

SHIRLEY JACKSON'S TROUBLED WOMEN:

AGORAPHOBIA AND THE

FICTION OF FEAR

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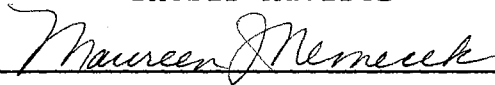
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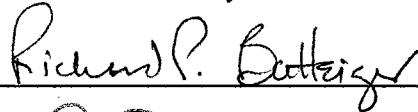
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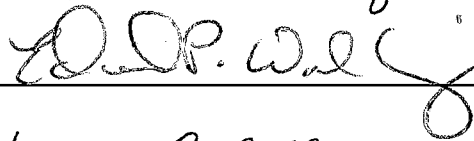
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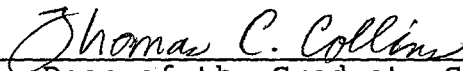


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PREFACE

Readers typically encounter Shirley Jackson's fiction through "The Lottery." Unfortunately, most never venture beyond this brief introduction. I sincerely hope that this study encourages at least a few new readers for a deserving author.

I too first encountered Jackson with "The Lottery." Soon after, I read We Have Always Lived in the Castle and found the combination of Jackson's keen understanding of human nature and her straightforward prose style appealing. When I entered graduate school, the idea of researching Shirley Jackson was already on my mind. Since no biography had been written, I wanted to do one. The year I began my study, Judy Oppenheimer published Jackson's first biography, Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson. Instead of being discouraged, I became more intrigued by the woman who wrote such remarkable fiction amid such personal conflict.

I sincerely appreciate the gentle criticism, inspiration, and encouragement provided by my major adviser, Dr. Linda Leavell. My gratitude extends to the other members of my doctoral committee, Drs. Richard Batteiger, Edward Walkiewicz, and Maureen Nemecek--for guidance and support in the completion of the dissertation and during my entire program of study. I thank Dr. Alice Birney and Frank Bauman of the Library of Congress for their help in my research.

My colleagues at Oklahoma Panhandle State University have been most gracious in allowing me time to complete my writing

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I also thank my dear friends Dr. Dorothy Day and Stuart Meltzer for their inspiration. I thank my husband for his patience and understanding. I thank my parents for their belief in my abilities and for instilling my desire for accomplishment.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1963 when her psychiatrist diagnosed Shirley Jackson's illness as agoraphobia, little was known about this debilitating emotional disorder. An abundance of studies completed during the late 1970s and early 1980s produced evidence that led most psychologists to consider agoraphobia a symptom of repressed emotional disturbances. Improved treatment and the contemporary emphasis on women's issues created new interest in the disorder, which is most prevalent among women. Many factors connect it with women's issues, including women's traditional role of remaining at home instead of seeking a career. During the first half of the twentieth century, rapid changes occurred in science, technology, and society, but in general, society was slower to accept new professional roles for women, causing many to feel victimized. Women like Jackson, who were wives and mothers and yet pursued professional careers, faced physical and emotional exhaustion often resulting in repressed hostility. Jackson's repression added to existing emotional disturbances, which had developed during her youth spent in a patriarchal-governed home. For Jackson, the repression resurfaced as agoraphobia. Jackson's fears and repressed emotional instability caused her to revise conventional literary forms and write fiction clearly depicting women as

society's victims.

Although improved treatment came too late to provide help for the author, a re-examination of her works in relationship to current theories regarding the disorder offers a clearer understanding of areas of her writing which frequently confuse readers. Agoraphobes realize that the fears which persist in terrifying them are often illogical, but that knowledge does nothing to alleviate the horror. Within this realm of irrational fear lies the key to understanding much of the apparent obscurity of Jackson's fiction.

Not only are readers sometimes confused by the obscurity, many critics are equally baffled by the diversity of the housewife who wrote warm, humorous family episodes and yet produced such disturbing tales as "The Lottery," "A Visit," or The Haunting of Hill House. Jackson's own writing helps explain much of the disparity. In 1969, The Writer published posthumously "Experience and Fiction," one of Jackson's presentations for a writer's conference. Here the author informs future writers of ways to incorporate events from their own lives into their fiction, demonstrating that "nothing is ever wasted" (rpt. in Come Along 195). She explains how she used even the most trivial occurrence to develop a story. Jackson's life was an uncommon mixture of warm, loving relationships and excruciating, debilitating fear when doubts of her own sanity troubled her. If an author intends to open her life

to the world so completely that she incorporates her children's real names into her fiction and comments that "the author must be in the story or you'll end with a dull anecdote," it seems likely that details regarding an illness so much a part of her life would also creep into the fiction.¹ Close re-examination of her public and private writings combined with results of agoraphobia research provide a more complete explanation of her fiction's apparent obscurity and of her diversity as well.

In the preface to The Magic of Shirley Jackson, Jackson's husband, critic Stanley Hyman, denies critics' attempts to associate her themes of "cruelty and terror, madness and alienation" with a personal neurosis. Instead, he avoids mention of her illness altogether and attributes the themes to artistry which accurately portrayed the "fragmenting times" in which she lived (viii) and hopes that "the future will find her powerful visions of suffering and inhumanity increasingly significant and meaningful" (ix). The plea for recognition has thus far gone unanswered: twenty-nine years after her death, only Jackson's "The Lottery" appears regularly in anthologies. Otherwise, she receives little recognition. Though she had begun to receive critical acclaim at the time of her death, Jackson, however, never received a major award.

The interval since her death has produced a single published critical book, Lenemaja Friedman's Shirley Jackson; the Twayne publication is an accurate, carefully

researched study of Jackson's life and works. Following Hyman's lead, Friedman emphasizes Jackson's craftsmanship, calling her "an entertainer," able to record serious scenes "with suspense and sympathy" as well as humor (10). Unlike Hyman, Friedman does not ignore Jackson's illness, but she limits its discussion to brief comments about her "sense of inferiority" (19), her remaining at home "where she was happiest and felt the safest" (35), and her "attacks of anxiety" (36). Friedman makes no attempt to link the illness to her writing except to say that writing remained a form of therapy when the author suffered her worst periods, an accurate assumption which Jackson herself demonstrates throughout the more than fifty boxes containing personal writing and original manuscripts on file in the Library of Congress. Friedman devotes several pages to Jackson's most famous story, "The Lottery," and divides the remainder of the book into chapters focusing on the author's first novel, The Road Through the Wall, short fiction, autobiographical works, psychological novels such as Hangsaman and The Bird's Nest, and an interesting overview in which she compares what Jackson said about writing at conferences with what she did in her writing. Friedman devotes a chapter to Jackson's Gothic portrayal of houses, an area of Jackson's writing which one could easily connect with her agoraphobia, but the critic makes no associations with either Jackson's illness or her need to seek refuge at home.

