the ghost of the sadistic wealthy figure Emeric Belasco. With every appearance, Florence is physically assaulted by Belasco who proves to be aiming to take limitless control over her femininity. The repeated scenes of sexual assault and even rape show how far Florence has been fetishized by a purely male gaze. Though this may mean in *prima facie* that Florence is powerless, her resistance to these violent acts and her persistent attempts to control the situation and to lead the group to the truth of Hell House, present in fact a threat to the power of the sadistic figure.

Belasco continues to disempower Florence by bringing her to a phase of doubt (since Florence's power lies in her faith in herself and in her spiritual mediation). Belasco realizes that controlling Florence's body will not be enough to guarantee power. He starts dividing the group and isolating Florence by sowing the seeds of doubt in all the characters' minds. Florence's experiences of initial connection with the haunting force and the numerous scenes of violence were all doubted by the group including Florence herself, as they start questioning: "How do you know you haven't been deluding yourself from the first moment you entered this house?" (Matheson 194). Florence is accused of schizophrenia, which isolates her from the rest of the group, weakening her further. She has become more vulnerable than ever, reaching a state of physical and mental decay: "I can't get rid of him. Even as I'm speaking to you, I can feel him in there, waiting to take over" (Matheson 218). Realizing that she can no longer escape from Belasco's gaze and being entrapped in the house forever, Florence decides to resist further, trying thus to unveil the truth when she heads for the Chapel, a place that she has never been able so far to enter. As the haunting force tries to stop her from reaching the Chapel by picturizing the different horrors that occurred in Hell House, Florence used physical pain to

keep him away momentarily, realizing that “agony blocked his contaminated soul from hers” (Matheson 244). Florence’s journey reaches its end in a final epic scene, where she is monstrously raped and killed with a giant crucifix (Matheson 249). However, far from portraying Florence as a weak victim this ultimate scene reveals her capacity for resistance as she succeeds in informing the rest of the group about the criminal, drawing “a symbol, using a finger dipped in her blood. It was a crude circle with something scrawled inside it. [...] It looks like the letter ‘B’” (Matheson 250).

Unlike the character of Eleanor Vance in Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, Florence Tanner resisted the panoptic gaze, by trying to subvert the mythical power of Emeric Belasco. The relationship between Florence and the haunting force is characterized by the duality of power and resistance. As Michel Foucault studies in his book *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 -1977*, “[t]here are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised [...]” (142). Florence believed that her spirituality was a strong weapon she could use against the power of the panoptic gaze. Refusing to accept the panoptic power, Florence exposed herself from the first day of her journey in Hill House, putting herself in a vulnerable position, by conducting physical and sensational connections with the haunting force. However, instead of escaping the watcher’s eagle eye, she puts herself under his spot. He disempowered her by turning her spiritualism, faith and femininity into weak points well handled by Belasco, who started thus to manipulate her mentally and physically. Florence’s journey was an epic adventure made of different episodes of doubt, fear, pain and humiliation from a sadistic watcher. However distressed, Florence managed to resist this unseen force till her last breath, warning the rest of the group and exposing the surveillant, which would lead finally to the successful exorcism of the house.

### 3.3. Marian Rolfe: The Loss of Identity and Volition in the War against the Panoptic Haunted House

Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* presents the effects of panopticism differently. While in the other novels under study the panoptic gaze leads the female characters to a state of unbearable insanity followed by suicide, or to tragic death, the gaze in Marasco's work has strong yet less violent effects. It has a hypnotic effect on the female protagonist, Marian Rolfe, who lost completely her identity as she penetrated physically and mentally into the glorious mass of the house. Marian's loss of volition and her inability to resist the power of the panoptic gaze can be traced back from the opening pages of the novel. Unlike the beginnings of the other novels, where the focus is on the haunting nature of the setting and its enigmatic limitless power, the first lines of *Burnt Offerings* focus on Marian's indulgence in domesticity, as she is a sharp-eyed person who can spot the tiniest smear to tide it and clean it, in addition to her obsession with fancy items. This detailed presentation serves as a contextualization of the upcoming events as Marian's manners and obsession that she may consider usual, are in fact her tragic flaw that will lead to the destruction of her happy little family and turn the vacation house into a deadly place. As she finds her dream house as a bargain for only 900 dollars for the entire season, Marian is far from imagining that she has easily fallen prey to the house, seduced by the sophisticated edifice that quenches her thirst as it encompasses everything that Marian dreams of:

Marian had found a coral lacquer secretary, beautifully embellished with black and gold figures, against the inside wall. She touched it, hesitantly at first, absorbed in the detail; her hand followed the cool, polished curve, very lightly, reaching the small finial. One piece tucked away in the corner, and it was worth more than everything they had or ever would have, as far as she could see. (Marasco 29)

Having found her dream world, Marian becomes vulnerable as she is hypnotically under the spell of the haunted house. The presence of Miss Allardyce and Brother comes as a means to verify the enchanting effect of the house. The two characters talk thoroughly about the house

and its importance to them, referring to it as their paradise and to their mother as their Goddess, who enlightens their lives and guides them. Miss Allardyce and Brother talk in a patriotic, nationalistic tone, as they try to show the importance of the house that Marian will live in for two months: “The whole thing would just come down without her” (Marasco 48). Besides, trying to guarantee the vulnerability of Marian, the two characters try to seduce her by talking repeatedly about the beauty of the house, despite its decay, using terms that predicts the denouement of the novel. They recurrently talk about the house coming alive: “ ‘And, God, Brother!’ ” Miss Allardyce said, “ ‘when it comes alive – tell them what it’s like in summer’ ” (Marasco 45). This drives Marian to think about the potential luxury she may have if she just takes care of it in a good persistent way. However, the term “alive” transcends the figurative meaning as the house consumes the soul and the energy of its inhabitants to become physically alive, resurrected from its decay.

The first part of the novel shows the reciprocity of the gaze while the Rolfs look at the house to decide whether they rent it or not, while at the same time they are watched by Miss Allardyce and Brother. The description of the characters’ actions and reactions along with the intriguing way Miss Allardyce and Brother talk, show that the novel is based upon the idea of sacrifice.

As the novel’s title may indicate, Marasco builds his non-orthodox perspective of the haunted house on the idea of a burnt offering (scapegoat), a religious sacrifice practiced in Judaism, in which some aspects and criteria should be respected. The choice of the prey is decisive as it should be in perfect physical condition with no default and it should be presented to the door of the altar<sup>59</sup>. The house’s description echoes the architecture of a tabernacle in front of which Marian was offered to be sacrificed after being fully examined by the Allardyses. Another aspect of the sacrifice is the communion with the object of worship, and

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<sup>59</sup> By Morris Jastrow Jr, J. Frederic McCurdy, Kaufmann Kohler and Louis Ginzberg.

this can be achieved through a complete devotion. Accordingly, Marian's admiration transformed quickly into piousness as she was consumed physically and emotionally reaching at the end of the story the complete fusion with the mother, the heart of the house and the object of worship.

After being chosen by the house, Marian start acting like the new owner of the house. She begins discovering the new area by visiting the different rooms of the massive building, reaching the "tower" of the watcher: "Marian climbed the steps and found herself in a small dark hall, about ten-by-ten. There was one door, directly ahead. On either side of the door were pedestals supporting huge Canton bowls. "Our mother," the map said; a bedroom and a sitting room were indicated beyond the door" (Marasco 70). Marian tried to conquer the isolation of the absent-present mother as she enters the hall. However, the invisibility of the mother comes to an end as a strange sourceless hum sound was heard. Here, Marian felt the first mesmerizing effects of the house as she was overwhelmed by an auditory, olfactory and tactile hypnosis, turning her into a non- resistant person:

The sound moved against her hair, deep and unrecognizable, an abstraction like the carved braille fluttering under her fingertips. Her fingers moved slower and then stopped, and the palms of her hands were flat against the door, and her ear pressed against it. Restful, so suddenly restful, not listening, not touching, barely aware of pushing herself closer into the door which was warm and fragrant, smelling of green. And the hum had deepened and broken into the sound of her own heartbeat.

She tried to fight the wave of drowsiness that had come over her, to open her eyes, and thought. One minute more, just one minute more. And then tried again and saw the small ridges of white pillowing her hand, and heard the sound and felt the wood against her cheek. (Marasco 72)

This description shows the way the house attracts Marian using different techniques at the same time. The hum, the fragrance and the softness of the wood present ways to keep Marian attached to the house. She feels herself as an integral part of the house, making her willing to do anything to keep it and revive it.

The procedure of haunting seems to be similar to the other novels under study as the focus is once again on the female body, that represents the door to emotional manipulation.

Starting from the first days, Marian's fascination with the house's furniture and extravagant style along with her constant thinking about Mrs. Allardyce, the absent yet present old owner alienate her from her own family and couple life. She starts to feel repulsive towards the intimate relationship with her husband. Marian seems to be helpless as the house starts to occupy her heart and soul, driving her to be completely devoted to its service, even though she admits the strong effect of the old lady's constant gaze "Obviously the old lady was on her mind for some reason; she must have been, if Marian thought about it, while Ben was trying to make love to her; like some disapproving presence, as formless and pervasive as an imaginary hum" (Marasco 82). As the novel progresses, Marian's occupation with the house's maintenance becomes a complete obsession as "by the third or fourth day she was leaving excuses to climb the long circular staircase [...] The old lady, the well-being if not the existence of Mrs. Allardyce, was becoming an obsession" (Marasco 85). Marian starts to be hypnotically driven by the manipulative omnipresent gaze of the old lady. Her happiness has been associated with her presence at the house that becomes her own 'cosmos'. She becomes more familiar with all the different things that she thought they were petrifying including the hum. Marian, consumed by her own dreams that were used as hooks to haunt her, becomes further alienated from her basic role as a mother. She starts to take less care of her child, which contradicts her nature as a devoting mother (it contradicts the first description of Marian at the beginning of the novel):

Somewhere beyond the closed windows she thought she heard David's voice calling her. She didn't move, except to bring her hands up to her head and the hair back against her temples. It was strange how the room insulated her; David, for the moment, seemed as distant to her as the sound of his voice. The hum was closer, more insistent. (Marasco 92)

Marian becomes more alienated from her family than ever. She does not participate in her family's joyful moments and reunion. Marian has lost completely her self-determination as she is constantly hypnotized by the different collections of silver crockery and other items that present her ultimate dream. She becomes physically consumed as she starts to feel older and



physically overwhelmed. Despite the numerous incidents that lead to physical harm Ben and David and to the death of Aunt Elizabeth, Marian denies the house's responsibility. As Marian was indulged in her domestic duty of taking care of the Long Island house, the haunted setting occupied a central role in her life. It becomes her obsession, replaces her intimate life with her husband and becomes her solace whenever she feels overwhelmed. The house presents more than ever an enigmatic place where time loses its importance (the symbolism of the different clocks that do not work except for the kitchen clock). To guarantee its manipulative power, the watcher uses other tools in addition to the hum, leaving no chance to Marian to evaluate her situation, ending up by losing completely her identity. As the house was mysteriously regenerating, becoming brighter and more vivid, Marian becomes hypnotically more attracted to the house that becomes her own sanctuary. Fragrances are also used as a way to attract Marian and control her further. Helplessly, she becomes unable to leave the house, ready to give up her family to keep her role as a guardian to her dream house.

The house starts to attack Ben and David physically as a way to alienate Marian. As they try to leave the house, Ben is seriously attacked and becomes completely paralyzed, as "something, somewhere between the drive and the house, or in the house, had happened to him, so traumatic that it had effectively anaesthetized his mind, reducing him to a state of shock that was as deep and paralyzing as a coma" (Marasco 205). Here, Marian becomes aware of the danger that she is facing, admitting that it is a burden she cannot handle. As a response to her momentary self-awareness, Walker comes to remind her of what the house can afford as an attempt to control her again:

"When *you* begun it?" Walker continued. "You, Mrs. You're the one's been polishin' the wood and the silver. You been bringin' up her tray three times a day. You're the one's been fillin' her room with flowers. You're the one she depends on ... for everything." He brought his face very close to hers. "And when you see her, Mrs.- it's all goin' to be worth it. In your heart you know that, don't you?" (Marasco 209).

Here, Walker tries to hypnotize Marian again reminding her of the importance of the sacrifice

she has made, her significance for the house and for the absent-present Mrs. Allardyce. Walker presents in fact another attracting element (like the hum and fragrance) to guarantee Marian's devotion. After Walker's passage, Marian becomes physically vulnerable, getting older and weaker, while the house becomes brighter and newer. Marian reaches the point of no return when her husband and son are brutally killed, leaving her alone in the house of her dreams. They have become the new victims of the house, a part of the lifeless collection of the photographs that record the horrors behind the closed doors of the summer mansion. As the novel reaches its denouement, Marian realizes that she has lost everything to keep the house for herself, and as a final reaction, she tries to reach her watcher, to unveil the mysterious identity of Mrs. Allardyce who has been watching her ceaselessly and manipulating her gradually till complete devotion. Marian unfolds finally the enigma of Mrs. Allardyce, a "hideously old [figure], leaning forward in a great chair" (Marasco 216). As she tries to touch her, Marian realizes that the old lady in the attic is in fact a faded figure, a surveillance force rather than a real person. Marian, still under the spell of the house, has lost completely her identity and fully merged in the house, as "She clutched the arms of the chair and felt the force of the hum not outside herself but in her, issuing forth and driving itself into the house and grounds, all the way down to the smallest bit of crystal, the tenderest green shoot. And somewhere beyond the chair there was the sound of a great door closing, on a vault, or a tomb" (Marasco 217). Marian interiorized Mrs. Allardyce's panoptic look becoming gradually her own surveillant, which affected her intimate life, relationship with her family and lead finally to a total fusion with the house as she becomes toward the end of the novel the new Mrs. Allardyce, which suggests that the horror is regenerated.

To conclude, the motif of haunted houses has been an omnipresent element in Gothic literature throughout centuries. It has witnessed several changes as it developed from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. It started with well-defined architectural characteristics inspired from the Middle Ages, making it a cliché used by authors to enhance horror. The use

of the motif developed to include a psychoanalytic dimension as the architecture becomes less important in favor of psychological horror. Authors like Edgar Allan Poe pioneered in the field, creating an urban context with a new form of horror originated from the human being. Thus, haunted houses transcend their decorative role to be holders of horror.

This part has focused on the representation of haunted houses in twentieth century novels as panoptic spaces that reflect their inhabitants' mindset. Horror is now originated from the social, economic and even political milieu. It has studied the way panopticism is presented in the three novels. Using the Foucauldian theory and Jeremy Bentham's design, we saw the settings (Hill House, Hell House and Long Island Mansion) present panoptic spaces, architecturally and metaphorically.

In the three settings, the panoptic power does not exercise the simple act of surveillance. It is rather reactive to the different actions of the characters. The panoptic power uses in different instances the characters' past memories, fears and even their repressed desires. Horror is in fact originated from the characters who face the hidden part of the psyche. The haunted house becomes then an uncanny place where the repressed part of the characters selves is back, used by the haunting force as a tool to manipulate them. Surveillance presents the key term that characterizes the different novels. It is both vertical and horizontal: vertical as there is a watcher who constantly supervises all the characters, and horizontal as there is a mutual surveillance between characters. The haunted house is transformed then into a huge trap where characters are helplessly unable to get away from the watcher's gaze.

This section deals also with the effect of the panoptic space on different characters. As there is a relation of power and resistance, the characters in Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* and Richard Matheson's *Hell House* are victims of different tragic ends. Throughout the novels, there are different effects that intensified gradually. The protagonists experience insanity and hysteria, as they are not able to distinguish between reality and hallucination. Facing their repressed past, the female protagonists are psychologically decayed. Even though

there are instances of rebellion and resistance, the end is still violent and tragic. Death is the common end for Eleanor and Florence, two different characters who share the physical abuse of the watcher and their inability to bear the constant surveillance.

*Burnt Offerings* by Robert Marasco shows a different effect of panopticism. Marian accepts the constant surveillance and she gradually interiorizes it, reaching the stage of self-surveillance. Even though the presence of Mrs. Allardyce is not truly verified, Marian keeps thinking about her presence even in the intimate moments with her husband. She starts to lose her identity gradually, to become finally assimilated to the house as she is integrated physically and mentally in it, becoming the new watcher of the Long Island House, the phoenix- like setting that is regenerated from its ashes.

# **Part 3**

## **Haunted houses: A reflection of the American twentieth century society**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Hill House: The epitome of surveillance**

Shirley Jackson's Hill House presents a complex setting as it is described as an unlivable house, built upon 80 years of tragedy that transform it from a supposedly shelter of Crain's family to a pure source of horror. The house's complexity lies in the fact that its condensed darkness threatens its inhabitants to confront what is hidden and to reveal what they try carefully to keep secret. The power of Jackson's haunted place lies in its ability to manipulate all the characters' weaknesses, reflecting all their fears, phobias and unconscious desires. As it is mentioned in the first part, Hill House's uncanniness comes from the characters themselves, who project out all their fears and anxieties. Yet, the house is still presented as a surveillance site as it architecturally reflects the Benthamian Panopticon and as the panoptic gaze can be recorded throughout the novel. In this chapter, Hill House will be studied as the epitome of surveillance through the character of Hugh Crain, the unseen watcher who is actively present through his panoptic male gaze that dominates the general atmosphere. The use of Laura Mulvey's concept of male gaze aims to study the panoptic gaze in relation to sexual dominance and desire for the female body. Besides, the focus is on Hugh Crain's methodological ways to internalize the act of surveillance and to interiorize the horror by reacting to the characters' actions and plans to unveil the truth about the haunted house. The chapter aims also to further examine the character of Eleanor Vance, who was presented in the first part. This character can be studied through her relationship with her phallic mother. Eleanor can be reviewed thoroughly in relation to different characters, especially her absent-present castrative mother and Hugh Crain as the symbol of patriarchal and male oppression. Besides, Eleanor's suicide scene can be analyzed to evaluate the credibility of the character and to see how far she is responsible for her tragic end. The last subpart of this chapter aims to

focus on Dr. Montague as the only character who tries to research the house's surveillance phenomenon through scientific methods in order to put it to a halt. Even though the house is too powerful to be conquered by technological devices, Dr. Montague's scientific approach succeeds in weakening it thus enabling the characters to survive its horror. This subpart means to consider the constant competition between the spiritual and scientific approaches to panoptic surveillance that marks the insane setting.

### **1.1. Hill House: A dreadful omnipresent gaze**

From the beginning of the novel, Hill House is associated with the oppressive male figure of Hugh Crain. This character has no detailed description except in the scrapbook, created as a legacy for his daughters. This book lets slip the deranged personality of Crain who records moral lessons about hell, heaven and deadly sins in a very dreadful and ominous style, ending with a signature with his own blood<sup>60</sup>. The house's misleading, disorienting design echoes the unbalanced mind of the dominating male figure. Crain's God-like omnipresent gaze echoes his perverted ethos as he exercises his sexual dominance over female characters. In this context, Laura Mulvey's cinematic concept of *male gaze* can be used<sup>61</sup>. In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1973), Mulvey presents the concept of *male gaze* as the act of depicting "woman as image, [and] man as bearer of the look" (808). Using different examples of Hollywood movies (mainly Alfred Hitchcock and Josef Von Sternberg), Mulvey studies the way cinema provides numerous pleasures based on the idea of looking. In this context, she starts with the Freudian concept of *scopophilia*<sup>62</sup>. This concept refers to the pleasure of

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<sup>60</sup> Signing your name with your blood is generally associated with contracts made with the devil.

<sup>61</sup> Laura Mulvey is a British feminist film theorist who works on the image of female figures in classical Hollywood cinema. Using Freudian and Lacanian theories, she studies different canonic works of Alfred Hitchcock and Josef Von Sternberg. She focuses on the relationship between the male active position and the presentation of women as passive objects of desire.