In 1987, after numerous interviews and hours of reading

the author's private papers, Judy Oppenheimer published Jackson's only biography, a study which delves deeply into the artist's troubled psyche. Although helpful to critics who attempt biographical and psychological criticism, the strictly biographical Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson, offers only minimal criticism. Other critics, however, have provided single articles associating emotional disorders with several of Jackson's fictional characters. Through the use of R. D. Laing's theories, which suggest that madness stems from female oppression in a male-dominated culture, John Parks considers the schizophrenic tendencies of many of Jackson's characters including Natalie Waite of Hangsamán. Parks finds many of the author's female characters "lonely, desperate women who reflect the disintegrations of modern life" ("Chambers" 20) but makes no attempt to associate the characters' disorders with those of their creator.

Also providing feminist criticism, Lynette Carpenter asserts that Jackson's lack of recognition is a result of sexual politics. Traditionally both humorists and women writers, particularly those who double as housekeepers and mothers, have been discredited or overlooked entirely. Although no published work has attempted using Jackson's illness as a way of reading her fiction, Linda Trichter Metcalf's 1987 dissertation, "Shirley Jackson in Her Fiction: A Rhetorical Search for the Implied Author" states that "Jackson's fiction is inspired by the emotions of

anxiety and fear" and further that "the search for the real author in the text. . . leads to the conclusion that Jackson perceives herself in her narrator" (DAI 649). I agree that the author did view herself as the narrator in much of her fiction, but she also projected many of her own insecurities into her fiction as she created numerous characters in fearful conflict with their outside worlds.

Combining modern psychoanalytic and feminist criticism offers new insights into Jackson's fiction. Perhaps one result of the 1960s feminist movement is a growing number of female American Gothic writers who emphasize patriarchy, madness and quest. Critics have always accurately associated Jackson with the Gothic tradition since many of her novels and short stories contain characteristics such as fear, a "haunted house," crime, magic or supernatural phenomena, and characters who exhibit psychotic behavior or are in some way deformed. Critics employing Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis often view the Gothic as a mode of writing "corresponding to the feminine, the romantic, the transgressive, and the revolutionary" (Showalter 129). Psychoanalysis has enabled new readings of texts of writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton, Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, all known to have experienced emotional disorders.²

Most helpful in discovering the parallels between Jackson's fiction and her illness has been the author herself. Except for materials she burned to keep her mother

from snooping when she went away to college, Jackson carefully saved journals, diaries, and drafts all her life. After her death, her family took extreme care to continue the practice. When I examined those records, now on file at the Library of Congress (including several new boxes which had just been added to the collection), I discovered the most valuable insights into the troubled psyche of Shirley Jackson. The knowledge I gained from those papers enabled me to apply recent theories regarding agoraphobia to complete a new reading of her fiction.

Current research of agoraphobia makes it possible to consider the effects of the illness on a writer's text. A first such study by psychologist Maryanne M. Garbowsky, The House Without the Door: A Study of Emily Dickinson and the Illness of Agoraphobia, suggests the poet's intensity derives in part from her own intense fear, an idea which suggests similar associations for Jackson. Clarification of depersonalization or panic attack experiences by current agoraphobia authorities such as Dianne Chambless, Alan Goldstein, Claire Weekes, and Richard Hallam enables critics to associate these descriptions with fictional scenes. Particularly helpful in this study is the combined study by Australian psychologists J. Christopher Clarke and Wayne Wardman, the latter of whom is also a victim of the disorder. They combine logical explanations regarding causality with case studies outlining their own form of psychotherapy. Helpful for its detailed causal

explanations, Richard Hallam's Anxiety: Psychological Perspectives on Panic and Agoraphobia

categorizes anxiety complaints into five classes: somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal, depression, and anxiety. Jackson experienced each at some point in her life.

Combining critical reading of Jackson's works with current information regarding agoraphobia suggests that she, like many other agoraphobes, suffered emotional disorders long before being diagnosed. By considering the complexities of agoraphobia, its possible causes, particularly for Jackson, and its resulting effects upon her writing at varying periods throughout her career, readers can better appreciate the author's talent. To provide a background for the study, I discuss agoraphobia, its probable causes and methods of treatment in chapter one.

Two periods of the author's life in particular elucidate agoraphobic characteristics in her writing. Most apparent are the years in which she was obviously suffering from the confining effects of the illness. During this period, roughly from 1958 while she was working on The Haunting of Hill House until shortly before her death on 8 August 1965, Jackson employs setting, themes, and characters which mirror the disorder. The less obvious, earlier period began when she received her most adverse criticism, for her most famous work, "The Lottery," and persisted through the summer of 1954 when her family physician advised rest for this

depressed, overworked mother and author. I include a brief biography of Jackson's emotionally troubled life in chapter two.

Jackson's female protagonists reveal the troubled consciousness of their creator. During stages of her life when Jackson's own emotional health deteriorated, she produced female protagonists who become increasingly psychotic. A discussion of the protagonists' diminishing stability, primarily limited to the novels obviously representative of specific periods of the author's life, begins with The Road Through the Wall's Harriet Merriam, who represents the teenage Jackson growing up in a California suburb. It progresses to Hangsaman's Natalie Waite, who resembles Jackson in her first year of college; depicts Jackson's most successful and most psychotic character, Mary Catherine (Merricat) Blackwood of We Have Always Lived in the Castle, who represents Jackson in North Bennington; and ends with Angela Motorman of Come Along With Me. The most self-confident character ever created by the author, Motorman represents the emotionally stable Jackson after psychoanalytic counseling. These characters from the novels and others from the short fiction are discussed in chapter three.

Jackson's illness caused her to revise the Gothic tradition. Evidence of Jackson's disorder becomes apparent in repeated motifs and themes in her fiction. One of the most frequently noted characteristics of Jackson's fiction

is her interest in old houses and other Gothic elements. Lenemaja Friedman and other critics have attributed Jackson's interest in houses to a tendency inherited from her architect great-great-grandfather Samuel Bugbee and grandfather Maxwell G. Bugbee (Friedman 17). Of course, this had validity, particularly since Jackson spent her early years in San Francisco and must have grown up knowing that her locally famous forefathers had designed various landmarks of the city. An equally logical explanation, however, is the agoraphobe's association with houses as familiar places providing security. Jackson obviously dwells on her houses' protective features in several short stories and novels such as The Sundial and We Have Always Lived in the Castle and does not use the houses in a typical Gothic fashion to produce strange or fear-provoking effects. Jackson extends the prisoner motif of Gothic literature to portray modern women as victims of society. Chapter four considers the manner in which Jackson revised the Gothic form, not only allowing Gothic-style houses to serve as protective devices, but also portraying modern female victims in marriage and society in general.

Although Jackson did not employ Gothic features to produce anxiety, she devised new methods of creating fear. Several contemporary horror fiction writers such as Stephen King credit Jackson with inaugurating a new genre which focuses on horror. Although chilling stories have been a part of American fiction since Charles Brockden Brown, many

of Jackson's stories seem to focus on fear itself. Jackson utilized many traditional conventions such as the ballad for evoking fear, but she may have been reflecting her own panic attacks in some of her most disquieting works which involve a terror suggestive of that suffered by the agoraphobe. These include works that suggest "depersonalization," a near catatonic state in which subjects lose their own self consciousness as fear interrupts the thinking processes. It serves as the body's protective device against unbearable fear and is accompanied by a loss of reality called "derealization" by psychologists. The obscurity of stories such as "A Visit," "The Rock," and "The Tooth" is explainable in terms of depersonalization and derealization, as discussed in chapter five.

Jackson's projection of her emotional disturbance into her fiction also subverts the typical modern theme of alienation. In addition to her concerns for racial equality obvious in some of her editorials written at Syracuse and in such fiction works as "After You, My Dear Alphonse" (1943), Jackson often employed alienation themes as a result of her interest in gender equality. In fact, she did always champion the underdog, at times employing a scapegoat theme to emphasize the dilemma. Jackson reverses the typical modernist attitude toward cities, by depicting small communities as alienating and cities as benevolent. As a victim of agoraphobia, she was keenly aware of the suggestion of threat when an individual faces any opposing

group. The anxiety is aggravated by her own illness and experiences. Much of Jackson's short fiction portrays individuals alienated by members of a small community. Included in this category are works such as "The Lottery" and "The Summer People." Other stories such as "Flower Garden," "Home," and "Stranger in Town" discussed in chapter six involve the anxiety produced in the mind of individuals facing typical closed communities' attitudes toward newcomers who bring a threat of change. Jackson, who always perceived herself as different and victimized, is at her best when portraying these individuals. This attitude enabled her to accurately portray society's victims.

Notes

¹ From a clipped newspaper article from the North Bennington Banner entitled "Jackson Tells Honors Class Writing Points." The article is in the Jackson Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

² Shoshana Felman's article, "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy" and Phyllis Chesler's Women and Madness have been helpful in this study. Neither mentions Shirley Jackson but each emphasizes emphasizes the manner in which women have typically been associated with madness in our society. Likewise, "the ethnic of mental health is

masculine in our culture" (Chesler 69).

CHAPTER ONE

AGORAPHOBIA

Increased understanding of agoraphobia in the 1970s and 1980s enabled psychologists to define the symptoms, the possible causes, and the methods of treatment more clearly than they had been able to previously. The majority of researchers generally believes the causes of the disorder are environmental and not genetic; however, disagreement still exists among psychologists, which attests to the need for further research. More open discussion with victims has presented a clearer perspective of their emotional and physical experiences during an attack, which helped psychologists discover similar circumstances in victims' lives prior to attack. The victim's emotional stability before the onset of agoraphobia causes the most disagreement among researchers. Many believe that sufferers have a history of psychological instability, others believe that even the most emotionally stable are possible candidates for the disorder, but nearly all agree that agoraphobia sufferers either constantly lead highly stressful lives or are temporarily experiencing great anxiety at the time of their first attacks. These findings help psychologists administer treatment which incorporates patients' improved understanding of their disorders along with behavioral training.

Agoraphobia is often misunderstood. The word "agoraphobia" derives from the Greek words "agora," an open space that served as a market place or meeting ground for various activities in ancient Greek cities, and "phobia," an abnormal fear. Although studying the biographies of ancient persons reveals symptoms of the malady, the name itself was not used until 1871 by C. Westphal, a German psychiatrist. His use of Greek roots may have increased misunderstanding about the disease itself since, literally translated, the word means fear of open or public spaces. More accurately, the disease is a fear of not being able to escape quickly from any unfamiliar situation to the security of familiar surroundings. Psychologist J. Christopher Clarke stresses that a phobia is a fear attached to objects and situations that the victims' logic tells them are not dangerous, yet they cannot control their need to escape it (72). In the case of agoraphobes, their fear draws them to familiar, safe surroundings.

The fear which draws the agoraphobe to safety takes many forms, but it is always intense. In observing a group of patients, Sigmund Freud first recorded a state of panic caused by extreme fear. He determined that what "they actually fear is a repetition of such an attack under those special conditions in which they believe they cannot escape" (136). Most psychologists now agree and emphasize the disorder's "incapacitating" effects which derive from the victim's "fear of fear" (Weekes 8; Goldstein and Chambless,

"A Reanalysis of Agoraphobia" 48). The most common fears recorded in Clair Weekes' 1976 study include fear of being in crowded places, of traveling, of collapsing, fainting, panicking, and/or of feeling paralyzed in the street. Less frequent fears include being alone, dying, giving birth, suffering a physical illness, going mad, being persistently frightened, losing a loved one, harming others, losing confidence, being depressed, having accidents, feeling insecure and blushing (11). Shirley Jackson's journal writings, her fiction, testimony of family members and friends, and her doctors all indicate that the author suffered from many of these fears throughout most of her life. Specific examples from the author's published and unpublished works appear throughout this study.

Although the time of initial attack varies, agoraphobic episodes usually peak at the fifteen-to-twenty or at the thirty-to-forty year range (Goldstein and Chambless 3). Victims who experience a first agoraphobic attack at the age of thirty or later have often experienced some type of emotional breakdown or near breakdown years earlier although it may have gone unnoticed. Even friends and family members may not have been aware of the previous difficulty since victims of emotional disorders become adept at masking feelings and avoiding stressful situations. Jackson's private diaries indicate she probably had experienced anxiety attacks as early as her first year of college, but like many other agoraphobes, she discreetly masked her

insecurities until late in her life when they became an insurmountable barrier.