<sup>62</sup> A psychoanalytic concept studied by Sigmund Freud in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) to describe the innate pleasure in looking. This concept will be further examined throughout this part.

watching private or forbidden parts of the body. It is related to the child's development and to the process of building the child's personality. Mulvey shares Freud's belief that scopophilia is mainly voyeuristic and that it can be developed to be narcissistic, since he relates it primarily to "pregenital auto-erotism, after which the pleasure of the look is transferred to others by analogy" (806). She goes further by suggesting that the way movies are projected in cinema gives the spectator an illusion of being in a private world:

[...] The extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world. Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire on to the performer. (714)

Mulvey develops further her idea by suggesting that cinema develops the narcissistic implication of scopophilia. In this context, she uses Jacques Lacan's concept of *the mirror stage*. She thinks that the screen is similar to a mirror and that "the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego" (714). Here, the ego is constituted through an "identification with the image seen" (715). In the third part of her essay, Mulvey presents thoroughly the concept of *male gaze*. In this context, an *exhibitionist* overtone of scopophilia is presented in reference to the image of woman as a sexual, erotic object of pleasure for both male characters and spectators. To describe this image of woman as a passive, raw object offered to the active male gaze, Mulvey uses what she calls woman's *to-be-looked-at-ness*. She takes the example of some 1950s-1960s Hollywood movies to highlight the idea that the role of female characters in itself is not important in those movies. What matters is the effect of these characters on the male protagonist. To emphasize this idea, Mulvey quotes American director Budd Boetticher saying that:



what counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance. (715)

Mulvey explores also the idea of *fetishistic scopophilia* in which woman is turned into a fetish as a substitute for the lack of penis. As women are objects under the control of an active male gaze, they can provoke a castration anxiety<sup>63</sup> (as they are visually detected and identified with the absence of penis). To avoid this anxiety, fetishism can be a good solution since, according to Freud, the image of the phallus will be indirectly present in different signs. In a nutshell, *scopophilia*, the pleasure of looking and being looked at, has three different implications: *voyeuristic*, *narcissistic* and *fetishistic*. In *voyeuristic scopophilia*, women are reduced to images to be looked at. In *narcissistic scopophilia*, the ego is constituted thanks to the identification with the seen image. Yet, in *fetishistic scopophilia*, men transform women into fetishes to escape the castration anxiety that can be caused by the obvious absence of the penis. Even though Laura Mulvey uses the different concepts of *male gaze* and *scopophilia* in the world of cinema, taking different movies as examples (the image of Marilyn Monroe in *The River of No Return* [1954], Hitchcock's *Vertigo* [1958] and *Psycho* [1960]), they can be applied in literature and notably in the novels under study.

In *The Haunting of Hill House*, the object of a close, intensive surveillance is Eleanor Vance. The choice of the female character as the object of the male protagonist's gaze can be studied using Laura Mulvey's concepts. Despite the fact that there is a group of investigators who try to unveil Hill House's truth, there are only two major characters, Eleanor and Theodora, who suffer from numerous haunting experiences and are under a constant watching. These experiences are lived mostly in Eleanor and Theodora's intimate space; their bedroom.

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<sup>63</sup>The castration anxiety is firstly presented by Freud to refer to the fear of being castrated. It is a fear developed when the child realizes that the mother has no penis, which contradicts his understanding that everyone has one. The castration anxiety affects both sexes since the boy scares the loss of his penis, while the girl thinks that she is already castrated. (Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 22)

Throughout the novel, different intimate scenes, with sexual connotations are recorded between the two female characters during paranormal experiences. These ‘intimate’ moments were the object of the male gaze of Hugh Crain who even reacted to it in some cases. The relationship between Theodora and Eleanor is as complex as the house’s design. It is a mixture of admiration, sexual attraction and fear. Jackson provides at the beginning of the novel an introduction to Theodora’s character as a sexually open person. She shares an apartment with a friend whose gender is not indicated which leaves the question “is Theodora lesbian or bisexual?” with no final answer. Eleanor is immediately attracted by Theodore’s independence and way of life, an admiration that becomes quickly a sexual attractiveness mixed with fear. Eleanor is afraid to admit and to show her attraction due to psychological and societal pressures<sup>64</sup>. In one incident, Eleanor and Theodora go through a paranormal experience when they hear “the low, steady sound went on and on, the voice lifting sometimes for an emphasis on a mumbled word, falling sometimes to a breath, going on and on” (Jackson 161). Both characters hold hands tightly as the room gets colder and darker. As they try to react, the watcher’s manipulation gets deeper as he reacts to their thoughts, questions and reactions. At the end of the experience, Eleanor freaks out when she discovers that the hand she is holding is not Theodora’s, saying “God God—whose hand was I holding?” (Jackson 163). Although many questions can be raised about Eleanor’s credibility, this paranormal experience shows in fact that Crain reacts to the intimate lesbian relationship between both characters, leading us to ponder the voyeuristic scopophilia or the pleasure to see the forbidden object. Crain’s omnipresent gaze is focused on the intimate relationship as it is socially acceptable. It focuses on the female body and on the erotic relation that is supposedly private. This male gaze implies power as it objectifies female characters and confirms Crain’s

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<sup>64</sup> Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* was written in 1959 within the context of an American society that believed in the institution of marriage and in the nuclear family. Homosexuality and other types of atypical sexuality were not considered healthy (they were considered as aberrant). In fact, until 1973, homosexuality was classified as a mental illness.

patriarchal heterosexual fantasy. Hugh Crain's gaze can also be studied as a typical Foucauldian gaze. In his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault suggests that through the invisible gaze, the watcher can gain not only power through observing but also knowledge about those under the panoptic gaze (187). Crain's gaze transcends the idea of mere looking at the different characters, it "signifies a psychological relationship of power in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze" (Schroeder, "Consuming Representation: A Visual Approach to Consumer Research", 208). Crain shows in different instances throughout the novel his awareness of Eleanor's weakness and vulnerability in relation to her past. He proves his power over the subject of his gaze when he imitates different noises similar to the ones before Eleanor's mother's death. It is a rhythmic constant noise:

A hollow bang, as though something were hitting the doors with an iron kettle, or an iron bar, or an iron glove. It pounded regularly for a minute and then suddenly more softly, and then again in a quick flurry, seeming to be going more methodologically from door to door at the end of the hall. (Jackson 128)

These sounds coming from the nursery room remind Eleanor of her mother's knocking on the wall whenever she feels the need to call her. Crain's power to manipulate Eleanor's childhood memory, past and trauma is obtained from his invisible omnipresent gaze since he knows the importance of the disabled mother in Eleanor's life as she spent her teenagerhood and early adulthood taking care of her. Besides, Crain's panoptic surveillance is communicative since it reacts to the characters' actions and dialogues. Describing the first haunting experience, the author uses personification when she attributes human action to the house: "It started again, as though it had been listening, waiting to hear their voices and what they said, to identify them, to know how well prepared they were against it, waiting to hear if they were afraid" (Jackson 130). The description echoes a war between the characters and the gazer (Crain), in a way like a preparation for an invasion to push off sanity and let hysteria in. Unlike the classical

haunting stories, Crain's haunting seems to be more strategic, showing the gazer's awareness of all characters' mindsets, responding to each character's reaction:

“You can't get in,” Eleanor said wildly, and again there was a silence, as though the house listened with attention to her words, understanding, cynically agreeing, content to wait. A thin little giggling came, in a breath of air through the room, a little mad rising laugh, the smallest whisper of a laugh, and Eleanor heard it all up and down her back, a little gloating laugh moving past them around the house. (Jackson 131)

The panoptic surveillance is further exacerbated simultaneously with the development of the plot and with the aggravation of the characters' reactions. In one instance, when Eleanor starts to feel a rising laughter, morphing to a blaring shout inside her head, the house reacts simultaneously to her feeling: “shivered and shook, the curtains dashing against the windows, the furniture swaying, and the noise in the hall became so great that it pushed against the walls; they could hear breaking glass as the pictures in the hall came down and perhaps the smashing of windows” (Jackson 203). The different haunting episodes that the characters experienced show the way Crain's omnipresent gaze is a tool to internalize the act of surveillance and to interiorize the horror by showing a reaction whenever the characters act, react or even plan to unveil the truth of the haunted house. Crain was not simply a lost soul that wanders in Hill House as the characters think but an organism that adopts a highly complex strategies of surveillance, guaranteeing the expansion of his omniscient gaze. Yet, if Crain's ceaseless panoptic gaze leads the characters to live in what Foucault calls “a compulsory visibility”<sup>65</sup>, it is not the only thing to blame about what happened in the house. Throughout the different experiences, Eleanor's credibility is always doubted. Is she an innocent victim or a traumatized unstable character who imagines what happens?

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<sup>65</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Random House Inc, 1995, p.187.

## **1.2. Eleanor Vance: A challenge to family institutions or to the political/ societal oppression?**

Eleanor Vance is presented from the beginning of the novel as an oppressed girl tormented by her paranormal childhood memories and her miserable present life with her sister and her brother-in-law. As a daydreaming girl, Eleanor fantasizes ways and means to free herself from the chains of her past and present, to settle down and to have her own private life as any girl her age. Dr. Montague's invitation to be a part of the investigators' group presents for Eleanor a fresh start to renew her life. Her reaction to the house's strangeness is different from other characters'. While the group relate the house's haunting power to the figure of Hugh Crain, Eleanor insists on the mnemonic links between the uncanniness of the house and her mother. Eleanor's focus on her mother, even after her death, makes her an active character in absentia. To answer the aforementioned question on the responsibility of Eleanor in all the haunting events, the nature of her relation to her mother should be further studied.

As it is mentioned in the third chapter of the second part, Eleanor's mother is typically a *phallic mother* who assumed a patriarchal role in the absence of the father. Despite her disability and complete dependance on Eleanor, the mother is presented as a castrative mother who smothers her daughter by depleting her life from any autonomy. The mother/daughter relationship is described at the beginning of the novel as a relation of hate. The narrator describes Eleanor feeling free from the heavy burden of taking care of her mother. The way she insists on leading the adventure in Hill House without any consideration to her sister and brother-in-law and the way she fantasizes about her new life, show her longing to be unchained from an unhealthy relation. However, as the novel develops, Eleanor's love for her phallic mother proves to be an identification with her<sup>66</sup>. This identification can be trace

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<sup>66</sup> The relationship between Eleanor and her mother can be compared to the relationship between Norman Bates and his mother in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* as they both share the identification with a castrative mother. The figure of the mother is omnipresent in their lives devoid of any patriarchal presence.

through the way she describes the house and interprets the different haunting experiences. While she is supposedly starting a new life in the Hill House, her first reaction to the house's design is to describe it as a womb (Jackson 42), which is considered as a lost paradise. In fact, the intra uterine life is considered as a stage during which the infant is in complete union with the mother, and that is why birth is theorized by Freud as the first experience of anxiety that the infant faces: "Moreover, the act of birth is the first experience of anxiety, and thus the source of prototype of the affect of anxiety" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, 411). Yet, through Eleanor's subconscious desire to return to the intra-uterine utopian life, the house can also be studied as a tomb. The reference to the tomb is used only once when the nursery is described in the fourth chapter. The nursery presents one of the Hill House rooms that is associated with the image of the mother. The room is described as a claustrophobic space that reminds the reader of a tomb:

Although the nursery was warm, it smelled musty and close, and the cold crossing the doorway was almost tangible, visible as a barrier which must be crossed in order to get out. Beyond the windows the gray stone of the tower pressed close, inside, the room was dark and the line of the nursery animals painted along the wall seemed somehow not at all jolly, but as though they were trapped, or related to the dying deer in the sporting prints of the game room. (Jackson 119)

The nursery room is particularly darker and mustier than the other rooms, leading the other characters to think about it as "the doorway of a tomb" (Jackson 118). But most importantly, Hill House in general and the nursery room in particular present for Eleanor her after death residence where she will renew her love and union with her mother. Eleanor has a bulimia for love that can be found in the house where she feels at home (womb) and where she can establish a new resurrected relationship with her mother (tomb). This explains her hysteric reaction when Dr. Montague decided to send her away from Hill House. She feels the house as a part of herself, of her identity, leading her to decide to stay there forever even if it takes her to wall up herself alive: " 'Walled up alive.' Eleanor begins to laugh again at their stone faces. 'Walled up alive,' she said. 'I want to stay here.' " (Jackson 240) Prior to her tragic death, and in one of the most

violent haunting instances, Eleanor tells herself: “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” (Jackson 204). This shows how Eleanor is completely absorbed by the house, as she feels seduced by the atmosphere of death, feeling home after being able to break “the spell of Hill House” (Jackson 232). She, as Tricia Lootens mentions in her essay “ ‘Whose hand was I holding?’: Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*”, “is about to reverse the birth process through which she “betrayed” her mother” (158).

#### 1.2.1. Eleanor Vance: A victim of the house's manipulation or the initiator of the hauntings?

Eleanor's identification with her castrative mother and her attempts to revive her love for her mother after death, lead us to raise the following questions: Is Eleanor a depressed character who is in denial of her mother's death? Is she really haunted by the house or is she a victim of her own depression? To answer these questions, I need to study the character of Eleanor Vance relying on Julia Kristeva's ideas on depression caused by the impossibility to realize mourning work. In her book *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989), Kristeva starts her investigation with the Freudian theorization on depression as a psychological state related to the loss of or rejection by a parent (usually a mother). The depressed person identifies himself with the lost person, which means that the anger and hatred towards the lost person is directed towards the self. Kristeva suggests that in the case of melancholia and depression, the depressed person goes beyond identification with the lost person to integrate it fully in his or her self. Melancholia is a stage in which there is “an impossible mourning for the maternal object” (9). It refers to the denial of the separation from the mother. This failed attempt to be separated from the mother along with the failure to complete mourning work turn melancholia into a radiant active state of obsessional desire to be reunited with the mother. Besides, Kristeva theorizes the idea that in case of the melancholia, emotions like sadness and loss can be the originator of a very active imagination (9).

Accordingly, a second reading of the haunting events can be done. Eleanor is firstly described as a character with a creative imagination. She resorts to daydreams whenever she feels the need to protect herself from the unhomely house. Unlike the rest of the group, Eleanor shows, as soon as she enters Hill House, a special connection to the house as an uncanny familiar space that reminds her of her deceased mother. It is unquestionably a place that is bound up to her dream to resurrect her past union with her mother. Eleanor feels that she is the house's center of interest and target. In the different experiences that she leads in her bedroom, the rest of the group do not notice any paranormal activity. In the first haunting experience, in which Eleanor hears a terrifying sound, the rest of the group were not aware of what she was experiencing: "the sound which hammered on your door was not audible to us" (Jackson 134). Eleanor develops a paranoia about being the center of haunting, which led her to be also the focus of the group's interest. As she thinks about herself as "the one chosen"<sup>67</sup> to be persecuted, she starts to hear orders in a singing child's voice. Yet, she is the only person who hears it: "Luke and the doctor bent over the chessboard, Arthur leaned confidingly close to Theodora, and Mrs. Montague talked. None of them heard it, she thought with joy; nobody heard it but me" (Jackson 226). Her joy proves her grandiose delusions of being special for the Hill House.

Furthermore, some critics explain the responsibility of Eleanor in the different haunting episodes in relation to her mother's death. In this context, Darryl Hattenhauer studies in chapter 9 of his book *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*, the role of Eleanor's childhood in building her complex character. He even questions the credibility of her version of her mother's death, believing that she may be a victim of child abuse which may explain her paranoia:

Much of Eleanor's depressive paranoia is bound up with her guilt. She blames herself for her mother's death. She says her mother died because she slept through the mother's knocking on the wall for help.

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. Penguin Books, 2009, p147.



But if Eleanor knew that her mother was knocking and if Eleanor did not help, Eleanor could not have been asleep. On the other hand, if Eleanor slept through her mother's death, how would Eleanor know that her mother had been knocking? Her account of her mother's death may be a fantasy of blameworthiness – of the kind that several of Jackson's characters exhibit. Fantasies of blameworthiness in her other characters often accompany compensatory fantasies of empowerment, which deny weakness. Eleanor could be a survivor of child abuse. She had a dream that suggests a trace of resentment over being the victimized child by featuring herself as the rescuer of the victimized child. (158)

Eleanor's decayed personality can be further traced in her suicide scene. She is completely fallen apart as she loses control over herself. While heading toward her end, Eleanor encourages and congratulates herself for killing herself, saying "[t]hey can't turn me out or shut me out or laugh at me or hide from me; I won't go, and Hill House belongs to *me*" (Jackson 245). Yet, she asks herself forthwith about what and why she is doing it. This shows that Eleanor is not a stable person and that her depressed personality is partly responsible for what happens inside Hill House.

### 1.2.2. Eleanor's hysteria

In addition to the theme of horror and haunting presented in Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the concept of family is also examined. All characters presented in the novel suffer from a poisonous model of family: Dr. Montague escapes his unhealthy relation with his wife, Eleanor suffers from the dominating power of a phallic mother who left her psychologically disintegrating, Theodora argues with her partner before coming to Hill House, and finally Luke suffers on account of his distrusting family. From these failed family patterns, a new family is created that gathers Dr. Montague and the other investigators. Although this new "family" seems to be united as its members share the same mission and goals, it unfortunately ends in total dispersion. As she never identifies herself with her biological family, Eleanor tries to find a new family in the Hill House. She feels a sense of belonging when she joins the group of Dr. Montague: "They were all silent, looking into the fire, lazy after their several journeys, and Eleanor thought, I am the fourth person in this room; I am one of them; I belong" (Jackson 60). Despite the gloomy atmosphere, she feels happy because she can associate

herself to a group, all the more so as she feels unwanted by her own flesh and blood. Her smile in the following excerpt underscores the sense of conciliation and happiness she has finally retrieved: “she smiled at herself in the mirror and told herself silently, you are happy, Eleanor, you have finally been given a part of your measure of happiness” (Jackson 137). The house provides Eleanor with the sense of a perfect home and family. As Tricia Lootens writes in “ “Whose Hand Was I Holding?” : Familial and Sexual Politics in Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*”, it “entraps its inhabitants with fantasies of domestic bliss even as it forces them to recognize such fantasies as delusions” (155). Eleanor’s journey in the haunted setting is characterized by a gradual path from challenge and resistance to hysteria and death. The idea of challenge can be studied in relation to family, patriarchy and to Eleanor herself.

As it is mentioned in the first part of this thesis, Hill House is simultaneously the symbol of the phallic mother and the symbol of patriarchy. As a *puer aeternus*<sup>68</sup> character, Eleanor projects her guilt and her subconscious attachment to her mother on the house (Hattenhauer 157). In the first chapter of the novel, Eleanor is presented as a character who lives in fantasies and romances. She even identifies herself with a family that she met at a restaurant while she was on her way to Hill House. She met a little girl who insisted to drink her milk in her cup of stars while her mother tries gently to convince her to drink from a glass. Watching the incident, Eleanor finds herself encouraging the girl to resist her mother’s request:

Don’t do it, Eleanor told the little girl; 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; don’t do it; and the little girl glanced at her, and smiled a little subtle, dimpling, wholly comprehending smile, and shook her head stubbornly at the glass. Brave girl, Eleanor thought; wise, brave girl. (Jackson 22)

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<sup>68</sup>This concept is firstly used in mythology to refer to a child who is eternally young. It is used by Carl Jung to refer to the archetype of an adult person who is socially and psychologically immature. He is a person whose life is based upon fantasies and dreams and who cannot take any serious decision. *Puer aeternus* presents the Jungian concept for what is known as the Peter Pan syndrome. In her book *The Problem of Puer Aeternus*, Marie-Louis Von Franz defines a *puer aeternus* as someone who “remains too long in adolescent psychology; that is, all those characteristics that are normal in a youth of seventeen or eighteen are continued into later life, coupled in most cases with too great a dependence on the mother” (1-2).

The way Eleanor identifies with the little girl and the way she reacts to a simple incident show that her 'adult' self is not fully constructed. As Roberta Rubenstein mentions in her essay "House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and Female Gothic", the lack of the mother or any parental figure can lead to an underdeveloped independent self as the child remains lost with no home and no identity. This is clear in the case of Jackson's Eleanor, who despite her attempts to build her independent, adult self and to challenge her family (her sister) by accepting to lead an adventure with a group of strangers, fails to escape the haunting presence of her mother. Eleanor lives a real struggle between what the English psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott calls the "true self" and the "false self". In his book *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development*, Winnicott introduces the opposite concepts of True and False self. The former as the sense of real authenticity of an individual and the latter as a defensive mechanism that protects the true self in case of "mother's inability to sense her infant's needs" (145). Winnicott highlights the importance of the mother in the construction of the infant's personality. While mother's good care helps to build the infant's True self, overprotection or toxic mother-child relation may lead to the creation of a false self that aims to hide the true self and to meet the mother's expectations, contradicting (erasing) the authentic self. Yet, this protective method can turn into a mental illness in case the false self holds sway, considering the world as unsafe and unreliable. In the 'cup of stars' scene, Eleanor was not able to say clearly and audibly what she was thinking about despite her identification with the girl. Her False self keeps her true rebellious self hidden and protected, behaving the way she is expected. Encouraging the girl to be brave enough to refuse her mother's request shows Eleonore's constant inner fight between a silent True Self and a dominant False self that sees the world as a potential threat. Besides, Eleanor remains entrapped between her longing to have an autonomous self and her unconscious desire to reunite with her mother as she remains haunted by her presence. This

duality of *mother/self*, *home/lost*<sup>69</sup> can be traced in different instances in the novel. In addition to the instance of the message written in the walls of Hill House “HELP ELEANOR COME HOME” (Jackson 155), the use of the planchette reveals the struggle between Eleanor’s self and the motherly home as words like “home, mother, child, lost” (Jackson 192-3) are used repeatedly.