Most psychologists believe that agoraphobic symptoms begin as a result of an anxiety attack. The attack often involves a perceived physical dysfunction, either cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, or respiratory. At the onset, victims believe they are suffering a heart attack. Some worry that they cannot control bodily functions, thus another reason to remain at home. Victims' original attacks may have resulted from a simple form of hypoglycemia caused by skipping meals or from extreme physical or emotional stress. A sudden fright may cause hyperventilation, which creates a fall in blood carbon dioxide, sometimes resulting in dizziness or even fainting (Clarke 14). In a 15 November 1961 letter to her parents Jackson described her own physical symptoms of colitis that were producing anxiety:

the colitis induces a sudden attack of nausea, which is all right; that is what it's supposed to do. but the sudden nausea causes an abrupt drop in blood pressure of perhaps twenty degrees, which is exactly like getting kicked in the stomach, and i all but pass out; i get dizzy and sick and staggy and shaking, and of course very scared.

1

The stress can develop from family conflicts or even the death of a relative or close friend. Victims are so frightened by the original panic attack that they become

sensitized, on edge, or nervous for hours and sometimes days (Clark 14). Later they begin to avoid similar situations. For agoraphobes, this means a withdrawal from nearly all social behavior and may lead to feelings of inferiority, lack of self worth, and depression. Noted psychologist Richard Hallam suggests the way a single anxiety attack increases anxiety. A slight tremor may cause a person to drop something. The next time he is holding that object, fear of repeating the act creates anxiety (46).

Victims tell surprisingly similar stories regarding first attacks. Ruth Hurst Vose, a busy British journalist on a lecture tour in the United States, first noticed severe stomach pains which turned into such an anxiety attack that she feared having to cancel her tour. Although she completed the tour, months later she became so ill that she had to quit her job and eventually spent years unable to leave her house (Vose 15-18). Although my study indicates Jackson suffered her initial agoraphobic attack years earlier, she perhaps suffered an experience similar to Vose's in 1951 when she traveled to Northampton to interview with Mary Ellen Chase for a teaching position at Smith College and fainted during the interview (Friedman 30). Although Jackson attributed her fainting to being pregnant and having a cocktail for lunch, underlying fears of committing herself to teaching may have increased her anxiety. Bennington College offered her a position several times, but she refused even though she enjoyed guest

lecturing at Bread Loaf and other writing conferences. Her refusal to take a permanent position may only mean that she did not want to take the time from her writing; however, it may also show that while she could fortify herself against the fear of speaking before groups on occasion, she could not face it daily.

Although psychologists agree that as a result of a single, initial attack, an agoraphobe's fear increases and may become a full-fledged phobia, they disagree about the victim's pre-incident state. An agoraphobe herself, Ruth Vose says:

Agoraphobia is a symptom of underlying physical and emotional problems, and these disorders can manifest themselves in many other ways before finally appearing in their most vicious form as agoraphobia. (88)

Like Vose, Hallam and Clarke believe certain characteristics exist within the potential anxiety sufferer. Hallam believes victims suffer from chronic anxiety as a result of perceived loneliness or inferiority (139). Like Hallam and Vose, J. Christopher Clarke also believes agoraphobia develops because of a pre-existing state before an initial panic attack; however, he thinks everyone has the same potential for developing the disorder. Clarke says that about the time children acquire mobility, they also acquire a fear of separation from their parents, a genetic safety factor also found in monkeys and apes. Most individuals

overcome this fear, but those who have too much protection or too many frightening experiences develop phobias which remain subconscious until an initial panic attack causes them to develop a debilitating illness (28).

Unlike Hallam, Clarke, and Vose, British psychologist Clair Weekes does not believe deep-seated emotional disorders cause the attacks; instead, she thinks a single incident which occurs during a time of highly emotional or physical stress can cause anyone to develop a phobia. Weekes says ninety-five per cent of her patients can identify the cause of their condition and pinpoint the time of the original attack (28). Most common causes are physical illness or stress brought about from overwork or difficult personal relationships. She calls the condition "sensitization" and describes it as a "state of heightened response" (18). The victim's emotional and nervous responses are magnified and immediate; thus, the effect of the anxiety attack is increased more from the victim's condition at the time than from whatever stimulus created the incident itself.

All researchers agree that after a series of attacks, the victim begins to avoid situations or places where attacks may occur (Grunhaus 612). Psychologists refer to this step as avoidance. For agoraphobics, staying at home becomes the method of coping with the anxiety attacks. Hallam believes this self identification of a disorder causes a chain reaction and increases the fear by

"anticipatory anxiety" (134). Victims tend to brood over possible situations, and their concern magnifies to include improbable ones as well as common ones. Staying at home creates an unnatural life style that upsets not only the victims' routines but also those of their families and friends. This situation probably accounts for the higher rate of women agoraphobes. In England and Australia, where fewer women work outside the home, a higher proportion of agoraphobes exists than in the United States.

Whenever the victim cannot avoid the anxiety situation, another of the body's protective devices assumes control. This phenomenon, which psychologists refer to as depersonalization, is best described as a loss of thought and feeling, a numbness. The individual feels nothing and believes himself not in control of speech or actions, yet his body reacts mechanically, as if operating on automatic pilot (Hallam 21-2). Victims describe such episodes as being detached, as if they are at a distance, watching themselves perform (Hallam 65). In his study of agoraphobic patients, M. Roth discovered that his patients reported unusual effects of a depersonalization state: forty per cent reported a deja vu experience and perceptual disorders of smell or vision; sixty per cent reported acute panic and fears of impending death (Mathews 11). When agoraphobes are unable to avoid or escape situations presenting extreme anxiety, depersonalization allows them to function in such a way that observers may not notice their dilemma. In a

research study involving patients with various phobias, scientists Roth, Garside, and Gurney found that twenty-one percent reported depersonalization as a beginning stage of deep-seated panic anxiety (qtd. in Golstein and Chambless 67). The most dramatic result of depersonalization is the effect on the minds of the victims. Victims perceive themselves as different and fear they are becoming insane (Garbowsky 120), a fear obvious in Jackson's private journals and fiction.