Despite her fragile personality and vulnerability, Eleanor tries to challenge the house’s panoptic force. She shows signs of power and endurance as she tries to confront the different haunting experiences with poise. Although the haunting is concentrated on her, she tries persistently to go further in her attempt to unveil the nature of Hill House. She endeavors to escape her situation as a prey of the all-present gaze by trying to be more active in the investigation. In the different climatic moments of haunting episodes, Eleanor finds herself acting wildly by screaming and challenging the panoptic force:

[...] now, I will not endure this. They think to scare me. Well, they have. I am scared, but more than that, I am a person, I am human, I am a walking reasoning humorous human being and I will take a lot from this lunatic filthy house but I will not go along with hurting a child [...] I will by God get my mouth to open right now and I will yell I will I will yell “STOP IT”, she shouted [...]. (Jackson 163)

As the haunting episodes get harsher on Eleanor’s fragile self, reminding her of her mother, her resistances fall one by one, thus becoming consumed by the house’s entrapping power. She starts gradually to accept her entrapment, submitting to the house’s motherly effects that have led her to accept it as her final home. Once Dr. Montague realizes the poisonous effects of the house on Eleanor, he decides to send her away so that she could retrieve her true self again. Yet, this decision drives her to a hysterical reaction as she commits suicide to be eternally entombed in Hill House.

Eleanor’s attempts to disregard the haunting gaze of the house is a way to challenge its power. This challenge is symbolic as it means a challenge to the motherly dimension of the

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<sup>69</sup>This duality is conceptualized and studied by Roberta Rubenstein in her essay “House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and Female Gothic”.

house (the phallic mother) and the figure of patriarchy (as the house connotes also the idea of masculinity through the idea of male gaze and the patriarchal oppression of Hugh Crain). However, by reading the text from Eleanor's point of view, I remain indecisive about whether the haunting nature of Hill House is real or functions from inside her disturbed mind. Eleanor's path from challenge to hysteria leads us to ask the following question: Is Eleanor her own haunter?

If I trace back Eleanor's journey, I notice that the haunting episodes become more violent as Eleanor feels estranged. In this context, Darryl Hattenhauer mentions that, looking for a new family, Eleanor tries to become closer to both Theodora and Luke. However, she is rejected by both characters. In one instance, when Eleanor insists to settle down with Theodora, the latter spurns her: "Do you always go where you're not wanted" (Jackson 209). Theodora's rejection presents a turning point as Eleanor finds Hill House the only 'creature' that does not reject her presence. She starts to project her memory, her relationship with her mother and her guilt on the house. Eleanor's credibility can be questioned as she repeatedly questions what she is experiencing:

I will never be able to sleep again with all this noise coming from inside my head; how can these others hear the noise when it is coming from inside my head? I am disappearing inch by inch into this house, I am going apart a little bit at a time because all this noise is breaking me; why are the *others* frightened? (Jackson 201-202)

Eleanor finds in Hill House the best answer for her quest for a family. Projecting the haunting image of her mother, Eleanor thinks that staying in the house will be her only chance to bring her relationship with her mother back to life. Hence, she creates a phantasm<sup>70</sup>, a mental image of the legendary Hugh Crain to compensate the loss of her absent father but most

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<sup>70</sup> In Greek etymology, the words "phantasm" and "phantom" share the same etymological origins. They have in common the prefix "phant-" that means to appear or to show. Both words lead to a broader meaning of illusion and visual hallucination.

importantly the loss of her mother. After her mother's death, Eleanor lived an experience similar to what Gérard De Nerval endured and expressed in his poem *El Desdichado* (1854). She loses her bearings, living a state of total psychological chaos. Being in the eye of a psychological and emotional storm, Eleanor finds in Hill House an unmissable chance to retrieve her lost identity and to renew her mother/daughter dyad.

Eleanor can also be considered as a volunteer victim. She can be compared to Sophocles's Antigone. In Seminar VII *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan studies Sophocles's play *Antigone*, focusing on the way the protagonist finds *jouissance* in being a victim of the Other. Antigone is a revolted figure as she vows herself to fight against patriarchy (symbolized by her uncle Creon). She admits her actions and as she is punished by her uncle by being walled up alive, she decides voluntarily to commit suicide by hanging herself. Lacan theorizes the idea that Antigone's suicide presents a way to stop Creon's will, and therefore her *jouissance* lies in the transgression of what Creon represents: the law and morality. He unveils the hidden side of Antigone since without Lacan's seminar, Antigone appears as a rebellious symbol of femininity who revolted against the sacred patriarchal order, sacrificing her life. Yet, Lacan points out that Antigone's story is based on "an absolute choice, [...] that is motivated by no good" (Lacan 240). Her strong will and determination reveal her deadly *jouissance* of transgressing what is sacred. The other is a symbol of prohibition and castration and in order to face the castrative Other, the subject can accept voluntarily the position of the victim through suicide as a way to defend an ideal. Accordingly, Eleanor represents a new version of Antigone. Her suicide at the end of the novel, seems to correspond to her status as a volunteer victim. Although she seems to be happily free from the chains of her phallic mother, having finally a chance to take over her lost adult years, Eleanor shows through different instances that she enjoys her victimhood. Eleanor's decision to commit suicide comes as a reaction against Dr. Montague's strict decision to send her away from Hill House. To face this figure

of prohibition, she uses the same technique as Antigone by committing suicide to defend her aim to be united with her mother and to stay forever in Hill House.

### 1.2.3. Hill House's female characters: a challenge to societal/ political oppression

Although the idea of panopticism is generally related to the political context as I can link it to the idea of governmental mass surveillance, it may be also societal as it can be related to patriarchal oppressive surveillance. Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* highlights the clash between patriarchy (represented mainly by Hugh Crain and Dr. Montague) and the three female characters, Eleanor, Theodora and Mrs. Montague. Through these female characters, Jackson succeeds in echoing the anxieties of the mid-twentieth century. In the 1950s, many American women were imprisoned in what men call 'womanhood', a concept that the patriarchal order created to confine women in pre-set norms to be applied in order to be accepted (like the image of the angel in the house that was used as a symbol of femininity, referring to a typical subservient attitude). During this era, being a housewife became stronger than ever as womanhood was defined in relation of women's ability to constitute a family and bear a child. This image was highlighted by the mass media of the mid-1950 as Betty Friedan explores in *The Feminine Mystique*, a book she published in 1963:

In the 1950's they printed virtually no articles except those that serviced women as housewives, or described women as housewives, or permitted a purely feminine identification like the Duchess of Windsor or Princess Margaret. "If we get an article about a woman who does anything adventurous, out of the way something by herself, you know, we figure she must be terribly aggressive, neurotic," a *Ladies' Home Journal* editor told me. (45)

Different women's magazines provided an intensive propaganda for this definition of womanhood, leading women to be under the constant gaze of the patriarchal order, unable to behave differently from what is 'socially' acceptable. In this context, Friedan gives different

examples of magazines' headlines that show the way the 1950s women's world revolved around the pleasure of men:

The transformation reflected in the pages of the women's magazines, was sharply visible in 1949 and progressive through the fifties. "Femininity Begins at Home", "It's a Man's World Maybe", "Have Babies While You're Young", "How to Snare a Male" [...]. (38)

Women found themselves entrapped in the cult of domesticity, as they were conditioned to think that their natural place and status was to be married and to be mothers, preventing them from thinking about what they really wanted to be or to do. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Jackson has conceived three different characters who challenge this patriarchal oppressive vision. The protagonist, Eleanor Vance, rebels against the status quo after her mother's death and decides to change her life by throwing off her shoulder the burden of being a mother for her disabled mother, and by leading an adventure with an unknown end. In *Hill House*, despite her vulnerability, Eleanor shows resistance against Crain's attempts to invade her intimacy and her 'private' memories. Eleanor is depicted at the beginning of the novel as a girl with high hopes, determined to start her life after having been confined for 11 years in her role of a caretaker for her disabled mother. As she enters Hill House, Eleanor is driven to be insane. Her unsettlement can be read as a reflection of the mid-twentieth century anxiety of being trapped in the 'housewife' role. This anxiety reflects the feeling of void and emptiness that women feel during their 'housewife routine'<sup>71</sup>. This feeling is further intensified when Eleanor finds "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (Jackson 155). This sentence can be explained in this context as an invitation to discipline Eleanor and drive her to the legitimate and natural place. Furthermore, Eleanor's suicide scene can be examined as the ultimate scene that shows how she challenges patriarchy. She subverts Dr. Montague's orders that leave no space for her to choose or discuss whether she should stay or go. Dr. Montague is a typical patriarchal figure who settles the rules

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<sup>71</sup> This idea is based on Friedan's interview to different housewives who claim that they are "desperate" and "with no personality". They define themselves as servants, "somebody who can be called on when you want something" (16-17).



and leads the group. When he decides that Eleanor must leave the house, she thinks that suicide is the only way to show her rejection of the oppressive decision. This can also be explained as a way to escape the domestic space where she feels surveilled by the patriarchal figure who tries to lead her back to her previous status as a submissive woman cowered under the orders of the patriarch.

In addition to Eleanor, the idea of challenging the patriarchal gaze can be examined through the character of Theodora and Mrs. Montague. Unlike Eleanor, who seems overwhelmed by the domestic role attributed to the women of her era, Theodora is presented as an active spiritualist, single with no children; and the cherry on the cake, is implicit homosexual character. Theodora embodies perfectly the image of women that the second wave of feminism<sup>72</sup> calls for. This image reflects the revolutionary movement that changed the way women viewed themselves. Theodora concretizes what Kate Millett theorizes in her book *Sexual Politics*<sup>73</sup> (1969), that “women’s right to their own bodies and sexuality of their ‘own’— a sexuality that is disconnected from the obligations of marriage and motherhood” (Krolokke 10). Theodora presents the complete opposite of Eleanor. She is described as an independent, strong-willed person with a sense of discipline and accountability “Duty and conscience were, for Theodora, attributes which belonged properly to Girl Scouts” (Jackson 8). Theodora’s profile challenges the patriarchy of Hill House. As Dale Baily suggests, Theodora’s signature with a masculine version of her name “Theo” shows “her defiance of the patriarchy” (39). Theodora presents for Eleanor the personality she dreams to be. She dreams to come out of her shell and to be able to be the leader of her life. By challenging the norms of the American society, Theodora can be also considered as the image of the new generation of the American women. Furthermore, Mrs. Montague can be studied as one of the

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<sup>72</sup> The second wave feminism is defined by Charlotte Krolokke and Anne Scott Sorenson in their essay “Three Waves of Feminism: From Suffragettes to Grrls” as “the radical feminism of the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s” (7). This movement revolutionizes the image of women in relation to a liberal sexuality, education, family and workplace.

<sup>73</sup> This book presents one of the influential works of the second wave feminism.

female characters who subverted the patriarchy in Hill House. She joins her husband a week after the beginning of the investigation, accompanied by Arthur Parker. Unlike the other characters, Mrs. Montague is not physically or morally described. Yet, her personality is crystal clear through her actions and dialogues. Unlike the housewives of her era, Mrs. Montague insists to follow her husband and to be an active participant in the investigation. She shows herself as an authoritative person whose orders cannot be rejected. She clearly shakes her husband's control over the group as she reacts with contempt to his ways to investigate the house and his persistent refusal to use the planchette. Mrs. Montague's authority is also clear in her relation with Arthur. This character, presented as a submissive assistant who can't refuse or discuss any of Mrs. Montague's orders, can be studied as a parody of the phallic patriarchy as he tries to show himself as a very masculine person

"I," Arthur said richly, "shall make my headquarters in the small room just this side of the nursery, well within shouting distance. I shall have with me a drawn revolver—do not take alarm, ladies, I am an excellent shot – and a flashlight, in addition to a most piercing whistle. I shall have no difficulty summoning the rest of you in case I observe anything worth your notice, or I require – ah—company. You may all sleep quietly, I assure you." (Jackson 193).

Here, the way Arthur explains his mission parodies the concept of manhood in Jackson's times. The revolver is a phallic symbol that highlights the centrality of the masculine figure as protector. Arthur presents a parody of what the mass media present during the 1950s. In this context, Michael Kimmel studies in his book *Manhood in America* the strong image of the patriarch that television provides through different shows. He gives the example of the sitcom *Father Knows Best* that portrays the centrality of the father as the bread-winner, the provider and the protector (247).

Written during an era when women are considered "insane" if they behave out of the norms, Shirley Jackson defies her own society by incorporating incisively different archetypes of female characters: Eleanor carries the burden of domesticity that she has endured for 11 years (by taking care of her mother). Theodora presents the modern version of the American female

through her independence and ambiguous sexuality. Mrs. Montague, despite being present only at the end of the novel, shows herself as an imposing character, even narcissistic as she does not miss any chance to prove the accuracy of her method over the academic, scientific approach conveyed by her husband. These three characters succeed to subvert the patriarchal panoptic gaze that keeps the women of the twentieth century enchained by the different societal norms and gender roles. Through these characters, Jackson succeeds in conveying her interpretation of what Ellen Moers calls the Female Gothic<sup>74</sup>. Choosing suicide as an end for Eleanor, the tragic hero, Jackson delves into the dark underbelly of the American societal norms of the twentieth century. The predefined norms of womanhood that entrap women in their body and house can lead to insanity and death. By shifting the power from Dr. Montague (as a leader of the group) to his wife (her constant derision intimidates her husband), Jackson shows that the 1950s idealized image of the relationship between man and women (as it was marketed in mass media) is skewed. Hill House is in fact an allegory of the patriarchal chauvinist society that oppresses women by their femininity. Crain's panoptic gaze that haunts Eleanor in particular shows that it is a male gaze that tries to discipline her again for thinking and trying to be independent.

### **1.3. Dr. Montague: When science fails to stop the panoptic surveillance**

Within the realm of power relations, and as the spirituality of Eleanor fails to destroy the panoptic power of the house, Dr Montague's attempts to stop the house's surveillance relying on scientific, rational accounts seem also to be limited. This sub-part will analyze the way science fails to decode the haunted house's nature. Dr Montague defends from the beginning of

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<sup>74</sup>The Female Gothic is a term coined by Ellen Moers in 1976 in her book *Literary Women: The Great Writers*. Moers defines the Female Gothic as any Gothic work of art written by female writers (90). She explores different canonic literary works like *Frankenstein* and *Northanger Abbey* to study the different kinds of Female Gothic. In the introduction of *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith state that Moers' s book presents a pioneering work in which "the connections she made between such diverse women writers offered new ways of reading and valuing them and that had a particular political importance in the context of "the new wave of feminism called women's liberation." (xiii) It also proved inspiring to other critics who read the Female Gothic as a politically subversive genre articulating women's dissatisfaction with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body" (2).

the novel his technological device and scientific approach to fight the panoptic gaze. However, throughout the novel, there is a constant challenge between spirituality and scientific strategies that marked the events.

Dr. Montague, a professor of Anthropology who is interested in the world of parapsychology<sup>75</sup>. He is the only character who is described both physically and morally. He is “round, rosy and bearded” (Jackson 60). This physical description is related by some critics to Stanley Edgar Hyman, the American literary critic and Shirley Jackson’s husband. Darryl Hattenhauer mentions that Dr. Montague is in fact a parody of Hyman and his “mirror opposite”, and that even the choice of the name Montague is not arbitrary as the author “gives his parodic twin the last name of the anthropologist Ashley Montague, who was known as one of the Bennington’s most effete faculty members” (Hattenhauer 155)<sup>76</sup>. Unlike the other characters who are identified by their first names; Eleanor, Theodora and Luke, Dr. Montague is known exclusively by his family name. His identity lies first in his academic degree and second in his role as a father figure. The adventure to investigate the haunting nature of Hill House has created a new family composed of different members with complex relations with their biological families. Throughout the novel, different instances show Dr. Montague as a father figure who exercises a parenting role. When he sends the invitation letter to Eleanor, he describes the directions “as efficiently and promptly as though he had been guiding her from some spot far away, moving her car with controls in his hands” (Jackson 23). Arriving to the Hill House, Dr. Montague fully takes care of the characters’ daily schedule, planning all details concerning rooms and hours of lunch and dinner with Mrs. Dudley. Dr. Montague treats the rest of the group with a fatherly love and protection. He even calls them “children”: “you are three

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<sup>75</sup> According to Merriam Webster Online dictionary, parapsychology refers to the study and research of “evidence for paranormal psychological phenomena (such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis)” and other paranormal events (“Parapsychology.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parapsychology>).

<sup>76</sup> According to Darryl Hattenhauer, the character of Dr. Montague is inspired from Jackson’s private life and entourage. She ironically uses the character who is referred to as ‘doctor’ as a way to create a twisted image of her husband who, although he had no graduate degree, taught in Bennington college for 4 years (155).

willful, spoiled children who are prepared to nag me for your bedtime story” (Jackson 69). His love and protective instinct surface also when he decides that Eleanor should leave the house for her own physical and mental health. Yet, being a father figure depicts only one side of Dr. Montague’s character, who is also presented as “knowledgeable and stubborn” (Jackson 60). He is also described as a scientist obsessed with his investigations since he feels the scientific passion to conquer the unknown<sup>77</sup>. At the beginning of the novel, Dr. Montague is presented as an engaged scientist who is in pursuit of knowledge and truth. His passion to unveil the truth of the supernatural becomes a mania:

It had cost him a good deal, in money and pride, since he was not a begging man, to rent Hill House for three months, but he expected absolutely to be compensated for his pains by the sensation following upon the publication of his definitive work on the causes and effects of psychic disturbances in a house commonly known as “haunted”. (Jackson 4)

Dr. Montague’s obsessive passion for his scientific investigation is made clear through the way he sees himself and the house, that is as an explorer of a de facto misleading place. In one instance he describes himself as “a pilgrim, a wanderer” (Jackson 62), showing the way he considers his quest for knowledge as a sacred mission. Dr. Montague uses a purely scientific approach to study Hill House. As he prepares everything meticulously, his method seems to be successful. The group succeeds in navigating in the house using a map and following the doctor’s path. Yet, as he engages himself in a direct confrontation with the evil in the house, the doctor soon starts dealing with unpredictable events, which unsettle his initial plans. As Eleanor insists on the fact that the house is under the control of a devilish spirit who haunts her, Dr. Montague tries to find a logical, scientific explanation to everything that she witnesses. He states that “Fear, is the relinquishment of logic, the *willing* relinquishment of reasonable patterns” (Jackson 159). He tries to provide logical references to the idea of a

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<sup>77</sup> This is a characteristic of the 1950s United States as many scientific and technological experiments were realized successfully. The 1950s was considered as the decade of scientific innovations (not only in the USA but also in the USSR) as space started to be explored with the launch of the Russian Sputnik 1 in 1957 and later the American Freedom 7 in 1961.

Haunted ‘deranged’ house: “The disturbances I am calling ‘psychic’ are actually the result of subterranean waters or electric currents, or hallucinations caused by polluted air; atmospheric pressure, sun spots, earth tremors” (Jackson 71). Dr Montague’s scientific perspective and methods cannot be studied without comparing them to his wife’s spiritual approach.