By avoidance and depersonalization, agoraphobic victims tend to enlarge their fears. Hallam explains the dilemma through his hypothetical model of the phobic patient. Individuals who suffer from chronic anxiety and depression because of fears and loneliness encounter conflict situations and, because of their hysterical style of dealing with stress, are unable to reason a logical cause. Instead, they focus on anxiety symptoms which they perceive as catastrophic, a position which increases their fears. From this point, they attempt to avoid similar situations; therefore, a phobia develops (139). Avoidance creates an unnatural social life which offers victims nothing except more time to worry and enlarge their fears. The price of this worry is added emotional stress, long-term erosion of confidence, and a loss of enjoyment of activities (Clarke 74). As agoraphobia enlarges to a full-blown disorder, the victim suffers depression, sleep terrors, and periods of depersonalization. Many victims report days when they

cannot leave the safe familiarity of their bedrooms, a situation that Jackson faced during the worst periods of her illness in 1962 and 1963.

Once agoraphobia is established, victims have good days and bad. Physical health, the weather, and the stress and conflict of their personal lives all contribute to their emotional health. An illness as minor as influenza might initiate a major panic attack linked with an agoraphobe's fear of death, yet psychologists have recorded cases of agoraphobes suffering severe burns or broken bones and not experiencing panic attacks (Clarke 18). Likewise, many agoraphobes tend to be less despondent on clear, sunny days, yet others remain in their homes on clear, sunny days or never leave without dark glasses. These incongruities suggest a need for further study.

Researchers have often attempted to determine physical causes of the disorder. Determinants such as chemicals in the blood, sensitivity of receptors to hormonal stimulation, balance disorders, and prolapse of the mitral valve of the heart have all failed to cause anxiety attacks (Hallam 50). Likewise, scientists have not isolated a genetic influence on agoraphobia (Mathews 33). However, in a study using the Eysenck Personality Inventory, researchers found agoraphobics registered high levels of both general anxiety and involuntary action and a slow rate of habituation (Mathews 34). M. H. Lader and A. M. Mathews suggest that if, as a result of this psychophysiological state, there is

insufficient time for one stimulus to die away before another stimulus arrives, a panic attack will result (380). These studies are the only ones to date which register significant indication of the involvement of biological factors in agoraphobia. Many more studies suggest emotional causes.

Many psychologists assume a correlation between agoraphobes' high anxiety levels and their relationships with parents, particularly mothers. Although it is difficult to prove,² they believe overlyprotective and/or highly critical mothers may be common causes of agoraphobia (Goldstein and Chambless, Garbowsky, Mathews, Tearnan, Telch and Keefe). In 1956, W. I. Tucker discovered an excess of parental criticism and protection and a lack of genuine love in the majority of his one hundred phobic patients (qtd. in Parker 555). The mother's criticism creates a poor relationship between her and the child, resulting in "a painful ambivalence toward the mother" (Buglass 85), an apt description of Jackson's attitude toward her mother.

Too much emphasis on protection may likewise create ambivalence rather than love, and it may also promote the "dependence on others and the tendency to use avoidance as a method of coping with difficulty" (Mathews, Gelder, and Johnston 35), characteristics common to agoraphobia. The consensus is that children growing up in such environments often feel incapable of coping with many of life's situations. Other psychologists argue that in families

involving poor relationships, interpersonal skills are not properly developed, which may lead to avoidance of interpersonal confrontation and denial of conflict. From early experiences with her mother, Jackson developed the habit of graciously denying herself to avoid open confrontation. The avoidance created added stress and depression.

Marriage is another familial relationship often linked with agoraphobia in women. Traditional marriage customs place women in subservient roles which bind them to their houses. Sociologist Jessie Bernard believes marriage produces emotional stress for women, and "traditional marriage makes women sick--both physically and mentally" (qtd. in Seidenberg and DeCrow 9). Bernard studies cases of outgoing, dynamic women who hold positions of authority and yet become agoraphobic when they marry. In their combined study, Women Who Marry Houses, Robert Seidenberg and Karen DeCrow compare survey results of married women who have become more depressed, suffered more nervous breakdowns, had more feelings of inadequacy, and experienced poorer physical health than single women. One of the most common emotional disorders of married women is agoraphobia. The typical agoraphobe is a married woman who does not work outside the home but would like to, at least before ever suffering an anxiety attack. Afterward, she may cope by simply remaining home, a situation which compounds the problem. As she allows other members of the family to conduct outside

business for her (as Jackson did), her fear intensifies, and she becomes increasingly reluctant to leave her house.

Psychologists also stress that some marriages thrive on dependence. Dominant husbands often require subservient wives, who are "unassertive, lacking in social skills and helpless unless attached to a strong partner" (Goldstein and Chambliss 138). If, through education or association with other, more assertive women, the previously submissive women become more aggressive themselves, the marriages often fail. Although Jackson seemed anything but subservient and unassertive at the time of her marriage to Stanley Hyman, earlier insecurities from her adolescent and early college years began to resurface when Hyman obtained a position with The New Republic. Meanwhile, she struggled from one clerical position to another even though she was as talented and educated as Hyman. Her early successes in publishing fiction and the arrival of their first child within two years of their marriage removed her permanently from the workforce. Both her early professional struggles and motherhood may have made Jackson less assertive and more subservient to her husband, a role she continued until her death. The struggles caused her to doubt her ability, and motherhood presented her with an entirely new set of duties.

As mentioned earlier, treatment for agoraphobia has progressed significantly since Jackson's death in 1965. Drugs such as anxiolytic drugs, beta-adrenergic blocking, and tricyclic antidepressants are commonly used today in the

treatment of agoraphobia; however, research indicates that such drugs offer only temporary relief, not a cure (Mathews, Gelder, and Johnston 50-55). Jackson's psychiatrist James Toolan prescribed no drugs. Finding her an excellent psychiatric patient who was honest and willing to talk, he said, "She was able to handle it without medication" (Oppenheimer 253). Although Toolan prescribed no medication, Jackson did consume alcohol daily, a means many agoraphobes use to cope with their fears, and she continued to take sleeping pills prescribed by her family doctor. Like many prescription drugs, alcohol provides only a temporary relief, but that may be enough to help the agoraphobe recover since even temporary relief often allows the victim to continue a normal life style. This may be one reason for fewer reported agoraphobes among males. Since males are more apt to have to continue working and, therefore, must be able to leave their houses, many fortify themselves through the use of alcohol. At least one research study, by J. S. Mullaney and C. J. Trippet, supports the theory that one reason for fewer reported agoraphobia cases among males is their tendency to cover their fear with substance abuse (560). Oppenheimer suggests that Jackson's heavy drug and alcohol use increased her anxieties, but consumption of the drugs may also have helped relieve the stress and allowed her to hide her fears.