Mrs. Montague is introduced in the seventh chapter of the novel when she joins the group along with her companion Arthur. As she enters Hill House, Mrs. Montague starts by blaming the doctor for not using the planchette, thinking that spiritualistic medium can be the answer for what is happening in the haunted setting. Unlike the doctor, Mrs. Montague has no academic ‘rationality’. She believes that the house is not under the control of one spirit (that is Hugh Crain’s), but is rather full of dwelling spirits who “may be actually *suffering* because they are aware that you are afraid of them” (Jackson 183). With the arrival of Mrs. Montague, she creates a competition with the doctor, debating over the effectiveness of each method. Each one of them tries to show the correctness of his method. Mrs. Montague proposes as soon as she arrives to Hill House the use of planchette, a tool that Dr. Montague tries to define as scientifically as possible without hiding his discontent:

Planchette [...] is a device similar to the Ouija Board, or perhaps I might explain better by saying that it is a form of automatic writing; a method of communicating with – ah – intangible beings although to my thinking the only intangible beings who ever get in touch through one of those things are the imagination of the people running it. [...] The Ouija Board, as I say, is very similar, except that the object moves on a board pointing to separate letter. An ordinary wineglass will do the same thing; I have seen it tried with a child’s wheeled toy, although I will admit that it looked silly. Each person uses the tips of the fingers of one hand, keeping the other hand free to note down questions and answers. The answers are invariably, I believe, meaningless, although of course my wife will tell you different. Balderdash.” And he went at the fire again. “Schoolgirls,” he said. “Superstition.” (Jackson 187-88)

The use of words like “Balderdash”<sup>78</sup> and “silly” shows that the description provided by Dr. Montague is subjective despite his attempts to be scientifically objective. He tries to show that the device, popularly used in the nineteenth century, is outdated, unable to compete with the

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<sup>78</sup> Balderdash means illogical or meaningless talk.

scientific, logical methods. The couple are bickering over the rightness of their methods which shows their frustration of being unable to solve Hill House's enigma. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Montague's 'irrational' spiritualism is efficient as she succeeds in contacting the house's spirit. Through the planchette, she discovers that a part of the House's darkness lies in "Nell, child, mother, home, lost" (Jackson 192-3). These brief answers to Mrs. Montague's questions reflect Eleanor's desire to reconstruct the bond with her mother without whom she feels lost and incomplete. Yet, both scientific and spiritual methods fail to understand the fact that Hill House is more than an old house haunted by the spirit of Hugh Crain. In fact, the house's horrific nature is fed through the characters' hidden past, their unconscious desires, phobias and madness. Both methods are unable to find the origin of Hill House's 'absolute reality' that is ineffable. Eleanor identifies with the house and considers it as the image of her phallic mother so much so that she cannot separate herself from it. In the last chapter of the novel and as Hill House comes to an end, Eleanor starts using the first-person plural pronoun "we" to refer to the house and herself: "Eleanor clung to the door and laughed until tears came into her eyes; what fools they are, she thought; we trick them so easily" (Jackson 230). She clearly detaches herself from those she first considers first her family, to merge fully with the house. Eleanor falls apart mentally as she can no longer separate herself from the house. She thinks that she is a free person who is looking for her 'home'; but she never imagines that in reality the house entraps her, "curling around her ankle"<sup>79</sup> (Jackson 231). Despite the fact that Mrs. Montague's reactions present in some instances a comic relief through the way she teases her husband about the efficiency of his method and his skepticism toward the planchette, her protocol was not as foolish as Dr. Montague thinks. She succeeds in discovering the first hints of Hill House's puzzle. Yet, the house's malevolence and darkness were too harsh to

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<sup>79</sup> The verb "curl around" can be explained as a symbolical reference to the snake as a figure of evil, death and morbid pleasures.

understand and decode. Its unknown “absolute reality” (Jackson 3) is in fact a reflection of Eleanor’s mind who should be left in peace, unprobed. As Eleanor tries to go too deep in the house to reach its truth, the end is calamitous. As Eleanor ends crushed into the tree, the rest of the group understand that Hill House’s horror can never be solved or even explained. The novel ends with the preference of the rest of the group to go back to their daily life; Dr. Montague is finally able to write his “preliminary article analyzing the psychic phenomena of Hill House” (Jackson 246), Luke chooses Paris as a destination and Theodora goes back to her life prior to the adventure of Hill House. They are thankful to survive the unbreakable haunted house where they experienced their darkest and deepest nightmares.

In a nutshell, Hill House conveys panopticism architecturally and symbolically. As studied in the first part, the circular design of the house and the presence of the tower reflect the Benthamian concept of Panopticon. Yet, most importantly, the idea of panopticism is conveyed symbolically through the characters Hugh Crain and Eleanor Vance. Hugh Crain exercises his power of surveillance through his male gaze. Through this gaze, Crain succeeds in projecting his scopophilic instincts by finding pleasure in looking at the female body. Crain’s surveillance is also reactive to the characters’ actions and dialogues. The characters feel at a certain moment that they are completely manipulated by the watcher whose God-like gaze focuses mainly on Eleanor. This character is particularly the most vulnerable. Despite being a fragile girl who is psychologically immature, she tries to challenge first her family, the group she belongs to and Hugh Crain before being fully entrapped in her desire to renew her relation with her mother. She is the only one who dares the evil<sup>80</sup> but unfortunately, she cannot conquer it. She finds herself in a dilemma since she wants to renounce her past life and to start a fresh new life; simultaneously, she longs to relive her union with her everlasting love

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<sup>80</sup> At the beginning of the novel, and on her way to Hill House, Eleanor saw different signs. One of them is a sign about motorcycle races called Daredevil. Yet, because the second ‘d’ is missing, Eleanor reads it as “dare evil”



for her mother. Eleanor and the rest of the group enter a war against a powerful dark entity using two methods, scientific and spiritual. Dr. Montague shows his confidence in his scientific approach, trying to explain logically all supernatural incidents that happen. However, his method is a complete failure as Eleanor is entrapped gradually in the house's darkness, leading to her suicide. This end was foreshadowed by the doctor who confirms "no ghost in all the long histories of ghosts has ever hurt anyone physically. The only damage done is by the victim to himself" (Jackson 139). Eleanor's initial quest for a new start transforms into serious attempts to re-establish connections with her mother, whose phallic image is projected in the house. Hill House presents for her both the image of the mother's womb, the first paradise of the infant and her tomb, as she commits suicide to join eternally her lost mother.

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(Jackson 19). This foreshadows the confrontation with the evil despite the fact that she could not resist the power of her unconscious.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Hell House: a microcosm of US in the late twentieth century**

Richard Matheson's *Hell House* shows many common points with Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. Both novels share a similar story outline of a group of people from different social and cultural backgrounds who are interested in investigating the haunting nature of a notorious 'demon' house. Both authors study the same concepts of panoptic power, male gaze, the dichotomy of science vs spiritualism and their efficiency to overcome the panoptic gaze. Like Jackson, Robert Matheson's narrative is based upon an urban horror. The Gothic setting shows a modern house rather than a medieval castle, with multilayered hauntings as it involves both external factors (e.g. the panoptic gaze of the watcher, the presence of ghosts and haunting episodes) and internal factors like the characters' own anxieties and phobias. Matheson uses the classical motif of the haunted house to deal with the apprehensions of his times, echoing the myriad of social dilemmas of the American society. This chapter aims to focus on the power relation between the center of power (Belasco) and the unvoiced Ben Fisher. This relation unveils the complexity of the panoptic surveillance. Emeric Belasco presents the epitome of the Foucauldian panopticism as he exerts a constant unverifiable surveillance, transforming the mansion into an immense prison, from which the characters cannot escape. As the novel begins, the panoptic gaze is believed to be exercised by Daniel Belasco, Emeric's son. However, with the development of the novel, the truth is unveiled as the panoptic gaze is in fact exercised by Emeric Belasco, the ultimate, powerful watcher. Daniel presents one of the tormented lost souls who are oppressed by the dictatorship of Belasco. The novel unveils the existence of a well-organized hierarchy that succeeds in supervising systematically the characters by identifying them, analyzing their reactions and using the

appropriate way to horrify and control each one of them. Emeric Belasco supervises panoptically both the characters and the other lost souls as there is a prevalent feeling of his presence that controls every action done. Using the theory of New Historicism and notably the concept of Louis Montrose *the historicity of text*, I will study the hierarchy of the panoptic power in relation to the American society in twentieth century. A second subpart is dedicated to the study of the development of Ben Fisher from an indifferent character to a rebellious angry person whose aim is to destroy the panoptic power. This part will analyze the effectiveness of the panoptic gaze, to what extent it can control the subject under surveillance and whether the excessive oppression, originated from the panoptic surveillance can lead to turmoil.

### **2.1. Emeric Belasco: the embodiment of a hierarchal panoptic organization**

Emeric Belasco is the wealthy designer and owner of the 1919 Hell House, created specifically to be a place where all pleasures, beyond imagination, are possible. What starts as a fun experience, transforms quickly into a debauchery that leads to necrophilia and cannibalism. In 1929, all Hell House's guests were found dead except for Emeric Belasco who was missing. Since then, the house has gained the reputation of the "Mount Everest of haunted houses" (Matheson 15) as all researchers, who dare to investigate the house, end dead or insane. The novel starts with the request of Mr. Deutsch to have a factual, scientific investigation, led by Dr. Barrett about the house's haunting power that is "strong enough to physically and /or mentally demolish eight people, three of whom had been scientists" (Matheson 17). Dr. Barrett chooses to lead this adventure with a heterogeneous group composed of the medium Florence Tanner, Edith, the doctor's wife and Benjamin Fischer, the only survivor of a previous investigation. As soon as they enter the house, the characters feel the presence of the watcher, as they were welcomed by his voice recorded in an old phonograph. The novel depicts Belasco's panoptic surveillance that is based upon a

methodological horror:

Fischer lifted himself onto the sink counter and took judicious sips of his drink as he thought about the house. What was it doing this time? he wondered. There was a plan; of that he had no doubt. That was the horror of the place. It was not amorphously haunted. Hell House had a method. It worked against invaders systematically. How it did this, no one had ever found out. (Matheson 112)

Similar to Hugh Crain in *The haunting of Hill House*, Belasco's gaze seems to be focused on the two female characters; Florence and Edith. The haunting episodes in Hell House are sexually oriented and both female characters seem to be in the eye of this tumultuous experience. In the different haunting experiences, the watcher proves himself to be perverted. When Florence Tanner tries to communicate with the ghost for the first time, she uses her body and stimulates erotic sounds and acts to be in contact with the unseen force. The presence of the watcher is almost always felt through intimate situations. For instance, in a first haunting episode, while taking a shower and preparing herself for bed, Florence felt the presence of the ghost:

Footsteps started towards her.

"Yes?" she said.

The footsteps kept approaching, muffled on the rug. Florence started reaching for the candle, then withdrew her hand, knowing it was not of the other three. "All right," she murmured.

The footsteps halted. Florence listened carefully. There was a sound of breathing at the foot of the bed.

"Who's there?" she asked.

Only the sound of breathing. Florence peered into the darkness, but it was impenetrable. She closed her eyes. Her tone was even, undismayed. "Who is it, please?"

The breathing continued.

[...]

The breathing grew more labored. It was that of a young man. She could almost visualize him standing at the foot of the bed, his posture tense, his face tormented. (Matheson 73)

The detailed description of Florence's shower and the way the ghost manifests his presence through breathing reminds the reader of the emblematic shower scene of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. In Hitchcock's movie, Norman Bates watches Marion Crane firstly through the peephole as she gets undressed and then spies on her when she is in the shower before killing her brutally. Norman activates his male gaze of desire, which leads to the emergence of his repressed sexual thoughts. As a result, Bates decides to kill Marion as a way to eliminate the

source of his shame. This scene shares with Florence's haunting experience the same concept of male gaze and sexual attraction. The haunting episode starts with a detailed thorough description of Florence's shower scene:

The hot stream of water sprayed off Florence's upper chest and rivuleted down between her breasts. She stood in the shower stall, head back, eyes shut, feeling the ribbons of water lace across her stomach and down her thighs and legs. (Matheson 72)

The detailed description of the way Florence takes the shower shows that the heterosexual male gaze is activated as Florence's nudity forms the potential phantasm of the ghost, the author and the reader. The watcher's gaze conveys the male dominance over sexuality as his lustful gaze can be traced back to Belasco's vision of women as sexual fetishes. He finds pleasure in attracting women before leaving them mentally and psychologically consumed. Different instances throughout the novel can convey the objectified image of women, like the different traces on Florence's breasts and the incident when she sees clearly the figure of a nude man near her bed. The watcher's gaze is driven by sexual instincts as it focuses on the female body and intimacy and as it affects their sexuality too. Edith finds herself manipulated by this male gaze, arising her sexual hunger that she struggles to repress. She simultaneously starts to attack her husband's potency and seduce Fischer. Her dialogue with Fischer is loaded with erotic diction, and a violent tone that shows her repressed frustration

"What's the *matter*, little man?" she ranted. "Never had a tit before? *Try* it! It's delicious!" Sliding off the table, she advanced on Fischer, fingers gouging at her breasts. "Suck them," she said, her voice trembling with hatred. Her face convulsed with sudden fury. "Suck them, you fairy bastard, or I'll get myself a woman who will!" (Matheson 171)

The violent humiliating tone that Edith uses to attract Fischer reflects the sadistic character of her manipulator, Belasco, who is portrayed At the beginning of the novel as a sex guru, influenced by Sade's excessive, perverted sexuality. Furthermore, the watcher's male gaze can be further depicted in the way Florence ends. Her death is atrocious as it is preceded by a cruel

rape: “she was naked, lying on her back, her legs spread far apart, her eyes wide open, staring upward with a look of total shock” (Matheson 213). Matheson’s *Hell House* provides a straightforward image of female characters through a male gaze. It shows a masculine point of view that monopolizes women as objects of masculine desire. Belasco’s power lies, in addition to his panoptic gaze through which he is constantly present, in his ability to manipulate female characters through their bodies and repressed sexuality. He is able to entrap his victims in his male gaze, leading to show a hidden part of their identities.

Despite the presence of some similarities, the haunting in *Hell House* is definitely different from the one in *Hill House*. The haunting starts communicatively as the characters are welcomed by Emeric Belasco’s voice. Thinking that they are haunted by the notorious Belasco, the different characters discover that there is another presence. As a spiritual medium, Florence is able to figure the presence of Daniel, Belasco’s son. She thinks that the figure that visits her by night is him, trying to warn her about the evil character of the house. She tries to convince the rest of the group about his harmless, defensive character, believing that “he’s very young and very frightened – and, because he’s frightened, very angry, very hostile. I believe if we can convince him to go on, a portion of the haunting force will be eliminated.” (Matheson 81) The group becomes aware of the presence of other watchers. The haunting is very methodical: in some instances, it is very violent, even sadistic, and in others it is very inoffensive. This leads the group to be very dubious as they are no longer sure about the identity of the watcher. This doubt is further intensified after the burial of Daniel’s corpse that was found mummified, “shackled to the wall inside the narrow passage” (Matheson 124). Soon after, the group discover that they are facing a hierarchy of different watchers:

“Can you speak now?” Fischer asked.

“I can.” The voice was undeniably masculine.

Fischer hesitated, then drew in a quick breath. “Who are you?”

“Daniel Belasco.” The lips of the face did not move, but the voice was coming from the pallid features of the young man.

“Was it your body we found behind the wall of the wine cellar this morning?”

"It was."  
 "We gave you proper services outside. Why are you still here?" "I cannot leave."  
 "Why?"  
 No answer. [...]  
 "You have to tell me. Who attacked Doctor Barrett in the dining hall and steam room? Who bit Miss Tanner? Who possessed the car?"  
 He heard a quickening of breath. [...]  
 The voice began to plead. "Cannot –" [...]  
 "*Him!*" cried the voice. "The Giant! Him! Father, Father!" (Matheson 163-64)

Through this spiritual session of parapsychology, Florence insisted that Daniel is, like the other characters, under Belasco's manipulative gaze. He is used by him to terrify the characters, trying to let them away from discovering Hell House's truth. Unlike Hill House where there is only one watcher, Hugh Crain, who manipulates all the characters, Hell House presents a multilayered haunting. Emeric Belasco has the ultimate power over the place and its inhabitants. He is responsible for all crimes done in the house as he is able to supervise and control the characters through his omnipresent gaze. Daniel Belasco is a victim of the watcher and a tool to terrify the characters. He cannot escape the horrors done by his father. The dialogue between Fischer and Daniel shows that he is under a constant surveillance that makes him chained and entrapped in the house. Belasco is in fact able "to act in any area without his presence ever being known. He could create an all but incomprehensible tapestry of effects by manipulating every entity within the house, shifting from one to the other, always in the background [...]" (Matheson 179). His power lies in the way he can twist reality through visions, like when Belasco makes Florence think she is dancing with Daniel, while driving her to the tarn to drown her. Yet, in this context, a question is raised about the credibility of Florence? Is she really haunted by Daniel Belasco or is she creating the character?

Florence is presented from the beginning of the novel as a character who stands for the folkloric beliefs in mediumship. She believes she can communicate with dead people. Soon after Fischer's detailed account on the history of Hell House and its owner Emeric Belasco, Florence insists that she communicates with Belasco's son several times. She is the first and only person who can communicate with him orally and physically. Dr Barrett and the rest of

the group question her credibility first but they shortly give up as Florence was brutally attacked, leaving bloody traces on her body. As they discover Daniel's body and after doing the necessary rituals, Florence claims that she is still in communication with Daniel. Her unorthodox methods and the multiple bizarre coincidences that make Daniel visible on to Florence raise her credibility into question again. Dr Barret and Fischer face her with the idea that she might delude herself and that the character of Daniel Belasco is the fruit of her wild imagination. She tries to prove herself right by searching the Bible in the chapel where Daniel's name and date of birth are mentioned but she starts to remember all the dialogues with Belasco's son, realizing that she was duplicating the script of a television play. She becomes aware of the fact that the figure she danced with resembles her brother David who passed away years ago. Florence could not stand the truth as she wakes up from her phantasm:

A sob of terror broke inside her. No, it wasn't true! She started crying. But it *was* true. *She had made up Daniel Belasco in her mind.* There *was* no Daniel Belasco. There was only the memory of her brother, and the way he'd died, the loss he'd felt, the need he's carried to his grave. (Matheson 196)

Once this bitter truth revealed, Florence becomes more violent as she destroys Dr Barrett's machine. The group understands finally that she is not possessed by the house but is under the effect of her deranged self. She is "a victim of divided consciousness" (Matheson 235). Destroying Dr. Barrett's machine can be interpreted as a reaction against logical scientific beliefs that destroy her own beliefs by unveiling the truth about Daniel.

The end of Florence shows the complexity of Hell House as Belasco uses again the figure of Daniel to kill Florence. Daniel is a demonic figure who tortures her physically. She is haunted by multiple figures of Belasco's victims when she sees "two figures sprawled across the steps below, a man and a woman. The man was plunging a knife into the woman's throat" (Matheson 243). Belasco uses the sadistic horrific past of the house to push Florence to the altar. Thinking that she can overpower Belasco, she did not realize that he had been tricking her and driving her to her tragic end. The particularity of the gigantic Hell House lies in the fact that it is not



haunted by the ghosts of the numerous victims of the sadistic events, but is rather haunted by one powerful dark ghost of Emeric Belasco who epitomizes the panoptic unverifiable gaze that is able to control and observe constantly the entrapped characters. Hell House is a space under multiple hauntings, all controlled by the dominating force of Emeric Belasco who was able to impersonate Daniel, whose presence is doubted though. Belasco uses these conglomerate hauntings to guarantee the success of his supervision and to be further empowered over the multiple attempts to unveil his reality.

## **2.2. Benjamin Fischer: The revolution of the unvoiced against the panoptic power**

Along with Florence Tanner, Benjamin Franklin Fischer was imposed by Deutsch to investigate Hell House. He presents the only character who faced the horror of the haunted space in 1940. As a talented physical medium, he participated at the age of 15 in an investigation that turned wrong as all members were dead except for him. The 1940 experience is a traumatic turning point in Fischer's life, leaving him with physical and psychological sequelae:

They'd found him lying on the front porch of the house that morning in September 1940, naked, curled up like a fetus, shivering and staring into space. When they'd put him on a stretcher, he'd begun to scream and vomit blood, his muscles knottin, rocklike. He'd lain in a coma three months in the Caribou Falls Hospital. When he'd opened his eyes, he'd looked like a haggard man of thirty, a month short of his sixteenth birthday. (Matheson 22)

After 30 years, Fischer decides to participate in a new investigation, thinking that he is older, wiser and stronger, ready to face the horrors of Hell House. Yet, this presentation of Fischer does not correspond to what he is expected to be or do. Throughout the novel, he is depicted as a sarcastic person who refuses to divulge the secret of his survival. He finds himself in the middle of a competition between Florence and Dr. Barrett over the righteousness of their methods. Despite being the most experienced and cautious member of the group, Fischer's ideas and opinions are under estimated and even unheard. As a result, he becomes gradually marginalized and indifferent toward the activities of the group, leading him to complete

seclusion. Fischer is aware of the fact that in order to conquer Hell House successfully, they need to understand Belasco's plan and method without attacking it directly. He knows very well that overconfidence that characterizes both Florence and Dr. Barrett may be their tragic flaw. Armed with knowledge of the house's history and of the atrocities that Belasco did, Fischer tries to guide discretely Dr Barrett. But his role was remarkably passive. Fischer's stand to be feckless can be explained as a way to protect himself from the horrors of Hell House.

Florence's death presents a turning point in Fischer's personality as he realizes the necessity to be an active member to survive with the rest of the group. With the death of Dr. Barrett who thinks that the mansion is exorcised, his guilt and awe are intensified. This leads to an uncontrollable anger manifested in his transformation from unvoiced passive character to a rebellious voiced person who challenges Belasco, the symbol of the panoptic surveillance, to destroy him. Fischer decides to be more active and to use his powers wisely in order to decode the house's secret. Taking the role of a detective, he starts revising and questioning what happens. He goes to the altar in the chapel, trying to find any new clues but he is attacked by Belasco. After this incident, Fischer realizes that what happened to Florence was not a suicide resulted from her troubled self. He finally finds the last piece of Hell House's puzzle through which he can destroy Belasco. Florence was the first victim, killed by Belasco as she was the closest person to the house's reality. In order to keep her away from the truth, Belasco tries to fool her and to make her question herself. Fischer understands that Florence "was his ... a puppet to be played with, tortured" (Matheson 288). Belasco uses his panoptic gaze to supervise all characters and to listen to Dr. Barrett's theory so that he can trick them efficiently. As Florence becomes closer to the unveil the watcher, Fischer thinks that Belasco manipulates her memory as a means to trick her again:

"It was a matter of timing," he said, "Belasco must have known that, sooner or later, Florence would come up with the right answer. So he concentrated on her even more, used her memory about her brother's death, and tied it in to her obsession about Daniel Belasco. Her brother's grief became Daniel's grief, her brother's need" – Fischer clenched his teeth – "became Daniel's." (Matheson 288)

As Fischer understands that the panoptic effect of Belasco's gaze is not only physical but most importantly mental, he decides to enter a mental war against 'The Roaring Giant', by subverting his surveillance. Instead of escaping his gaze, he decides to expose himself and Edith, using mockery instead of fearful screams:

"Look at your lips, Belasco," Fischer said, still advancing. "Spastic pressure holds them together. Look at your hands. Spastic tension holds them fisted at your sides. Why is that, Belasco? Is it because you're a fraud?"

His mocking cackle rang out in the chapel. "Roaring Giant!" he shouted. "You! My ass! You bullshit artist! You sawed-off little freak!"

Edith caught her breath. Belasco was retreating! She rubbed a shaking hand across her eyes. And it was true.

He *did* look smaller. (Matheson 297)

The long-awaited encounter between Fischer and Belasco is not as dreadful as imagined. *Prima facie* it may be considered as a simple comic relief scene. Yet, the mockery used by Fischer serves as a way to refuse to take Belasco's authority seriously, which challenges him and breaks off its annihilatory effects. This method traces back to Foucault's theory that any power can be reversed by resistance:

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence like power, resistance is multiple.<sup>81</sup>

The disruption that Fischer causes through his mockery can be read as a resistance strategy as he profanes Belasco's authority through laughter. In this context, Majid Yar refers in his article entitled "Panoptic Power and the Pathologisation of Vision: Critical Reflections on the Foucauldian Thesis", to the fact that the panoptic gaze can be subverted by turning the watcher into an "object of moral judgement" (266). The objects of the panoptic gaze can use mockery to question the seriousness of the panoptic power. He adds that:

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<sup>81</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon, 1980, p.142.

Once denuded of its wider supporting techniques, the panopticon is rather like Dorothy's wizard – its power to command those whom it addresses rests upon their belief in its omnipotence, their taking seriously its sinister authority or menace, the barely-veiled threat of sanction or reprisal should they refuse to obey. The problem is that the effect collapses should anyone refuse to play along, and instead pulls back the curtain – the Players' recourse to mockery, to laughter, their refusal to take the Panopticon seriously, challenges the myth of its authority and thereby threatens to abort its disciplinary effects. (267)

In order to successfully demolish the uncontained panoptic gaze that kills both Florence and Dr. Barrett, Fischer understands that he should resist the idea that Belasco is powerful. As he was investigating Dr. Barrett's tape, Fischer remembers a sentence, found in the Bible entry "If thy right eye offended thee, pluck it out"<sup>82</sup> (Matheson 294). This sentence leads him to understand Belasco's flaw. In fact, his power lies in the way he convinces the characters by his all-seeing panoptic gaze that leads them to interiorize it. Belasco's power and weakness was his ego. His ego is his power as he succeeds in convincing everyone that he is the giant, sadistic powerful person for years. Yet, this ego prevents him to accept his 'little' handicapped body, leading him to live in shadows, and to end up self-buried in a secret chamber to hide his secret forever. Using mockery, Fischer destroys the panoptic gaze by exposing himself and facing Belasco with his reality which breaks down his inflated ego. Fischer succeeds at the end of the novel in moving from a traumatized, unvoiced member of a group of investigators to a key character who succeeds in de-crowning Belasco and defeat his legendary panoptic gaze.

### **2.3. *Hell House*: the social and historical rootedness of a novel**

Although Matheson's *Hell House* seems to be a classical horror novel with numerous common points with the Gothic genre, it sets the stage for a social and historical reading of the United States in the twentieth century and mainly in the 1960s and early 1970s, bearing in mind the date of the novel's publication, which is 1971. In this context, New Historicism can be used as a basis to study the relation between the novel and US history. New Historicism was

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<sup>82</sup> This sentence is quoted from Mathew 5:29 (King James Version).

created in the 1980s as a revolutionary theory that emerged as a reaction against the centrality of the literary text that characterized many text-based theories like Russian Formalism and New Criticism. The expression “New Historicism” was coined by Stephen Greenblatt in the context of his studies of Renaissance texts in relation with history. New Historicism theorizes the idea that literature should be studied in convergence with its cultural system, since, as Pierre Bourdieu expresses in his book *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993), “To understand the practices of writers and artists and not least their products, entails understanding that they are the result of the meeting of two histories: the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their disposition” (61). One of the key figures of New Historicism is Louis Montrose who is the focus of this part. Montrose theorizes the idea that a literary text is first and foremost a cultural artefact, while history shares the feature of a literary discourse. Hence, a successful interpretation necessitates this dialogic relationship:

By *the historicity of texts*, I mean to suggest the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing –not only the texts that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. By *the textuality of history*, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question –traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the “documents” upon which historians ground their own texts, called “histories”.<sup>83</sup>

The choice of Louis Montrose’s theory presents a strategic choice to go beyond the psychoanalytic analysis of characters and the Foucauldian reading of panopticism. The New Historicist reading of panopticism aims to show that the writer uses fiction to reflect his or her society and era, showing a hidden image of the United States as a country with an elusive democracy, where there is, on the one hand, a total freedom guaranteed by the different

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<sup>83</sup> Montrose, Louis. “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture”. *The New Historicism*. Ed. Harold Aram Veenser. London: Taylor & Francis, 1989, p20.

legislations while, on the other hand, there is an institutionalized mass surveillance that controls all aspects of American life.

The parallelism between Hell House and the US in the twentieth century can be traced at the level of the setting, characters and the mechanism of Belasco's panoptic gaze. At the outset, the setting in Matheson's *Hell House* is gigantic. Situated in the fictional Matawaskie Valley, Belasco's house is built in a wild, rural place, difficult to reach. The road is described as unnaturally foggy and obscure "as though they rode inside a submarine" (Matheson 27). This description reflects the American wilderness that inspired previous American authors like Washington Irving in his tale "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow". The geographical position of Hell House reflects a typical motif of the American Gothic literature, used to enhance the experience of horror or what is referred to, by Bernice M. Murphy, as "Rural Gothic"<sup>84</sup>. Even though it is related particularly to the vision of Puritans and the European settlers, the American wilderness endures for centuries as a recurrent motif, upon which the American Gothic genre is based. The forest presents a maze-like setting where "the boundaries between reality and fantasy, order and chaos were weak, or even non-existent" (38). It continues to be an element of a paramount importance in the twentieth century literature and twenty-first century cinema. It depicts a long-standing archetype of forests and woods as savagely ominous where characters are entrapped and unable to distinguish between reason and insanity. The description of the setting continues as the characters reach successfully the house. The haunted setting is described as a massive place with sophisticated design and decorations from different styles and eras. In addition to its gigantic hall and rooms, the house contains a steam room, theater and a chapel, which shows the vastness of the setting. The wideness and secludedness of Hell House reflect the geographical vastness of the United States, that is the size of a continent. Like the

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<sup>84</sup> The "Rural Gothic" is a concept studied by Bernice M. Murphy in her book *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness* to refer to the experience of fear lived by characters as they become conscious of being lost in wild, isolated forest/ rural place. She gives examples of movies like *The Blair Witch Project* that is based upon this type of psychological horror related to secluded places.

United States, Hell House seems to be an immeasurable area that is away from the rest of the world. The characters' way to discover the setting can be compared to first settlers who explore the American territory. Their first reactions along with Belasco's recorded voice message show the characters swallowed by the house's enclosed panoptic atmosphere:

He could feel the house around him like some vast, invisible being. It knows I'm here, he thought; Belasco knows, they all know that I'm here: their single failure. They were watching him, waiting to see what he'd do. (Matheson 42)

Fischer's forecited words reflect the way characters feel infinitesimal in comparison with the huge place and vis-à-vis the panoptic gaze. Besides, the house is characterized by a controversial long history, that can be compared to the one of the United States. According to Fischer, Hell House is firstly created as an "innocent" place (Matheson 57) to serve cultural reasons (to create a model similar to the eighteenth-century high society of art and literature). Yet, the house soon morphs into a place of excess, violence and corruption. Hell House's history echoes in fact the history of United States that was firstly created as a land of democracy, liberties and freedom (in contrast with the old world). However, the development of 'the city upon the hill' was stained by racism, wars, violence and persecution<sup>85</sup>. In addition to the setting, the historicity of Matheson's novel can be traced through the characters. The group of Dr. Barrett is composed of different backgrounds, but most importantly it mirrors a conflict between science and spiritualism that characterized the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The group is composed of four characters: Dr. Barrett, a scientist obsessed with the logical approach, his wife Edith, a sexually frustrated wife who supports her husband. Florence Tanner, a spiritual medium and Benjamin Fischer, a physical spirit, traumatized from a previous experience in Hell House. Throughout the novel, Dr. Barrett and Florence enter in a competition against each

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<sup>85</sup> Throughout American history, many examples of social and political violence can be traced (from The Salem Witch Trials to the Civil War that divided the US into South and North). Examples from the twentieth century can be particularly noted in 1971 (date of the novel's publication), the USA was in the eye of a political storm concerning the Vietnam war.

other, defending their methods. They constantly argue over the rightness of their approach without any attempt to co-work. Florence is portrayed as a person associated with her spiritual life. She is described as a leader of a congregation of “Temple of spiritual harmony” (Matheson 19), whose ultimate goal is to build a church for her followers. As the adventure in Hell House starts, Florence shows her unquestionable faith in her ability to exorcise the house through her gift of spiritual mediumship. Unlike Dr. Barrett who explores the house methodologically, Florence tries to feel the house, sensing its energy and trying to find its origins. She believes in her ability to communicate with dead spirits and help them to head for a peaceful afterlife. Dr Barrett shows his irony and disbelief in what Florence is doing, which leads to direct confrontation between both characters. On the other hand, Dr. Barrett stands for the opposite side of Florence. Unlike her, he is a rational person who believes in the supremacy of science. He tries to investigate the paranormal activities of Hell House using machines and experimental methods. He creates a machine called The Reversor, through which he is supposedly able to solve the enigma of Hell House. Believing that Hell House’s power is originated from the energies of its inhabitants, Dr. Barrett thinks that using electromagnetic radiation will be the solution. He uses a scientific lexical field to explain the way his machine works:

All living organisms emit this energy, its dynamo the mind. The electromagnetic field around the human body behaves precisely as do all such fields –spiraling around its center of force, the electric and magnetic impulses acting at right angles to each other, and so on. Such a field *must* impinge itself on its surroundings. In extremes of emotion, the field grows stronger, impressing itself on its environment with more force –a force which, if contained, *persists* in that environment, undischarged, saturating it, disturbing organisms sensitive to it: psychics, dogs, cats – in brief, establishing a “haunted” atmosphere. (Matheson 227)

Dr. Barrett shows his skepticism toward Florence’s mediumship, which becomes a moot point among both characters. Florence was skating on thin ice as she leads different experiences of physical mediumship with the ghost of Daniel. Her different attempts to use her gift to unveil the truth of Hell House push Dr. Barrett to provoke her further by trying to explain everything she experiences scientifically, leading even to question the stability of her personality. As he



tries constantly to destabilize all her beliefs, Florence comes up against him:

“Will it never end?” she said.

The others looked at her. “Were you addressing me?” inquired Barrett.

“I was.” Again, she tried to quell her anger, but again the vision of the physical examination flashed across her mind, the costume, the absurd safeguards against fraud.

“Will what never end?” asked Barrett.

“This attitude of doubt. Distrust.”

“Distrust?”

“Why should mediums be expected to produce phenomena under conditions which science dictates?” she demanded. “We’re not machines. We’re human beings. These rigid, unyielding demands by science have done more harm than good to parapsychology.” (Matheson 99)

Florence’s opinion about the scientific approach that is adopted by Dr. Barrett, echoes the conflict that shaped the United States during the twentieth century, that is, spiritualism vs science. Although it can be traced back to the Bible, mediumship presents a practice that flourished during the nineteenth century. It refers to the channeling between the world of the living and the world of the dead. It can be both spiritual and physical. In the twentieth century, as the United States rises as a scientific power <sup>86</sup>, spiritualism continues also to affect numerous people. One example that can be mentioned is the rise of the New Age movement that was particularly flourishing in the 1970s (the publication period of *Hell House*). This spiritual movement integrates many traditional practices like mediumship and disagrees with scientific ideas. In his book entitled *Confronting the New Age: How to Resist the Growing Religious Movement* (1988), Douglas R. Groothuis defines the rising movement as:

*The New Age movement* is an umbrella term referring to a variety of people, organizations, events, practices and ideas. Sociologically speaking, it is not a centrally organized movement with one human leader. Although it includes cults, sects and even denominations, it is not restricted to any of these. Rather it is a constellation of like-minded people and groups all desiring a spiritual and social change that will usher in a New Age of self-actualization. (18)

During the twentieth century, the United States witnessed the parallel rise of cults and spiritual

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<sup>86</sup> The twentieth century presents a century of scientific and technological development in the USA with the birth of modern computing and the rise of space conquest in context of space race between the USA and the Soviet Union.

groups along with a scientific and technological expansion. The 1970s in particular presents decade of radical cults and faiths. Names like Jim Jones and events like the Jamestown Massacre become recurrent headlines in American news. Yet, New Agers particularly affected the 1970s by their beliefs that present a mixture of religion and philosophy. Their leaders (usually female leaders) are often presented as spiritual persons with a gift of mediumship. New Agers use different practices among which speaking through or with an ascended spirit (masters of wisdom)<sup>87</sup>. Throughout the novel, Florence speaks through an entity that is called ‘Red Cloud’. The way she prepares herself before the session and the presence of an ascended spirit who tries ceaselessly to warn the characters of the upcoming deadly threats, show that Florence presents an example of the New Ager female leaders. She shows her extreme faith in what she is doing and experiencing. In one scene, Florence smashes the Reversor with a crowbar before attacking Dr. Barrett himself, nearly killing him. Even though she seems to be completely possessed by Belasco, her attack can be explained differently. It echoes the strong competition between the rising movement and science, as Dr. Barrett explains “[w]hat [they]’ve witnessed this morning is that part of Miss Tanner’s personality she’s always kept hidden, even from herself –her patience turning into anger, her withdrawal into furious expression” (Matheson 235). Florence’s attack can be explained as a reaction to Dr. Barrett’s taunts through which he questions her credibility and even sanity. She can no longer keep the image of a wise, sensitive spiritual leader as she gets blinded by wrath. Unfortunately, the relentlessness of both Florence and Dr. Barrett leads to their tragic death. The survival of Fischer and Edith is thanks to the use of both methods. He uses a scientific logical method to investigate what happened and to understand his enemy Belasco, then he uses also Florence’s remarks that were guiding him toward resolution. Hell House’s case is too complex that necessitates the convergence of both methods. Despite the fact that Florence mentions that the house can never be exorcised as it is “a giant magnet for degraded souls” (Matheson 62), the

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<sup>87</sup> Rhodes, Ron. *The NewAge Movement*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, p.41.

end of the novel proves to be the exception as Hell House is exorcised and characters (Fischer and Edith) are saved thanks to Fischer's idea to use both science and spiritualism.

The historicity of the novel can be also studied through the oppression exercised by Belasco and the way he gives characters an illusion of freedom and monitoring. Described by Fischer as an "egomaniac", Belasco manipulates the group by giving them the illusion that they are free and that they are on the right path toward his destruction. He impersonates the identity of his son Daniel in order to keep them away from his real presence. He further manipulates Dr. Barrett by letting him use his machine freely, before showing his power by destroying him. Belasco's manipulative power lies in his ability to give an elusive freedom and power to the characters before getting them. It is the only method that can satisfy his ego as Fischer mentions at the end of the novel. As the recorded voice message shows, Belasco sets from the beginning the rule of unrestricted freedom "to function as you choose. There are no responsibilities, no rules" (Matheson 38). The characters feel empowered as they believe that the house is under their scope. Yet, they are not aware of being the object of an omniscient gaze. In fact, Belasco observes and studies the different characters' actions and reactions, manipulating their repressed memories and repressed selves. The way he took advantage of Fischer's talk about Daniel, and the way he used Florence's memories shows that Belasco manipulates events and characters as string marionettes. As I shall see in the third part, Hell House, like the other novels under study, epitomizes the American state system that uses a panoptic surveillance over the American society. As has been mentioned in the first part of this thesis, the twentieth century was an unsettled period for the United States which witnessed a national and an international political turmoil. To face this unrest, the US government created an institutionalized mass surveillance through which it became possible to constantly supervise the American people, transforming their private, intimate free life, guaranteed by the Constitution, to a public affair under the pretext of national security.

To put it succinctly, Hell House presents a space with multiple hauntings where

characters are haunted by a powerful panoptic gaze and by their repressed memories and desires. Emeric Belasco shows that he is an authoritative mind manipulator. He lets characters free to investigate and to plan his own destruction. Yet, under this masked freedom, the controlling panoptic gaze lies as a way to dominate the characters. The roles have been reversed as Belasco becomes the watcher and the investigators the objects of the gaze. The panoptic force is so powerful that it can easily manipulate the characters' repressed selves. Belasco's methodical plan focuses mainly on female characters. Edith starts showing her sexual frustration by trying to seduce unconsciously both Fischer and Dr. Barrett. Florence is manipulated by Daniel, whose identity is usurped by his father Belasco. The watcher takes advantage of Florence's empathy with Daniel to attack her physically several times. Yet, these brutal attacks do not deter her from unveiling Belasco's truth. Belasco uses Florence's past to manipulate her. As an unwept person, the recreation of the image of the deceased brother presents her unique solace to complete her impossible mourning. Belasco's ability to manipulate the character's past leads the rest of the group to question her trustiness. Florence's case in particular can be read as a case of depression especially as she uses in several instances pain (and even self-injury before her death) to cope with her emotional pain. Fischer, the survivor from a previous experience, succeeds again in pulling through the house. As he witnesses the power of the panoptic gaze to destroy the group, Fischer decides to set off his instinct of survival and to defy Belasco. The unvoiced Fischer uses mockery as a way to deconstruct the panoptic authority, leading to the house's exorcism. The novel reflects the author's era and society as the tensions between Florence and Dr. Barrett echo the rivalry between spiritualism and science that characterized the United States during the twentieth century. Besides, as it will be further studied in part three, the panoptic power and the way it manipulates Hell House's inhabitants reflects the US government that uses the panoptic method of unseen and unverifiable surveillance to guarantee discipline in an era of political and social unrest.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Burnt Offerings: the indestructible panoptic power*

In the introduction to the 2015 edition of Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*, the American author Stephen Graham Jones tries to describe what characterizes and differentiates Marasco's haunted house from the classical formula presented in the canonic Gothic works. He identifies two types of haunted houses. There is a house that defends itself by pushing characters away and by 'punishing' them if they surpass their limits. Jones gives the example of *The Amityville Horror*<sup>88</sup> but Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and Richard Matheson's *Hell House* can be mentioned too as in both haunted settings, the haunting forces (ghosts) are the main performers who punish the characters for trespassing their limits by attempting to unveil their truths. The second kind of haunted houses according to Jones is the hungry house that derives its power from its inhabitants. Jones's juxtaposition between the two types of haunted houses sets forth the idea that Long Island House is different from any classical haunted house as it literally consumes its inhabitants and erodes them their energy and life. Unlike the other novels under study, *Burnt Offerings* is a slow-paced work that chronicles the gradual degeneration of the characters from sanity to madness and from life to death. The haunting force in a classical formula is either exorcised (so is the case in *Hell House*) or standing still, unconquered (like Jackson's *Hill House*). Yet, the sinister horror of Marasco's novel lies in the regeneration of the panoptic haunting force, leaving the reader with the impression that it is timeless. In this part, the panoptic power is going to be studied in relation with the Rolfes and with the ending scene. The Rolfes can be examined as an example

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<sup>88</sup> According to Jones, the haunted house in *The Amityville Horror* is different from Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*. The former belongs to what he names it "the Stay Away kind" (v) in which the house defends itself against any external attempt to inhabit it. Yet, the Long Island mansion needs people to inhabit it since it is a hungry house that is not "complete without people to digest for seasons or decades or centuries." (vi)

of a middle-class American family whose infatuation with bygone furniture leads them to immediate isolation and gradual degeneration. This part studies the method that the panoptic power uses to guarantee Marian's loyalty. The last episode of the novel can be thoroughly studied to show the limitless power of Long Island House that successfully rejuvenates itself as its inhabitants break down. Moreover, this part will study Marasco's novel in parallel with the historical context of the 1970s. A social and economic study of the United States during the period of the novel's publication is necessary to analyze the Rolfes' choice and the novel's end.