Improved methods of treatment for agoraphobia focus on behavior modification techniques. Clarke suggests a

three-stage treatment which requires that patients learn about their disorder, learn anxiety/stress management, and undertake a long-term program of daily exposure therapy (61-2). Many psychologists use such a treatment. Ironically, even before wide use or knowledge of these modernized methods, Jackson did employ many of them. She read a great deal about emotional disorders while writing The Bird's Nest, based on Dr. Morton Prince's case study of a schizophrenic. She became an active and willing participant in behavior therapy. She began practicing exposure therapy soon after visiting Dr. Toolan in February 1963, making daily trips to the post office and the market, gradually extending the circumference of her outings; she often took her daughter Joanne with her for the added security so important to agoraphobes (Oppenheimer 256). Her worst year was 1963, the year of her complete breakdown. Long before her death on 8 August 1965, she had recovered enough to resume a more normal lifestyle, even lecturing for some writing conferences.

In an anthology published after her death, Stanley Hyman said that Jackson's fiction represented the fragmented times in which she lived. Her themes of alienation and anxiety and her fight for equality certainly reflect the troubled times. If an illness can symbolize an era, then agoraphobia seems appropriate for the troubled twentieth century, with its wars, its women attempting to break social barriers, and its technology which forces rapid change. An

emotional disorder caused by and certainly aggravated by anxiety and stress, agoraphobia emphasizes and enlarges individuals' deepest fears, at times even stripping their conscious thought. These characteristics make agoraphobia particularly representative of the twentieth century. However, the same progress which helped create such a world also provides treatment for its casualties. Relief comes in the form of knowledge and understanding of the psychological disorders themselves and of their possible causes. Modern behaviorial conditioning helps agoraphobes conquer stress and gradually face situations and places they fear. With support from friends and family members and through understanding extended behaviorial conditioning, agoraphobes can lead nearly normal lives. Earlier development of this treatment might have provided the world more of Jackson's genius, and yet without the disorder, her fiction might have been less powerful, for much of its intensity evolves from the fearful world of the agoraphobe.

Notes

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, this and all subsequent entries from Shirley Jackson's unpublished works including diaries, journals, poems, and letters are taken from The Papers of Shirley Jackson, Manuscript Division, Library of

Congress, Washington, D. C. They appear as the author wrote them. In letters and journal entries, the author frequently used the lower case in reference to herself and for beginning sentences.

² Studies by Parker (1979); Snaith (1968); Solyom, Silberfeld, and Solyom (1976) have failed to determine that either lack of parental concern or overprotective mothers are more apt to produce agoraphobic offspring.

CHAPTER TWO
BECOMING SHIRLEY JACKSON

Even as a child Shirley Jackson was emotionally troubled. As an adult she became a dual personality; friends and family members found her an outgoing, excellent hostess and loving friend and mother, yet inwardly she harbored the insecurity and fears of her youth. In her early teens, her voracious reading and keen intelligence thrust her far beyond other high school girls, marking her as different, a terrifying label for an emotionally insecure adolescent. She learned early to mask subjective doubts and fears, disclosing them only in a diary which compensated for her lack of close friends and offered a means of escape from a well-meaning, yet critical mother. As her writing talent developed, her personal phobias filtered into her fiction as well as her private diaries. In her fiction she spoke out assertively against social injustices which she encountered, but at the same time she recorded unspeakable fears. Long after she had many close friendships, a marriage, and a large, loving family, writing continued to offer a way of expelling fears and insecurities, which she dared not disclose orally. The stress of hiding inner fears caused physical and emotional deterioration resulting in Jackson's breakdown in the 1960s.

Born into a patriarchal society which often values

women according to their physical beauty, Shirley Jackson developed a low self-esteem early. Large and fair with little interest in physical appearance, she resembled and interacted with her father Leslie Jackson more than with her attractive, fashion-conscious and social climbing mother, Geraldine Bugbee Jackson. Mrs. Jackson loved her daughter deeply yet may have contributed to her daughter's anxieties through a life-long barrage of advice geared toward molding Jackson into a more physically attractive and socially conscious person. Thus Jackson's relationship with her mother was a love-hate one typical of other aspects of the author's life.

The descendent of a prominent San Francisco family of architects, Geraldine Bugbee Jackson desired a social, country club existence. On 15 March 1916, when she married Leslie Jackson, a rising young businessman, the two shared dreams of "ascending the social and economic ladder" (Oppenheimer 13). Their carefully planned path to riches was soon interrupted, however, by the birth of their daughter Shirley on 16 December 1916, nine months and one day after their marriage. If she were forced to have a child at all, Mrs. Jackson wanted a beautiful and easily manageable daughter, one who would accommodate her future dreams. Jackson was neither beautiful nor easily managed.

When the author was an adolescent, Mrs. Jackson informed her daughter that she was the "result of an unsuccessful abortion" (Oppenheimer 14). This knowledge

must certainly have created an even wider breach in their already troubled relationship and must have added yet another reason for Jackson's emotional instability. Mrs. Jackson's attempts to mold her daughter into a replica of her own fantasies produced neither beauty nor poise, but she never stopped trying. Early in her life, Jackson began to tire of her mother's interference. In a diary entry of 11 January 1932, Jackson wrote, "Mother has been so cross all day there's no standing her, and she makes me want to cry, always jumping in whatever I do. I wish I could go away somewhere."¹ Three years later, in an 18 November 1935 diary entry, the author notes that her mother has been snooping through her desk and discovered some of her stories, "Mother says, 'no sexy stories.' I shall have to lock my desk. I would like some privacy." Probably as a result of this lack of privacy, Jackson destroyed many of her early works and diaries before going away to college.

Although she tended to offer advice in nearly every aspect of the author's life, Mrs. Jackson seemed most concerned with Jackson's physical appearance. Even as late as 1962, upon the release of We Have Always Lived in the Castle, when the author received one of her most favorable reviews in Time, Mrs. Jackson wrote her daughter, not to congratulate her on her skills or success, but, as usual, to criticize her appearance:

Why oh why do you allow the magazines to print such awful pictures of you? . . . If you don't

care what you look like or care about your appearance why don't you do something about it for your children's sake and your husband's? I do not know if the book review is good or not--and I have been so sad all morning about what you have allowed yourself to look like. (qtd. in Oppenheimer 246)

Mrs. Jackson's overemphasis on physical appearance undoubtedly contributed to Jackson's feelings of inferiority and lack of ease. In fact, it must have deflated her ego considerably. While she seldom openly rebelled against her mother's nagging, Jackson's adult disregard for make up, fashion, and diet may have developed from an inner need to defy authority. Her lack of attention to personal grooming created a less attractive appearance which in turn reduced her self confidence and added yet another way in which Jackson differed from those around her. All her life she feared being different. Psychologists who believe agoraphobes usually have overly critical or overly protective mothers may discover a classic example in Mrs. Jackson.