### **3.1. The Rolfes: a typical American family absorbed by the panoptic power**

The Rolfes family presents one of the unconventional innovative sides of the story. The author has created typical characters like the Rolfes to highlight the development of the climax into more outrage as the reader can identify easily with the young couple. Unlike the other novels under study, the characters in *Burnt Offerings* are described in an indirect way through action and dialogue. The novel starts with the depiction of a middle-class family whose dream is to escape the scorching summer of Brooklyn and enjoy a peaceful holiday. Unlike the conventional plot of the haunted house story that starts with a detailed depiction of the haunted house, *Burnt Offerings* starts with a first chapter that shows a frustrated family. Marian is a stressed mother, obsessed with cleaning and order. She corresponds to the stereotypical image of the twentieth century housewife that cannot rest. Ben is described as an exhausted teacher, under the pressure of an unsatisfactory career and the burden of an unfinished academic path. He is depicted as a heavy smoker, who complains about his miserable day at work. His personal and professional situation leads him to be a cantankerous person who jumps at his neighbors' throat:

When she came back with the beers, the piano started up again, as resonant as before. Ben threw up his hands. "It's got to be a conspiracy. The whole bloody city is after my ass." He patted the cushion

beside him. Marian banded him his glass, took out two coasters, and settled beside him. "You face her now," she said, nodding at the floor. "Let the old bitch worry about facing me." (Marasco 11)

Within this context of a stressful urban daily life, having a summer house for a vacation was their only haven. Thinking that they find a bargain, the Rolfes visited the Long Island House, a summer mansion that apparently is the perfect concretization of what Marian dreams of. The Long Island house is firstly depicted as a massive, gloomy house in the middle of nowhere. It is perfectly situated in an isolated area with "no sign, no break on either side of the road" (Marasco 21). This initial description echoes the iconic painting of the American artist Edward Hopper *House by the Railroad* (1925)<sup>89</sup> as it conveys complete alienation from modern life.



Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad* (1925)

<sup>89</sup> This painting is an influential work since it inspires different horror works that are internationally known like Bates's house in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho*. Hopper's *House by the railroad* portrays a Victorian mansion, contrasted with the presence of the railroad that seems to taint the tranquility of the setting. The absence of any natural element (trees, birds or even clouds) adds a melancholic, mysterious quality to the painting. The work conveys the theme of physical and psychological isolation through the presence of the railroad in the

Besides, both houses share common parts like; blank windows, porch and the spine. Both are gray colored and both have a huge façade with “French doors [...] opening out onto a terrace” (Marasco 23). They both have an old, melancholic air “with the look of generations about it” (Marasco 23). As it is mentioned in the first chapter, Long Island House presents for Marian her American Dream as it encompasses everything she desires. Despite Ben’s skepticism, Marian feels enchanted by the house’s massive, sophisticated design and the different expensive antiques. While Ben is still uncomfortable with the fishy way that Walker, Miss Allardyce and Brother talk and behave, Marian identifies herself already as the house’s owner:

[...], and as he came back to her, it crashed to the floor behind the sofa. Before she knew it, Marian cried out, “*Walker!*” Her tone was inexplicably sharp and proprietary, and immediately one hand went up to her mouth. Walker looked stunned for just a second, and then there were the traces of a smile. “Yes, ma’am?” he said, quietly and evenly. Her fingers remained over her lips. Why had she said that, why had it burst out so instinctively? Whatever there was of a smile faded and he was standing in front of her now, still and submissive. (Marasco 30)

Marian’s exaggerated reaction to Walker, the handyman, when he drops the picture shows the way she is irresistibly acting as the house’s owner and not as a future tenant. It echoes her obsession with the house’s details, considering it as an inestimable setting that should be preserved. As the Rolfes’ visit continues, Marian starts to feel again “the strange proprietary feeling that came over her again; the feeling that this house, which she had never seen before, was somehow reserved for her” (Marasco 36). Marian shows no resistance to the beauty of the house, neglecting the proverb of “too good to be real”, and while Ben tries to keep her down to earth by trying to convince her to refuse Miss Allardyce’s offer to take care of her mother, her ultimatum determines their summer house and inadvertently their tragic end.

If characters in *Hell House* or in *The Haunting of Hill House* were able to freely

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foreground of the painting. It shows the juxtaposition between tradition and modernity that may characterize the United States during the twentieth century.



investigate the haunted house, Marian finds herself restricted to a map with predestinated rooms as “the second door on the right, according to the map, was hers and Ben’s, opposite was David’s and next to his, Aunt Elizabeth’s” (Marasco 70). The haunting method of the Long Island House seems to be slightly different from Hill House and Belasco’s house even though they share the same objective. The haunting does not include any sexual violence. It rather focuses on Marian’s dreams. The house seems to be aware of Marian’s obsession with the antiques and that’s why it provides her with a new collection whenever she feels guilty of being away from her family. She finds herself in a never-ending treasure hunt game as she has always to take care of her precious collection through constant cleaning and polishing. Marian tries to find the perfect equation between the house, her family and her role as a wife. Yet, she couldn’t resist the power of the house as she starts to be isolated from the rest of the family. The magical hum sound succeeds in filling her life. The house uses a slow rhythm of haunting as its effect is smoothly and gradually taking power over Marian and the rest of the Rolfes. As the novel progresses, Marian starts to deteriorate physically, getting older and weaker with a simultaneous regeneration of the house. It is literally fed on the characters’ youth, energy and health. Marian’s domestic world implodes as she starts alienating herself from her family and repels her husband. The house becomes overpowered, occupying a paramount status in Marian’s life, even in her most intimate moments. In the meantime, as Ben starts questioning the radical change of his wife, he starts experiencing hallucinations and recurrent nightmares. Ben is gradually driven by the house toward madness. The house’s haunting force starts to win over his fatherly love and care as he almost killed his son by drowning him in the pool. Facing these paranormal events along with the inexplicable sudden rejuvenation of the house, Ben tries to convince Marian that the house is evil:

“Things are ...real to me ... that I know don’t exist. So goddammed real. There are times when I just can’t control what comes into my head. It’s become terrifying.” He was holding her closer; she felt his head bury itself against her. “It’s like ... hallucinating. I know it’s not there ... and yet it’s real. It’s never happened before, Marian, never before this house. It is the house. As crazy as it sounds, I know it’s the house.” (Marasco 158)

Yet, Ben's doubtful explanation turns to Marian's advantage since she tries to explain logically that everything he is experiencing is in fact the residue of the heavy burden of the urban life. Marian succeeds in convincing him that the idea that the house is haunted cannot be reasonable; therefore, she guarantees that she will not leave it. She becomes obsessed harder than ever with the house that "was insinuating itself into the deepest part of her being" (Marasco 159). After the death of Aunt Elizabeth, she refuses to leave the house for the funeral. She does not resist the power of the house that becomes obviously her priority over her family. Ben leaves the house for four days during which Marian finds herself completely devoted for the house with no distraction. This period can be considered climactic for Marian during which "for four days, the house had managed to fill her life completely, more richly and intensely than anything ever had in the past" (Marasco 193). The house becomes an integral part of herself to the point that she considers the presence of her family as an intrusion. Coming back to the Long Island House, Ben starts experiencing physical and mental decay. Yet, he is more reactive since he insists on facing Marian with the truth about the house, trying to push her to give it up. When he decides to leave the house with his son David, Ben insists to wake Marian from her submissiveness. But, the panoptic effect of the house is stronger. Marian is already fully consumed by the house, a truth that has not been perceived by Ben. Like in the other novels under study, the panoptic power seems to focus its haunting power over the most vulnerable character. Yet, the characters' reactions in Marasco's work are different from the other novels. The formula is generally related to repressed memories, desires and anxieties. The characters show generally a sense of challenge and resistance before their tragic end. However, neither Ben nor Marian is really challenging the panoptic power. Ben hides his fears behind his image of an intellectual person. He insists on not believing what he is experiencing as it contradicts his status as an academician. He is unable to explain clearly what he is experiencing insisting on the fact that it is unreal. Although he tries to convince his

wife to give up the house, his reaction is too late to be effective as Marian becomes completely blind and unaware of the malicious effect of the house. Marian's biddability can be explained in relation to the nature of the panoptic power of the dwelling. Long Island House transcends the idea of being simply a haunted house that seduces its inhabitants to consume them. It can be read as a symbol of the unbeatable American Dream. In this context, Dale Bailey develops the idea that Marian is a victim of her own self. He theorizes that the Long Island House is the American Dream that encompasses all Marian's consumerist wishes:

The book is nothing less than an attack on the American Dream, the ideology of accumulation and consumption that structures so many American lives. Marian Rolfe sacrifices her husband and child, ultimately her very self, on the altar of America, only to find that the dream is hollow. (77)

Bailey studies further this idea by considering Miss Allardyce (Roz) and Brother as godfathers of this dream. They represent the rich elite class that uses the middle class to fuel their wealth (77). Like Long Island House, the American Dream fills Marian's heart and mind, leaving no space for her family. The way the house provides a new collection of antiques or renews itself whenever Marian questions its essence, shows that the haunting force uses consumerism as an opium to control Marian and to guarantee her discipline. *Burnt Offerings* can be considered a criticism of the 1970s American society. Within the context of the economic crisis and social unrest<sup>90</sup>, the American Dream stands as an omnipresent national ethos that haunts millions of Americans. Marian is in fact a victim of her overinflated expectations that lead her to destroy everything she has realized in her life.

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<sup>90</sup>The 1970s is considered as a tumultuous decade as the United States witnessed an inflation crisis known as 'The Great Inflation' during which many economic problems occurred simultaneously. Unemployment rates rose dramatically. The stock market collapsed due to the oil crisis (it refers to the crisis of domestic oil production and the refusal of the Arab Petroleum countries to supply the United States as a means of protest against the American unconditional support for the Israeli colonial policy, leading to rise fuel prices). In addition to the economic crisis, the United States witnessed a period of social turmoil as minorities (native Americans, Blacks, lesbians and gays) kept fighting for equality along with the fight for women's rights and the Anti-Vietnam war movement.

### **3.2. The Long Island House: A regenerated panoptic power**

Similar to Hell House and Hill House, Long Island House is considered as a ‘hungry’ house, a notion that can be found in various Gothic works. For instance, in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables*, the setting is a character rather than simply a setting. It is even a protagonist fed by the burdens of its past of witchcraft and death. The elm tree that becomes gigantic grows despite the decay of Pyncheon family as if it was nourished by their ashes. Another example can be found in Stephen King’s *The Shining* whose author acknowledges the influence of *Burnt Offerings* as he listed it as one of his favorite horror novels in his book *Danse Macabre* (1982). Like Long Island House, King’s Overlook Hotel presents a parasitic setting that is replenished by the psychological and physical decay of its inhabitants. Unlike the image of the haunted settings in classical Gothic literature, Long Island mansion is presented as an invincible setting whose power is eternally regenerated. The house is no longer the bearer of horror but it is the sinister horror itself. It rejuvenates itself, empowering from the degradation of the Rolfes. The house uses a systematic plan of surveillance that guarantees its unlimited control. The focus is mainly on Marian whose materialistic dream of owning a house with silver antiques and classy furniture drives her to sacrifice her family, becoming entrapped under the spell of the haunted house. The way the mansion becomes cleaner and brighter serves as a poisonous bait to hypnotize Marian, who finds it impossible to give up the house after becoming her sanctuary from her domestic problems. The analysis of the power of Long Island house cannot be complete without analyzing the importance of Mrs. Allardyce. At the beginning of the novel, she is described as a minor character, a disabled old lady who needs care. However, with the development of the plot, the house manipulates Marian gradually and Mrs. Allardyce’s room becomes clearly the center of the panoptic surveillance since a constant hypnotizing hum sound comes out of her room in the attic. When food is not touched; Marian starts questioning the existence of the old

lady:

The soup was cold, the spoon and napkin exactly where Marian had left them.

What was she living on?

Once or twice the awful thought came into Marian's head that Mrs. Allardyce wasn't living at all, she was dead behind the carved door. Or if not dead, then some kind of terrible joke the Allardyses were playing on her, the ultimate catch: there was no Mrs. Allardyce. (Marasco 85)

Marian is not aware of the fact that Mrs. Allardyce is not a real person but rather a symbol. Preparing food for her was just a daily mission to guarantee Marian's faithfulness because Mrs. Allardyce does not need real food to survive. She rather needs the characters' minds and souls to flourish. The daily routine of preparing food for Mrs. Allardyce with exact time and order, planned by Roz and Brother, is used to construct Marian's discipline, ensuring that she is doing the expected task. In fact, the way Marian is haunted reflects the essence of the Foucauldian panopticism. She is the source of information for the watcher but she is not allowed to be in communication with other characters. This can be seen through different examples in the novel since Mrs. Allardyce (the watcher) predominates any intimate moment between Marian and her husband or with her family. This method leads Marian to be disassociated from the rest of her family, becoming unconsciously more sequestered. She never realized the drastic physical and mental change that she is experiencing, thinking simply that she is doing her usual job as a housewife.

The innovative part of Marasco's novel is the parallel evolution of the haunted setting with the progressive decay of the characters. After every incident, the house renews a part of itself as it is fed by the tension between characters. After the incident of drowning David, the pool appears freshly painted and the water filtered and clear (Marasco 107). Besides, as Aunt Elizabeth becomes lifeless, unable to move herself, the house's lawn becomes mysteriously greener and the rotten mansion "with the look of generations about it" (Marasco 23) becomes anew:

She saw the walls brightening with color as though the paint were being poured down them, and the panels and rosettes and cornices carving themselves vividly into the ceiling, and everything in the room taking on a splendor that was dazzling (Marasco 214)

The ultimate scene of the house's regeneration was shown to Ben, Marian's husband, particularly to show its power and to prove its domination. He is chosen as he is the only character who tries to convince Marian to leave the malevolent house. As a punishment, the last part of the house's metamorphosis comes as a goof-proof of the mansion's power that may threat Ben's life. The house "throw[s] off its old skin and reveal[s] an immaculate whiteness underneath that glistened in the rain" (Marasco 200). The house's regeneration is a continuing process in which "the cracks in the long stone balustrade healed themselves" (Marasco 211) while Mariam becomes "too drained and dead inside" (Marasco 214). Here, the use of personification by using words like "throw off, skin and heal" shows the transcendental power of the house that can go beyond its objective reality, as it clearly becomes alive. It was renewed from its own decay in a ritual representing rebirth, empowered by the energy of its inhabitants. Yet, this impressive scene is far from being the end of horror. When Marian finally becomes convinced to give up the house, since her husband becomes completely paralyzed (following a failed escape attempt), Walker comes unexpectedly to remind her of what she will miss by leaving the mansion. He tries to awaken her materialistic dream:

"For the gold and the silver?" he reminded her, and it was his voice but it was Roz and Brother speaking as well, and the voice she had heard inside herself so often. "For her house and everything she has in it? Whatever's hers is yours, Mrs., if you want it. You ought to know that by know..." He moved closer to her. "How much of a sacrifice is it – for all of this?" He looked up at the chandelier, the ceiling, the staircase, and Marian's eyes followed his. "Think of it, think of all the others who managed to do it, to burn everything but her out of themselves. Our mother." (Marasco 209)

Despite her motherly and wifely love, the house has become too powerful to be conquered. The mansion literally traps Marian inside when all doors are locked, David is drowned by an "unseen hand" (Marasco 213). Realizing that she lost everything, Marian decides to go and

see Mrs. Allardyce in her bedroom that she finds it unexpectedly unlocked. After consuming Marian's youth, the final scene comes as the coronation of the holy sacrifice. Marian is hypnotically driven to the door of Mrs. Allardyce's upstairs room. She unfolds finally the enigma of Mrs. Allardyce, a "hideously old [figure], leaning forward in a great chair" (Marasco 216). As she tries to touch her, Marian realizes that the old lady in the attic is in fact a faded figure, a surveillance force rather than a real person. Repeating "always with us" as she moves forward reminds the reader of the different scenes of self-sacrifice. Marian becomes finally fully integrated into the glorious mass of the house which "never looked so rich and shining and perfect" (Marasco 217). As she sits in Mrs. Allardyce's armchair, the center of the panoptic gaze, Marian feels its power inside her that catches her to "somewhere beyond the chair [where] there was the sound of a great door closing, on a vault, or a tomb" (Marasco 217). The Rolfes end up victims to the strong panoptic power as Ben and David become a part of the collection of lifeless photographs, while Marian becomes the new Mrs. Allardyce.

This final scene depicts the duality of death and life: the physical death of Marian, the symbolic death of Mrs. Allardyce and the rebirth of the everlasting panoptic power. The renaissance of the panoptic power (symbolized by Mrs. Allardyce) shows that panopticism can be eternal and masked under different new forms. Yet, the effect remains the same and can even be stronger. The intricacy of the novel lies in the nature of horror presented. While the reader of Jackson's *Hill House* and Matheson's *Hell House* may feel soothed by the survival of some characters, and the possibility of exorcising the haunted house (the case of *Hell House*), the horror in *Burnt Offerings* is intensified further as after the massacre of the Rolfes, Long Island mansion remains long standing, stronger than ever, waiting for new renters.

In *Burnt Offerings*, Marasco does not work on the classical image of a haunted house that is 'born' evil (like *Hill House* and *Hell House*). He created a mansion that necessitates the existence of people. The haunting evil power of the Long Island needs the presence of its

inhabitants to fuel it. It reflects and preys upon the characters' phobias and obsessions. As soon as the Rolfes settle in, the house starts haunting them by disintegrating the happy family and breaking up their unity. It starts with Ben as the house mirrors his fear of insanity, expressed at the beginning of the novel, by attacking him thanks to the manipulation of his old nightmares of a creepy hearse driver that he saw during his mother's funeral. These visions lead Ben to a gradual collapse into a mental breakdown. Marian's case seems to be different from the other characters' as her willingness and submissiveness to the house's effect make her questionable. Marian Rolfe can be actually compared to Shirley Jackson's Eleanor Vance. Both characters enjoy being the object of the scopis drive. Like Eleanor who aims unconsciously to reestablish her relation with her mother, Marian's relation to the house is complementary. The house presents for Marian her unique chance to realize her materialistic dream of owning an extravagant house, an obsession used by the haunting force to rejuvenate itself. Marian becomes the house's *raison d'être*, without whom it cannot exist. As the novel develops, Marian becomes fully owned by the house as she transcends her domestic chores by spending more time in the sitting room, and later by sitting in Mrs. Allardyce's chair and eating her meal. Relying on Dale Bailey's study of *Burnt Offerings*, I can consider that Marian's consumerist obsession with the house leads her to identify herself with Mrs. Allardyce, the presumed owner of the house. In addition of being herself, a victim, Marian sacrifices her family, hence the connotation of the title. The ending scene of Marian becoming the new Mrs. Allardyce, waiting to be fed reflects the author's stand. Marasco's aim is not to annihilate the concept of the American Dream but to question it. He criticizes the twentieth century version of the American Dream, associated with unreasonable consumerism. As an important part that constitutes Americanness throughout ages, the American Dream, according to Marasco should be revised. The faded image of Mrs. Allardyce shows the emptiness of the American ethos. Yet, it is strong and influential enough to regenerate itself throughout decades. Besides, the characters of Roz Allardyce and Brother come as a criticism of the American Dream. In his book *American*



*Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction*, Dale Bailey suggests that Roz and Brother represent

the economic elite who enriches themselves on the labor of those beneath them. Just as the fortunes of the rich depend upon the toil of the countless poor—mere cogs in the wealth-making machinery of the American industry – the health of the Allardyce estate, its grace and beauty, must now and then be slaked with the blood of its inferiors. ( 77)

Bailey's account of the characters Roz and Brother shows them as real characters. Yet, if Mrs. Allardyce is a fading figure, these two characters can be studied as entities, created by the house to attract the Rolfes and convince them to rent the house. In fact, their dialogue with the Rolfes proves that they are 'agents' whose mission is to examine the renters and to check if they are the right people. They consider the house a utopian place and their mother, its goddess, showing their awareness of Marian's obsession with consumerism:

"A marvel of a house," Miss Allardyce exclaimed, "an absolute marvel! Thanks to our mother." Brother nodded. Roz passed her hand over the surface of a table. "Just look at this room, look at the treasures in here."

"Just to live with them, Mrs. Rolfe? Ain't it worth it?"

Marian stared at them silently.

"And, God, Brother!" Miss Allardyce said, "—when it comes alive—tell them what it's like in summer."

"They wouldn't believe it. His hands levelled the space in front of him. "It's beyond anything you ever seen. Look at it for God's sake, look at the character of the place."

[...]

"Take it, Mr. Rolfe," Brother said, "take it" (Marasco 45)

The way Roz and Brother promote their house for the Rolfes reminds the reader of the different advertisements and TV commercials that show a perfect appealing image of a product. In fact, the 1970s present a period during which homeownership became the new American Dream for the middle-class society who were suffocated by the stressful life in the city. As Lawrence R. Samuel points out in his book *The American Dream: A Cultural History*, the American middle- class during the 70s "were especially confused and frustrated about not being able to afford a house or having to settle for something less than one they felt they deserved" (95). This frustration was further fueled by the propaganda that shows suburbs as the new paradise for the middle- class homeowners. This image was largely

present in different commercials of homebuilders<sup>91</sup>. Roz and Brother and even Walker, despite his infrequent intervention, can be considered as the reflection of the mass media propaganda of the homeownership Dream. When Marian shows her desire to give up the house, following Ben's catatonia, Walker appears out of the blue to remind her of her dream of homeownership. By using the second possessive pronoun "yours", he straightforwardly tries to convince her to forget her status as a tenant and to consider herself as the new owner of her dream mansion, reminding her of all sacrifices she carried out. This reflects the phenomenon of what Kristen D. Adams calls 'stigmatization' of renters<sup>92</sup>. During the 1970s, a house-owner is considered as a typical citizen to be followed, an image nourished by the different ads, leading to think that being a renter is a failure<sup>93</sup>. Walker succeeds finally in altering what Marian thinks and feels in a same way TV commercials influenced the 1970s consumers' behavior. The regeneration of the haunting power after consuming the Rolfes reflects the fact the American Dream, despite being elusive remains "a powerful ideological weapon of persuasion" (Samuel 7). Although it has been harmed throughout centuries by different economic, political and social crises, the American Dream succeeds in renewing itself, attracting immortally people from different races and social classes. This invisible ethos seems to empower itself through people's unceasing hope for a better life, analogously like the mansion's rebirth thanks to the Rolfes' energy, youth and sanity.

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<sup>91</sup> One of the most famous examples of these commercials is Standard American Builder ads in which the idea of remodeling, building or buying a house with low-cost financing is presented as a perfect way to realize one's American Dream, projecting the 1970s image of a truly American citizen.

<sup>92</sup> Adams, Kristen D. "Homeownership: American Dream or Illusion of Empowerment?". *South Carolina Law Review*, vol.6, no.3, 2009, pp. 573-616. Homeownership: American Dream or Illusion of Empowerment? (sc.edu).

<sup>93</sup> To convey this idea, Kristen D. Adams quotes Michael N. Danielson who states that "by the 1970s, almost all zoning ordinances consider[ed] apartments as inferior and therefore more restricted land use than single-family residences". (*The Politics of Exclusion* 52-53)

### **Concluding notes**

Unlike the early literary works that are based on monsters, demons and vampires (like *Dracula* by Bram Stoker), the twentieth century horror comes from a ghost that can be studied psychoanalytically and historically. It draws out not only the different repressed fears and complexes that may lead to hysteria and insanity, but also explores the societal context of a nation in a particular era. The presence of ghosts in haunted houses novels serves as a bridge between the eerie history of the setting and its present. As Andrew Smith puts in his article “Hauntings”

Ghosts are historical beings because they are messengers about the preoccupations of a particular age. [...] Ghost are never just ghosts; they provide us with an insight into what haunts our culture. Ghosts, of course, cannot die and as such are a persistent reminder of what a culture can only express in oblique terms. Making visible what it is that haunts the ghost is thus the crucial challenge for contemporary Gothic criticism. (153)

Accordingly, the ghosts of the corpus are absent present complex entities that reflect the twentieth century American culture with its economic and political systems and social anxieties. Written in different years, each novel echoes its decade, highlighting one episode of the US social and cultural challenges. The three novels under study share approximately the same image of the haunted setting. At the level of architecture, the haunted houses share the panoptic design of a modern house of the twentieth century, situated in American suburbia. Located between two spatial realms, city and countryside, suburbia is chosen by twentieth century authors to highlight “the gaps between what something is and what it is not” (Murphy 4), blurring the lines between what is homely and unhomely, familiar and strange. The choice of suburbia can also be studied as a reflection of the characters’ psychological state between conscious and unconscious, sanity and insanity. The three haunted settings that were built along the lines of Bentham’s Panopticon have also in common a foreboding inherited past, a heavy burden that is brought to life through hauntings. In Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, the setting is firstly defined by its dire past as Crain’s housing dream becomes a

nightmarish reality and a threat to all his female inhabitants starting with his wife and daughters. Past presents a crucial element in hauntings as characters are haunted either by the setting's past or by their own. Eleanor Vance presents an example of the characters who were haunted by their own past. She tries to liberate herself from her domestic burden, but she finds herself entrapped again in her anxieties and repressed desires. Jackson's novel can be clearly identified as Female Gothic as she:

[...] examines the experiences of many white middle-class American women in the 1950s who felt trapped within domestic spaces and unable to develop a model of identity that was independent of family life. This was plight which Betty Friedan explored in the *Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan famously referred to the issue as 'the problem that has no name', thus using a language of spectrality in order to account for how the 'problem' which haunted the lives of many women had been rendered invisible. (Spooner 151-152)

Jackson's novel takes a detour from the norms of Gothic literature as the author succeeds in treating other subjects that reflect her era. Eleanor's absolute dream to settle down, to have a family and enjoy her adulthood mirrors the social definition of female during the baby boom era. Reaching her thirties without finding a husband was frowned upon by the American society during the late 1950s. Eleanor, whose identity has been already lost throughout the years she took care of her mother, feels weighed down by her society's look. As the house succeeds in bringing Eleanor's fears and desires into the surface, she is driven to a state of unmanageable hysteria, leading to her suicide. Eleanor chooses to escape all societal stress and psychological pressures by returning to the womb, to her lost paradise in which she feels free from all anxieties.

Richard Matheson's novel is described by many critics as the male version of Shirley Jackson's work because both novels share the same outline. Jackson's influence is clear through the common characters' profiles, plot, and the atrocious end of female characters. Yet, Matheson depicts more violent hauntings with pornographic details. The horrors of Belasco's house seem to be originated in its dark past as the setting was a scene of moral deviancy and dissipation.

Belasco is never presented as a figurehead; a puppet used to trouble the characters and terrify them. He is a real specter who reacts through his setting that seems to be merged with its owner. Hell House seems to have a will of its own. In fact, unlike Hill House, the origins of Hell House's name are provided in details, focusing mainly on the hedonistic feature of its owner. Fischer provides the characters with a detailed account of Hell House's history, its owner and his family. Yet, the factualness of these details is questionable since the different information are gathered through the accounts of different people notably Belasco's second wife. The lack of historical accuracy in Hell House's origins can reflect its mythical dimension. Also, it reflects the Derridian definition of haunting as a reflection of our perception of the space. In fact, even before unveiling the story of Belasco House, the epithet 'Hell House' is used to refer to "the Mount Everest of haunted houses" (Matheson 15). Accordingly, the haunted nature of Hell House is Derridian as it has no definite origins and is empowered by its inhabitants:

First suggestion: haunting is historical, to be sure, but it is not dated, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar. Untimely, it does not come to, it does not happen to, it does not befall, one day, Europe, as if the latter, at a certain moment of its history, had begun to suffer from a certain evil, to let itself be inhabited in its inside, that is, haunted by a foreign guest. Not that that guest is any less a stranger for having always occupied the domesticity of Europe. But there was no inside, there was nothing inside before it. The ghostly would displace itself like the movement of this history. Haunting would mark the very existence of Europe. It would open the space and the relation to self of what is called by this name, at least since the Middle Ages. (3)<sup>94</sup>

Matheson follows Jackson's psychological suspense by exploiting the different characters' paranoia. The multiplicity of the characters' profiles reflects the diversity of the American society in the 1970s. Matheson reflects his era by highlighting the dichotomy between science and spiritualism (represented by the constant disputes between Florence Tanner and Dr. Barrett) that casts a dark shadow on the American society. The novel sets from its beginning the different

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<sup>94</sup> Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of the Mourning and the new International*. Routledge Classics, 1994, p3.

theoretical explanations of ghosts (its nature and presence). The reader finds himself with two contradictory theories; Dr. Barrett's belief that Hell House is a mausoleum of dark energy originated from the space's atrocious past. While Florence Tanner believes in the religious, spiritual definition of ghosts as tormented spirits who should be liberated to rest in peace. These two opposite theories lead to different experiences that provoke and enrage Belasco. The characters, who initially think that they control the house and study it, become an object of Belasco's gaze. The duality of science and spiritualism presents one of the classical dualisms of Gothic literature along with the duality of reason and insanity. In this context, June M. Pulliam and Anthony J. Fonseca studied the duality of science and spirituality upon which *Hell House* is built, claiming that it is gendered, relating science to masculinity and spirituality to femininity (167)<sup>95</sup>. Yet, as the novel develops and the hauntings become more intense, the masculine rigid scientific approach of Dr. Barrett proves to be a failure as it does not protect him from the calamitous damages of Belasco's hauntings. Florence Tanner undergoes different violent experiences as she insists on her spiritualism, which leads to different sexual assaults that monstricize the female body. The only character who was able to resist the monster's gaze and to dare to challenge his power is Benjamin Franklin Fischer. This character is said to be a medium and is the only survivor of a previous investigation that took place in Hell House. Some critics like Pulliam and Fonseca believe that Fischer's ability to survive twice the horrors of house is strictly linked to his "gender fluidity" (170). In fact, throughout the novel, Fischer is referred to as an over-refined person with feminine features. In one haunting episode, as Edith tries to seduce him under the influence of Belasco, Fischer tries to push her away, showing his disgust. Edith considers him "sexless" and "fairy"<sup>96</sup> (Matheson 119), referring explicitly to his sexual orientation. Yet, Fischer's survival from Belasco's hell lies in his refusal to use his powers as a medium. Unlike Florence Tanner,

<sup>95</sup> Pulliam, June M., and Anthony J. Fonseca. *Richard Matheson's Monsters: Gender in the stories, scripts, novels and Twilight Zone episodes*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

<sup>96</sup> Fairy is a pejorative adjective used to refer to an effete male who behaves in a feminine way. It is generally used to describe homosexuals.

Fischer is described from the beginning of the novel as a secretive person who prefers to keep his past experiences hidden, refusing to use his talent as a physical medium to protect himself from the influence of Belasco. Being just an observer, Fischer succeeds in knowing the way to destroy Belasco, by keeping himself firm and by questioning his powers. At the end of the novel, Fischer succeeds not only in surviving and saving Edith, but also in redefining Hell House by rebuilding the image of its owner, not as a “Roaring Giant” but as a “man who is risible and therefore powerless” (Pulliam and Fonseca 170).

Unlike Shirley Jackson and Richard Matheson, who focused on the idea of investigating the nature of a haunted house, notorious for its dreadful past, Robert Marasco tries to bring to the fore the economic and social concerns of the American society during the 1970s. As the novel starts with the depiction of the Rolfes, Marasco focuses on Marian as a symbol of the middle-class wife whose obsession reflects a 1970s frustrated class, unable to concretize its American Dream. This frustration, that will be the Rolfes’ tragic flaw as the novel progresses, is further italicized through the first and only meeting with the Allardyses. The opening of the novel depicts the clash between two different social classes as I can trace some class racist overtones in Ben’s reaction: “racist pigs” (Marasco 14) as Marian reads the Allardyses’ advertisement. Marasco highlights Marian’s thirst to escape her status quo as she blindly accepts all Allardyses’ conditions to rent the mansion. In the meeting scene, The Allardyses’ way to treat and talk to the Rolfes reflects a divergence between two different social classes, an inequality that characterizes the American society during the 1970s<sup>97</sup>. The first account of Miss Allardyce focuses on her elegance and sophisticated outfit. She is first described as “a small, energetic woman, in her early sixties walked in briskly. She [is] sharp-faced, with highly lacquered pepper-and-salt hair. Her outfit, dark blue, [is] tailored and expensive, and she [wears] a double strand of pearls” (Marasco 33). Miss Allardyce focuses first on Marian, knowing that

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<sup>97</sup> The economic and social divergences of the American society during the 1970s is further treated in the third part of the thesis.

she is vulnerable. Moving around her and touching her arm, Miss Allardyce treats Marian as an unmissable prey. Her attention does not divert from Marian, even though she is talking to Ben, trying to make sure that she is hypnotized enough to take any future conditions for granted. Miss Allardyce shows her awareness of Marian's obsession to realize her dream of owning a house like the Long Island mansion by focusing on the fact that the house deserves an owner like her who will take care of all its beautiful fancy antiques. Brother (Arnold) comes later to ascertain the good choice of the Rolfes as the new tenants. If Miss Allardyce tries to show kindness and amicability, Brother treats the Rolfes' couple with a clear preeminence. Even before introducing himself or welcoming the Rolfes, Brother starts immediately with "you're the folks going to take the house, are you?" (Marasco 42), followed by his approval "I like 'em Roz" (Marasco 42). The way the Allardyses treat the Rolfes can be studied as a hunter – prey relation or even as landlords- slave relation. This idea is highlighted through the focus on the Rolfes' mission and different tasks to take care of the house (although they are in a summer vacation) and of Mrs. Allardyce. The recurrent use of the word "old gal" to refer to Aunt Elisabeth is indicative of this haughty look as it refers historically to a slang word used by landlords to refer to female slaves in southern American states.

The motif of the haunted house in Marasco's novel is studied differently from the other works under examination. The Long Island mansion is the hunter, haunter and haunted living being. It is the hunter as it chooses its own preys to haunt them, consume them and finally be haunted by their own energy and soul (as Marian becomes for the mansion the eternal source of energy). Unlike Hill House and Hell House that are empowered by their own hideous past, Long Island mansion seems to be strengthened by the actual gradual degeneration of its inhabitants. Using a hum sound as a hypnotizer to guarantee Marian's discipline, the house drains all its inhabitants' energies to death, capturing their terror in framed photographs. This unique chilling way of haunting intensifies the readers' horror as it implies that the house is an eternal organic being that is fed by death. *Burnt Offerings* is studied as an allegorical horror



novel that echoes different problems of the American society during the 1970s. The novel is first and foremost about a nuclear family that is torn apart on her way to realize her American Dream. The novel monstrifies the culture of consumerism that haunts Marian and leads her to give up her role as a mother and a wife. The mansion can be studied as a symbol of the American consumerist society, a blood thirsty deity that needs new sacrificed energies and souls to be eternally powerful. The Rolfes are just victims of their own culture as they are raised and influenced to be the burnt offerings of their own society.

## CONCLUSION

This study has proposed an analytical reading of three haunted-house novels. In each of these novels, characters confront an organic house that is innately evil. The story transcends the conventional plot of the old house, haunted by a tormented soul and a terrible past. Throughout this dissertation, my objective has been paid much more analytical attention to other complexities not usually studied by scholars, thanks to the use of the Foucauldian theory of panopticism, questioning the way this recurrent motif voices deeper psychological and societal issues. Being three post-war novels, the figure of the haunted house cannot be examined out of its postmodernist context. The haunted setting transcends its status as an emblematic characteristic of the Gothic genre to mirror the characters' psychological and cultural anxieties, questioning the fixed values and ideals of the American society. By being skeptic about the American Dream and the cult of domesticity, the three novels under study deconstruct some of the generic, stylistic and thematic features of the Gothic genre.

What I have learned from my study is that, in the first place, reading haunted-house fictions from a generic point of view and in relation to general themes foregrounded in the Gothic genre is inadequate. These novels present the haunted setting as a panoptic space in which characters are physically and mentally entrapped. It is an unstable world where events are sometimes illogical and meaningless and where notions of madness and reason, reality and imagination are deconstructed. This study encompasses different literary theories like New Historicism, Bachelard's theory of space, the concept of gaze from Lacan and Merleau-Ponty's stands, in addition to the psychoanalytical theories of Freud. These theories allow us to face other questions like the interconnection between dream and nightmare, the credibility of protagonists and the link between illusion and disillusion.

The study set out to show how, despite the difference in the haunting's nature, it still

succeeds in changing the protagonists' vision of subjectivity, selfhood and their relation to other characters as well as the haunted setting. Relying on the New Historicist theory, which considers literature as a cultural and historical product, the first part sets up the cultural, social and mainly political contexts in the United States of the second half of the twentieth century by focusing on the period between the 1950s and the 1970s, which corresponds to the novels' publications. During that time, the United States was marked with the Red Scare, a devastating political and social phenomenon that resulted from the intensified cold war between the Soviet Union, the cradle conveyor and promoter of communism and the US, the growing imperial power. This hysterical fear along with the rising voices of the Civil Rights Movement for racial equality led by Martin Luther King shaped the American history and transformed its democracy into an increasing society of spying and surveillance under the pretext of national security<sup>98</sup>. The first chapter of the opening part dealt with the figure of "Big Brother" through the invention of the institutionalized mass surveillance with the establishment of NSI (National Security Institute). The choice of the Orwellian expression "Big Brother is watching you" is justified by the resemblance between the fictional state of Oceania, referred to in George Orwell's *1984*, and the expanding American society of mass surveillance, with the use of highly technological devices. This panoptic constant surveillance affected the world of art and literature during the period as numerous artists depicted the dark image of the United States, hidden behind the propaganded reputation of a nation where all dreams can come true.

The second chapter extended the contextual presentation of the corpus, dealing with one of the key motifs in the three novels. It focused on the American Dream and the way it gradually deviated from its true definition. The concept is studied in the context of the 1950s

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<sup>98</sup>All leaders of the Civil Rights Movement along with artists, journalists and politicians were under surveillance for national security. It was a context of an obsessive witch hunt of anyone who is doubted to work with the USSR. The surveillance includes a ceaseless spying and recording all calls, messages and letters. In case of Martin Luther King, NSI spied on his intimate moment, which shows the way citizens were constantly under the spotlight.

to the 1970s, as it marked the rise of the consumerist society and the suburban dream. The dream of ownership grew to be a haunting force that deprived the American society of any moral or ethical basis. This idea was further studied in the third chapter with our investigation into textual references to the degeneration of the American Dream, becoming a nightmare that consumes the protagonists physically and psychologically. It also recorded the way all declassed characters initially considered the haunted setting as the realization of their American Dream in one way or another. Here, further inquiry by the corpus authors revealed the traumatic realization that the dream was in fact the haunting force that tried to destroy them, which generated a redefinition of selfhood.

Following the study of the political, social and historical contexts of the American society during the second half of the twentieth century, the second part has come as a textual analysis of the motif of haunted houses. In the first chapter I dealt with the way haunted houses are actively presented as characters in the novels under study and not as decorative settings. The chapter started with an overview of the early Gothic presentation of the setting and the highlighted importance of architecture in enhancing horror. In this context, examples from canonic Gothic literature were given, including Horace Walpole and Washington Irving. Then the chapter focused on Hill House, Hell House and Long Island mansion as three examples of animated organic houses that complicated the conventional plot of haunted house tales: Characters are not haunted by an unrested ghost. They are rather haunted by their own traumatic past, their phobias, their repressed desires and even their dreams. The haunted houses rise above the architectural importance to convey a more psychological connotation. To analyse Shirley Jackson's Hill House, I used the Freudian concept of *the uncanny* and Gaston Bachelard's definition of *house*. For Eleanor, Hill House proves to be a source of both attraction and repulsion. The house stands for a new adventure to build her adult self. Yet, its cold massive circular architecture reminds her of her deceased mother who represents her

ultimate trauma. After a theoretical framework in which the Foucauldian and Bachelardian concepts were defined, the chapter examined the textual evidences of the impact of trauma on Eleanor's perception of Hill House. I showed that, by identifying every single room with the figure of her mother, Eleanor has become more vulnerable and weaker under the constant pressure of her trauma. The chapter also discussed the way the uncanniness of the house was molded by the ejected anxiety and disturbance that Eleanor lived during her childhood and that shaped her own personality. Accordingly, haunting proved to be originated from the penned past experiences of the former and present inhabitants who make the house able to "find the flaws and faults and weaknesses in all of us, and break us apart in a matter of days" (Jackson 124).

*Hell House*, and *Burnt Offerings* proved to be no exception as the Gothic aspects of the settings serve to highlight psychological and social problems. In *Hell House*, the blurred past/present sheds light on the way the haunted house can be a figure of the protagonist's unconscious. The house's gruesome history of sexual sadism and butchery proves to be actively influential on the characters' minds and sanity. Florence Tanner, in particular, was the most vulnerable character, who suffered most from the sexual and physical abuse of Belasco. Yet, this concentration on one character leaves room for questions, whether what Florence experienced is in fact the manifestation of the unconscious, her repressed desire for love, notably if I consider her love relationship with Daniel Belasco, the doubtful ghost figure. It is noteworthy that Florence is a mental medium and yet she uses her body as a basis for all her rituals. She even considers that having sex with Daniel, the ghost son of Belasco, is an effective way to empower him to escape the horrors of Hell House. Florence becomes more sexualized by the house as she tries to seduce Fischer. Belasco succeeds in turning Florence into a sex object that can endure his cruelty. However, this manipulation is not purely supernatural. It is the result of her repressed frustrated sexuality that is cropped up with the encounter of Hell House's Dionysian atmosphere (the presence of erotic books and pornographic pictures).