On the other hand, Jackson seemed to genuinely love her mother though they had little in common. On at least one occasion, she indicated that she missed her mother. On 3 February 1933, she wrote in her diary, "Gee, mother left, and am I miserable!" Two weeks later, on February 17, she seemed happy to have received a letter from her mother. In

the busy years of career and children, Jackson maintained the outward appearance of a dutiful daughter, routinely writing lengthy, chatty letters to her parents in retirement in California and sending generous gifts on every special occasion. If the letters between Jackson and her mother seem less loving than those between the author and her father, it is probably due simply to the fact that he was a better letter writer. On one rare occasion Jackson criticized her mother in writing. Undated, but obviously in response to her mother's 1962 letter regarding the unflattering Time photograph, Jackson's letter to her mother registers hurt, anger, and obvious depression:

i received your unpleasant letter last night when i got back from new york, and it upset me considerably, as you no doubt intended.

I wish you would stop telling me that my husband and children are ashamed of me. if they are, they have concealed it very skillfully; perhaps they do not believe that personal appearance is the most important thing in the world.

Looking at Jackson's previous correspondence, this response seems startling and unexpected. Readers are tempted to blame it on the author's mental state at the time of writing, yet Jackson's biographer maintains that Jackson made her attitude toward her mother obvious to her own children and attempted to show them love in the ways she believed she had been denied. In an interview with

Oppenheimer, Jackson's oldest daughter Joanne speaks of her mother's attitude about her grandmother:

She made me feel her mother hated her and feared her and wished her ill--that she would go through her things to see if she could manipulate circumstances so that Shirley would look bad, feel bad, or be bad. That's the message I got.

(231)

It matters little whether the author openly opposed her mother or secretly harbored antagonism. The point is that Geraldine Jackson was overly critical, thereby increasing Jackson's insecurity through constant persistence.

Jackson also suffered from extreme mood swings in her teens. Although many adolescents exhibit erratic behavior, Jackson's sudden shifts overnight from depression to euphoria with no obvious explanation also foreshadowed her later emotional disturbances. While still living in San Francisco and possessing a single close friend, Dorothy Ayers, Jackson began a diary which recorded her first love, a worship-from-afar romance, the type experienced by many shy, unpopular teens. The object of her attention was Bud Young, an accomplished athlete and student, the son of one of Jackson's favorite teachers. The 1932 diary first mentions Bud on February 16. By July, she is pouring out romantic notions of an imagined shared love with Bud. On November 19, she writes, "Oh Bud, how could you? Dear--to see you again was once my only desire--now--oh, please,

please, please don't love Dot--She doesn't love you. . . " Overly dramatic, Jackson had already begun what was to become habitual for her, either inserting fiction into her own life or making herself a part of her fiction. This practice increases the difficulty of attempting to determine Jackson's own thoughts even in her journals, yet it is obvious that the writer is extremely depressed. Four days later, she writes:

Good morning, Bud. I am happy now--I have seen you--once, and still I am happy. Dot has seen you--and still I'm happy.

By November 30, she is pouring out her love again, the November 19 note forgotten, but on December 1, she writes, "Tonight you made me cry--not for the first time, but, I hope, for the last." The attitude changes may mean little since the love existed solely in Jackson's mind and could be termed a normal teenage crush, yet the sudden, extreme mood swings suggest Jackson's emotional instability, a logical prerequisite for agoraphobia.

The Jackson family move from California to Rochester, New York in 1933 may have increased the author's social anxieties. Many seventeen-year-olds find a transfer from one high school to another a difficult experience. A girl with Jackson's social doubts must have found it traumatic. Her attitude toward the move again mirrors the mood swings. In a 2 June 1933 journal entry, she expresses eagerness, "Off with the old--Come on N.Y., I'm ready for yuh!" During

the trip, a cruise through the Panama Canal, she is elated, but by 2 September 1933, she writes, "Damn Mimi [her live-in grandmother] and Rochester." By September 7, she writes, "How I hate this town." On October 6, the familiar deep depression has descended: "Diary--I've got it again, so bad, and I'm so afraid--partly of that damned inferiority complex." Writing again offered an outlet for loneliness and emotional insecurity as Jackson faced the new surroundings in Rochester amid extreme depression and abnormal fears. Although Jackson found her final year of high school difficult, she entered Rochester University with enthusiasm in the fall, moving into the dorm on 17 September 1934, excited about a new life.

Although Jackson happily entered a new phase of her life, the old depression unfortunately returned. University life offered Jackson friends with shared interests and abilities. Her fun-loving and outgoing personality surfaced, and journal entries indicate she began formulating her own opinions and developing an inward strength. But by February 1935, the old insecurity had resurfaced. On 11 February 1935, she wrote, "Oh, dear God, please don't let---recapture their influence over me until I straighten things out," and on February 14, "Why does Life seem calculated to administer a deadening shock to each new jubliance?"

A February 26 entry foreshadows the agoraphobia that would handicap the author in later life, "Studied for

shorthand, but I turned coward and didn't go." As the school year progresses, Jackson's handwriting becomes nearly illegible, her entries less frequent, the diary finally limited to comments about depression and skipping classes, a marked change from those of the enthusiastic student who began in September. Jackson remained at Rochester to complete that year and even a second, but academic failure was inevitable. Although outwardly she had appeared uninterested, the failure devastated her. Years later her psychiatrist Dr. James Toolan determined that she had probably suffered a minor breakdown after leaving Rochester University (Oppenheimer 45).

Later at Syracuse University Jackson described the loneliness of the Rochester years:

i used to think that no one had ever been so lonely as i was. . . .i thought i was insane and i would write about how the only sane people are the ones who are condemned as mad and how the whole world is cruel and foolish and afraid of people who are different. then i went to college and i had a friend and she was kind to me and together we were happy. she introduced me to a man who didn't laugh at me because i was ugly and i fell in love with him and tried to kill myself. (qtd. in Oppenheimer 40)

Loneliness, insanity, cruelty, and being different are all subjects Jackson later developed as a popular writer, but

within her 1937 journal, they reflect only her personal, troubled thoughts. Also at Syracuse, Jackson wrote "Janice," a short story about a girl who attempts suicide and tries to tell people about it, but no one listens.² Both in her journals and in the essays and stories she submitted for class assignments, the inner turmoil Jackson suffered during and soon after the years at Rochester seems apparent.