Unfortunately, no one understands what happened to Florence to become wilder and more violent. They think that it is the house's fault as it succeeds in possessing her. There is only Dr. Barrett who realizes that Florence is a victim of her repressed self: " "What we've witnessed this morning is that part of Miss Tanner's personality she's always kept hidden, even from herself—her patience turning into anger, her withdrawal into furious expression." He paused. "Her chasteness into wanton sexuality" " (Matheson 235).

Unlike Hill House and Hell House, the Long Island mansion in Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* reflects a societal concept that presents the pillar of the American society. In this subpart, I studied the way Marasco presented domesticity within the context of a haunted house tale. At the outset, Marasco uses a classical middle-class family to map the way the American domestic life can turn to a source of horror. The Rolfes family is an example of the American middle class who aim to have a better financial status. Long Island house presents for the Rolfes an unmissable opportunity to revive their family moments and to enjoy the summer. Yet, despite its decayed state, Marian realizes that the house may be an exemplar of her dreams and long list of wishes. Here, I tried to study the haunting episodes that are different from haunting of Hill House or Hell House, where the setting is haunted by its terrible past. In *Burnt Offerings*, there is no focus on "the disturbing return of pasts upon presents" (Botting 1). Marasco focuses on the present haunting, evoking at the end of the novel the future of the haunted house through the symbol of photographs in which it stands indestructible. Contrary to Jackson's Hill House and Matheson's Hell House, where protagonists feel uneasy since the first day, Marian considers the Long Island mansion as her own home, her world where she naturally belongs. Yet, as the novel develops, it becomes clear that she has been in fact entrapped in her domestic space that she considers the epitome of her dreams. Her maniacal housekeeping becomes a weapon used to manipulate her interest. The house is particularly active since the characters Brother, Walker and Ms. Allardyce, are able to choose the 'right' victims. The house's haunting force, Mrs. Allardyce, is aware of Marian's vulnerability as she

is unable to resist expensive antiques and sophisticated furniture. Hence, the house has used Marian's obsession as a bait to consume her energy and soul, leading to a total immersion at the end of the novel. Marasco uses then the haunted tale formula to denounce the 1970s version of American Dream and cult of domesticity: it shows the strong influence of the dream of ownership and consumerism that can consume people's body and soul.

In the second chapter of this part, I traced out the different resemblances and parallelisms between the three haunted houses and the Benthamian panopticon. It started with the architectural similarities between panopticon and Hill House, focusing on the duality of visibility and invisibility. The haunted setting is presented as a circular building with some defects that present for characters a source of disorientation. The house contains also a massive gray-stoned tower where the insidious power of the house is mostly visible and felt. The phallic symbol comes as a grotesque embodiment of surveillance since it seems to be an observatory where the haunting mechanisms of Hill House are concentrated. With the misleading design, the tower is not visible for characters at the beginning of the novel. It remains hidden till it appears suddenly as if to remind the characters that they are not alone.

Instead of using the Benthamian concept of Panopticon, it was more fruitful to approach Hill House from the Foucauldian theory of panopticism. Here, different instances from the novel were analyzed to show the way the unverifiable surveillance is highlighted. Belasco is described from the outset as the absent present haunting force: absent physically but present through his recorded voice, heavy breathing and reaction to what characters say or do. Architecturally, there is absolutely no resemblance between the house and Bentham's design. Yet, the setting is considered as a metaphorically panoptic space. The duality of the seen and the unseen is highlighted since the first pages of the novel as the voice of the unseen owner is heard to welcome the characters and to remind them to "Think of me as your unseen host and believe that, during your stay here, I shall be with you in spirit" (Marasco 38). Belasco's words serve the idea of the illusionary freedom of the prisoners of the panopticon whose freedom of

conduct is observed constantly and even manipulated by the watcher's unverifiable presence. Within this framework, this subchapter explored the dialogical relationship between the characters and Belasco who reacts to their attempts to uncover the house's truth by exercising physical and psychological oppression. By the same token, Belasco's manipulative power transcends characters to reach other ghosts. Throughout the novel, characters are not sure if they are haunted by Belasco or by the ghost of his son Daniel. Belasco uses the ghost of his son Daniel to approach Florence and abuse her physically. Thus, he has decided to show his real self only during the concluding scene when Fischer blows the lid off Belasco's secret, using it as a last bullet to destroy him. Fisher understands that the haunting is exceptionally methodological.

Belasco's power lies in his gaze: he succeeds in tricking characters with other entities. Believing he is absent, the characters thought they could exorcise the house and reveal its secret. Yet, they realized that they are constantly under an all-seeing gaze, keep the characters apart so that he can manipulate their minds easily and haunt them till death.

Like Hell House, the Long Island mansion has not the exact panoptic shape. However, Robert Marasco literalizes the Benthamian design in a form of symbols and metaphors. The idea of constant invisible and unverifiable surveillance constitutes the essence of the house. This subchapter studied the invisible surveillance, symbolized by Mrs. Allardyce through the prism of the Lacanian *gaze*. This concept helped us to dope out the way the panoptic surveillance is exercised to keep Marian manipulated. Here, I discussed how Marian is transformed from a subject to an object of the house's gaze. The character thinks throughout the novel that she is the responsible for the house's cleanliness and organization. Yet, she is in fact entrapped in her mission, becoming gradually a passive person, completely controlled by the haunting force. Unlike the other haunted houses, presented in this dissertation, the Long Island mansion did not past trauma or phobia to manipulate characters' soundness and to quiver their stability. It overwhelms Marian, the most vulnerable character, with auditory,



olfactory and tactile hypnosis, using her irresistibility to fancy, expensive decorations as a means to control her. This chapter showed how Marian's transformation was gradual and progressive. The panoptic surveillance started with alienating her from her family, keeping her away from fulfilling her role as a wife and as a mother. Then, consuming the characters' mental and physical health till death. Finally, driving the hypnotized Marian to the 'alter' (Mrs. Allardyce's attic room) to be physically incorporated in the house, becoming the new Mrs. Allardyce and waiting for new victims.

The third chapter of the second part focused on the effects of panoptic surveillance on the female protagonists. Firstly, it discussed the development of the character of Eleanor Vance in Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, from a dreamy girl who seeks self-actualization away from her dull life to a hysteric character, haunted by the figure of her deceased mother and whose memories lead her to her tragic demise. Eleanor entered Hill House with the self-imposed mission to investigate supernatural phenomena. She finds herself in the midst of a horrifying setting that strangely reminds her of her domineering mother. The monstrosity of Hill House lies in the way it is manifested as a mother figure, despite the fact that it was built by a patriarch named Hugh Crain. Eleanor develops an impulsive desire to stay forever in the house, thinking that she will be able to rebuild her relationship to her mother. As Eleanor's self comes apart and fuses with Hill House, the Gothic setting becomes an extension of the protagonist. It becomes her inner world and her domestic 'natural' space, outside of which she can be lost. Thus, Eleanor's decision to commit suicide comes as a hopeless way to integrate her own self into the house's self, notably after the group's decision to keep her away from the house in the furtherance of her mental health.

The effects of the panoptic surveillance were also explored in Matheson's *Hell House* through the character of Florence Tanner. Although she shows more resistance to the house's hauntings, her fate is not less tragic. The house's panoptic effect was studied through the development of Belasco from a watcher to a sadistic haunting force. The haunting starts

classically with the duality of seen/unseen. Belasco, absent physically, is referred to as a present entity in several instances. He is present through his voice that is recorded in a phonograph, his negative energy, felt by all characters all around the house and his shadow on the walls of Hell House. Yet, as soon as Florence tries to use her body as a physical medium to reach Belasco, the haunting episodes become more recurrent and violent. The monstrosity of Hell House is not purely mental as in Hill House. Belasco's sadism presents a key feature of all haunting scenes. Thinking that she could handle "the Mount Everest" of haunted houses, Florence becomes a subject of numerous sexual assaults. Belasco goes further by disintegrating the group as they start to question each other's method and credibility. Realizing that knowing the truth of Hell House and its owner will empower her, Florence persists in leading her adventure using the same method of physical mediumship. She ends up killed in the Chapel, in the same sadistic guise that characterized Belasco from the beginning of the plot. Yet, her death corresponds to the beginning of Belasco's end as his truth is unveiled by Fischer.

Unlike the depiction of the panoptic gaze in Hill House and Hell House, the focus in *Burnt Offerings* is in the reciprocity of the gaze. The novel starts with a non-classical beginning in which the focus is on the character of Marian and not on the haunted space. The first pages of the novel show the vulnerability of Marian as a potential victim of her obsession and dream. In that part, I studied the way the haunting is presented as a ritualistic sacrifice, in which the victim did not show any sign of resistance. This idea was based, in addition to the details of the haunting, on the choice of the novel's title. Marian's dream of ownership was her tragic flaw: Mrs. Allardyce used Marian's dream as a way to manipulate her, control her thoughts and consume her physically. The decayed house proves to be hungry, and that needs the youth and sanity of its inhabitants to regenerate itself. It is a vampire-like house that consumes flesh and blood to live. Bearing in mind that Mrs. Allardyce is constantly in her room turns Marian from a watcher to an object of surveillance. She unconsciously interiorizes the panoptic gaze, keeping her unable to be mentally and physically present with her family. Marian does not realize that

she is not the owner of the house but its servant. She keeps being passive throughout the novel, without realizing the physical changes around her. She gets older and weaker in a few days while the house sheds its old skin by being newer and brighter. Unlike Eleanor and Florence, Marian did not try to challenge the panoptic gaze. As she explores the mansion, her passivity and submission are further highlighted since she is overpowered by her ultimate dream of owning such house.

This dissertation culminated with the way the three fictional haunted spaces reflect different aspects of the American society. My final part relies on the New Historicist notion of “historicity of the text”, since through the haunted house formula, the three writers bring to the fore issues of domesticity, the American Dream, consumerism, anxieties and traumas. In the first chapter, I started by analyzing the panoptic gaze in order to show that, although I previously mentioned that the house is portrayed throughout the novel as a motherly figure, the panoptic gaze can be examined in relation to the male gaze of the patriarch Hugh Crain. Eleanor’s intimacy is surveilled and even manipulated by the haunting force that reacts unhesitatingly to the different intimate scenes staged between Eleanor and Theodora. This gaze has also been analyzed in reference to the Foucauldian theory of panopticism. Crain’s gaze overpowers Eleanor as it builds a psychological power relation in which Eleanor’s traumas and anxieties are disclosed and used to manipulate her and to consume her sanity. Secondly, I placed the focus on Eleanor as the protagonist of Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*, and analyzed the way the protagonist defied the social norms of the 1950s American society through her quest for self-fulfillment away from her sister and her brother-in-law, and by accepting to lead an adventure with strangers in a haunted house. Then I explored the way Eleanor’s incarcerated past life within the domestic sphere affects her present in Hill House. She finds herself confronting the same domestic space since she instantly connected the haunted setting to her phallic mother. She starts her journey in Hill House with a struggle between individualizing herself and being integrated in the haunted

space (that symbolizes her mother). Unfortunately, Eleanor could not resist the house's insanity as the fine line between herself and the house was broken at the end of the novel. The protagonist's end created another avenue since it questions her reliability. I studied the way Eleanor's journey in Hill House reveals her dilemma. She develops simultaneously a fear of unity with her mother and a fear of detachment from the house (motherly symbol). She thinks that the house cajoles her with the repetitive message "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (Jackson 155), believing that her mother is calling her. Gradually, it becomes clear that Eleanor moves from the status of the haunted to be a haunter. She becomes overtaken by the psychological and emotional weight that she carried for long years, and by the repressed traumas that were liberated by the house's "absolute reality" (Jackson 3). Apart from Eleanor, I also studied the other female characters in Hill House as defiers of societal and political oppression. Both Theodora and Mrs. Montague challenge the patriarchal figure: Theodora's profile deconstructs the 1950s definition of womanhood. She is the only character with no last name, presented as a bohemian non-conformist character who, unlike the others, has no family life as she lives with her friend. Theodora is considered to be the representer of the rising feminism as her character defies the classical institution of marriage and dismantles the classical definition of sexuality. Mrs. Montague also defies the norms of domesticity as she is not presented as a classical housewife, being rather a domineering woman who challenges her husband with her planchette. Her presence is, as Darryl Hattenhauer describes in *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*, commanding in relation to her husband since "when his wife arrives spouting nonsense about the spirit world, her ignorance and irrationality defeat his erudition at every turn. She is even more self-important and cocksure than Montague, with even less reason to be so" (156). The first chapter ends with the analysis of the character of Dr. Montague who symbolizes the scientific and technological development that marked the 1950s in the United States. The focus was mainly on the way the scientific approach was not enough to unveil Hill House's reality or to save Eleanor from her tragic end.

The second chapter explored the way Hell House reflects the American society of the 1970s, by studying the characters of Emeric Belasco and Benjamin Fischer. The multiple haunting scenes prove that surveillance is not a simple act of watching the inhabitants. Surveillance is a complex, multilayered procedure. It demands mental and psychological manipulation along with the physical scrutiny. Then the analysis of Fischer came as a means to study the relationship between the hunter and the haunted. Being a former victim of Hell House, Fischer revives the experience with a different approach. He is described as a passive character throughout the novel. He did not try to warn other characters nor participate actively in the investigation. The death of Florence is the red sign that pushes Fischer to react. Believing that both science and spiritualism are not effective, he starts to use the same manipulative strategy to beat Belasco. The use of mockery and moral judgement were efficient enough to subvert Belasco's panoptic power. The depiction of Fischer's development from passivity to challenge was read as a message that Matheson tried to send. The panoptic surveillance that prevailed the American society during the 1970s cannot be fought by acceptance and submission. The secret lies in questioning the morality of these practices, putting the watcher under the spotlight of ethics.

The chapter ended with the study of parallelism between the haunted space (Hell House) and the 1970s American society. The study pointed out that the first resemblance lies in the geographical position of Hell House. The complex architecture of Hell House along with its secludedness reflect the United States' semi-insular geography. Besides, the complexity of the investigators is another common point. The characters are all from different social backgrounds, which echoes the richness of the American society that can cause conflicts between contrasting approaches and groups (like the conflict between science and spiritualism that shaped the 1970s). But most importantly, Hell House reflects the American society through the author's depiction of the manipulative strategies used by Belasco. The panoptic surveillance uses characters' memories and personal life to manipulate and control

them. This reminds the reader of the practices of the institutionalized mass surveillance during the 1970s, an era that was marked with the intensified violation of intimacy and freedom. The last part of this work rounded off with the study of the way the panoptic power is presented in Marasco's *Burnt Offerings*. The end of the novel is a far cry from the classical denouement of the haunted house tales. Yet, it is not the only innovative point that Marasco astounded his readers with. The first chapter analyses the symbolical dimension of the characters and shows how they represent the American society of the 1970s. Contrary to the classical opening of Gothic tales where the description is focused on the haunted space, Marasco starts with a long descriptive passage of the Rolfes, a middle-class American family composed of a young couple and a child. This technique allows the reader to identify easily with the characters. Through the motif of the haunted house, Marasco aims to criticize the American Dream and the rising culture of consumerism. In this context, I discussed how the Gothic space signifies a retreat into Marian's dream world. The house presents the epitome of what Marian longs for and for this reason, she does not show any resistance against the creepy haunting attempts of the house. *Burnt Offerings* proves to be a direct criticism of the American dream that turns to be devoid of any moral values and becomes in the 1970s a pure consumerist dream that devours people till death. The use of an urban context along with the middle-class family is a way to show that the dream of ownership, fueled by advertisements and TV commercials, grows walls up around the American people, suffocating them unconsciously.

The second part of the third chapter focused on the haunted house as a regenerated panoptic power. The limitless power of the house enhances horror as it seems to be imperishable. This is also related to the fact that the American Dream is immortal as it is fed with people's hopes. The house is not presented as inanimate and manipulated by an evil force, but rather as an organic setting that needs to be fed in order to regenerate itself at the expense of its inhabitants. Here, the haunted house as a panoptic site is revisited since surveillance

transcends the idea of control and traceability. The Long Island mansion uses the panoptic gaze as a tool to consume the characters and to guarantee its supremacy and reinvigoration.

As I have pointed out throughout this dissertation, the haunted house is a surveillance site in which characters are entrapped. The secret of the panoptic power lies in the interchangeability of the object and the subject and between the status of watching and being watched. The study of *The Haunting of Hill House*, *Hell House* and *Burnt Offerings* has led us to rethink the motif of the haunted house in terms of the Foucauldian theory of panopticism and through the lens of New Historicist theory since the three novels reflect different aspects of the American society during a period that spans three decades (1950s to 1970s). However, the ending of Marasco's novel with the regenerated panoptic power proves that surveillance is not restricted to the twentieth century. The same ending can be subject to an analysis that takes into account contemporary issues, all the more so as the Internet and more generally the hyper-developed technologies of communication have made real what seemed to be possible only in the imagination. Thus, future studies could address the heritage of panopticism and the rise of surveillance culture in the contemporary technological society. If the twentieth century was marked by the use of camera and video surveillance (as it was mentioned in the first part), the modern society witnesses the rise of *soft surveillance*, enhanced by the rise of the social network and the accessibility of digital technologies. Surveillance becomes directly and indirectly propagated which leads to the development of the culture of surveillance. In this sense, Olivier Aïm highlighted the idea of socializing surveillance in his book *Les Théories de la Surveillance: Du Panoptique aux Surveillance Studies*, stating that it can be in the form of "commodité, de performance ou d'amusement" (convenience, performance or entertainment) (177). Further research is needed to study the way the surveillance that started as a governmental practice in the mid-twentieth century becomes a social practice that conflates the public space with the private one, leading to a general feeling of entrapment. The "conscious and permanent visibility" (Foucault 201) that the characters experienced and

through which the watcher exercised automatically their manipulative power, drive me to question our modern society and whether or not we are haunted by each other. Don't we live in a horizontal panoptic society in which there is no tyrannical supervision from above but rather self-discipline and censorship? In this context, Oliver Aim questions surveillance as a field and as a theory. After a revision of the pioneer theories of surveillance and a focus on Michel Foucault and his emblematic theory of panopticism, he studies thoroughly the development of the digital surveillance in the twenty-first century, turning the human being into something traceable (91). Besides, within the framework of surveillance studies, Aim evokes the question of the new technologies and social network. He points out that modern Man lives in the illusion of empowerment since the social media is based on the duality of being visible and privacy. The use of smartphones and the Internet induces a new form of surveillance, more disseminated and portable. It gives the illusion of security and liberty while its user is remotely controlled (184). Moreover, Thomas Pynchon's last novel *Bleeding Edge*, which takes on the Internet and surveillance as a major subject, proves, if need be, the literary and socio-political importance of panopticism in our "post-Snowden" age. More particularly, the study of haunted houses as panoptic spaces presents a fruitful area for further work on surveillance study. It is necessary to study panopticism out of the context of Gothic literature despite its importance as a basic framework. Taking the society of the third millennium as a study case would be a fertile ground for more research on panopticism and the culture of surveillance that has become, according to David Lyon in his book *The Culture of Surveillance: Watching as a Way of Life*, an integral part of the modern daily life:

Surveillance culture has appeared as people engage more and more with means of monitoring. Many check on others' lives using social media, for instance. At the same time, the 'others' make this possible by allowing themselves to be exposed to public view in texts and tweets, posts and pics. Some people also engage with surveillance when they worry about how much others, especially large, opaque organizations such as airlines or security agencies, know about them. (16)



I will bring this study to a close by sketching out what my research has achieved. The study has set out to gain a better understanding of the representation of the classical Gothic motif of haunted house in three post-Second War American novels. It has revealed that the motif transcends its literary importance as an enhancer of horror and instills within a socio- cultural context of the United States in the mid-twentieth century. The haunted space was investigated as a panoptic space that triggers personal traumas and collective fears. The outcome of this dissertation is that the haunted is a living, organic structure. Using an unverifiable panoptic gaze, the house has become able to manipulate the characters' past memories, repressed desires and obsessive dreams. They have been entrapped within the physical haunted space and become prisoners of themselves. This dissertation proves that the power of the panoptic space does not lie in its architecture but rather in the power of the mind, the illusion of empowerment and the blurred line between visibility and invisibility. As post- war novels, the Gothic setting in the three narratives reveals an inquiry into social and cultural issues and anxieties. It echoes the national anxiety of the continuously growing invasiveness of surveillance. It also criticizes the American Dream that has been degraded a new surveillance tool through which self-discipline is guaranteed. It becomes clear that surveillance is not external but has become a mental component.

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