When she returned to school at Syracuse, writing led Jackson to Stanley Hyman, the future husband who provided literary and emotional support but ironically may have been a contributing force in her ultimate physical and emotional breakdown. Intrigued by one of her short stories which appeared in the school journal, Hyman arranged to meet her, and Jackson finally made a friend equal in both intellect and literary talent. Hyman introduced the author to a more socially active lifestyle. An extrovert who surrounded himself with writers who shared his literary interests, Hyman enjoyed entertaining characterized by drinking and loud discussions that lasted late into the night. Their friendship enhanced Jackson's writing, for he became a devoted fan who guided her reading and writing, introducing her to the works of many modern authors and offering advice about her fiction. Hyman's influence made her a better student and a better writer. He also introduced Jackson to his wide circle of friends, who were a part of a dynamic literary front of the 1940s and 50s when the author herself

became popular.

Their relationship further reveals Jackson's altering moods. Although the couple experienced normal disagreements, Hyman's letters portray a man certain of his love but confused by Jackson's erratic behavior. Separated during the summers when each returned home, the couple exchanged torrid, yet wildly satiric love letters that reflect their literary finesse. Hyman's letters to Jackson consistently express his love: "i love you as much or more than i have ever loved you before, and miss you more than even the naming of my two pillows shirley will remedy." ³ His only concern is their families' disapproval and Jackson's wavering. His Jewish parents wanted him to marry a Jewish girl, and Mrs. Jackson thought her daughter should marry someone of higher social and economic standing. In a 1938 letter to Jackson, dated only Friday night, Hyman expresses his fears that "geraldine has spirited you off to hawaii or honolulu or wherever the hell it is and that these maternal visits have born fruit and that you have gone off and married michael." In the same letter, he repeatedly assures Jackson of his love, yet he expresses confusion at her changing attitude:

this time you are not kidding. you do not love me
i have no idea why you don't, but then i never
had any idea why you did. your letter is straight
and fine and makes you seem perilously close to
the greatest person in the world. and you're not

my mistress any more, whatever the hell that means. i am not so sure that you ever were, although you always nearly were. of course i love you very much.

Confused by her inconsistent response and behavior, Hyman, nevertheless, continues expressing only his love.

In contrast, Jackson's letters to him and journal entries concerning him fluctuate between feeling powerful, capable of controlling him, to doubting his love and fearing him. She fears losing her own recently won identity if she allows herself involvement with Hyman. In her journal on 22 March [1938], she writes, "He is absolutely where I want him. I am proud, and completely powerful and still afraid. He frightens me with this feeling that he can break me mentally if he chooses."⁴ Even though she often registers confidence of his love, equally often she writes about quarrels or expresses a fear of losing him. In an undated but later entry from the 1937-38 journal, she writes: "He'll come back dear god . . . he wouldn't stay away,--not knowing how much I want him." Perhaps the two were only experiencing normal difficulties, yet Jackson frequently reveals doubt. In the fall of 1937, the author writes in her journal to a friend named Philip:

I've left him, of course . . . Every time I've left him (or every time he's left me, for that matter!) I've had to come back to him because I didn't have the courage to stay away. This time I

have. I've got to. . . I don't like being unhappy, but then, too, I don't like being treated like something on a leash.

Having just escaped the critical eye of her mother, Jackson may have been reluctant to enter a relationship with yet another critic. However, the vacillation corresponds with Jackson's inconsistent behavior throughout her life and seems more indicative of her emotional instability than of her feelings toward Hyman. Yet either momentarily sure of her love or perhaps complying with the custom of her era which viewed marriage as the proper goal for young women, Jackson wed Hyman in May 1940, soon after their graduation from Syracuse.

Marriage altered their roles significantly and created new anxieties for Jackson which increased during the remainder of her life. Before graduation both had worked equally in establishing and publishing The Spectre, a student publication at Syracuse, and soon after their marriage, Hyman began work as an editorial assistant for The New Republic. Jackson, on the other hand, was forced to take various clerical jobs while she continued to write. Jackson's biographer, Judy Oppenheimer, says the author did not try to hide her jealousy regarding Hyman's superior job. The birth of their first child, Laurence, in October 1942, altered Jackson's life even more dramatically. For the first time in her life, she was sentenced to staying at home, and the Jackson-Hyman relationship that had operated

as a relatively equal partnership at Syracuse was no longer equal. Jackson appeared to adapt well to both child rearing and cooking; however, in her autobiographical depiction of family life, the author always humorously discredited herself. Although witty, these self recriminations expressed her fears of inadequacy.

The marriage lasted twenty-six years and appeared relatively happy; perhaps Jackson needed a partner she could lean on. The Goldstein and Chambliss study discussed in chapter one contends that sometimes unassertive women lacking social skills attach themselves to dominant men in an attempt to compensate for their own inadequacies. Shirley Jackson could be and was often powerful in her own right in spite of her hidden fears and insecurity, but Stanley Hyman was also a masterful figure. Taissa Kellman, a friend visiting their New York apartment in the early 1940s, described him as "Dictating, working, telling everyone what to do. He was a terrible tyrant--but marvelous" (qtd. in Oppenheimer 97). Hyman's only contribution to housekeeping was to implement a strict schedule which demanded cocktails at five and dinner at six, an arrangement certain to have added stress in a family that included a career mother, four children, multiple animals, and frequent guests.

Jackson's personal diaries and journals repeatedly display doubts about their marriage. In a journal dated only 1942 and written before the birth of their first child,

Laurence, Jackson conveys her unhappiness:

doesn't a man ever get ashamed to think that the only way he can look like a man before his wife is to say cruel things to her until she cries--How can I tell him that I don't think he's any bigger because he makes me miserable?

Jackson's journals question Hyman's fidelity as well as his love. In the author's manuscripts an undated note appears on a wrinkled page of yellow paper, of the type Jackson used when writing drafts and journals. It discusses an affair between Hyman and Joan Skinner and says, "that although they were passionately in love with one another her [Joan's] pity for shirley prevented her from letting stanley go through with the divorce." Is this another fiction? Jackson often used the names of her family members in her stories. Is she writing about a situation she knows exists? Her fiction often closely parallels events in her own family life. Or is it a form of therapy in which she writes about a problem in an attempt to resolve it? Or is it merely a product of the author's deteriorating emotional state? Whether it was fiction or the author's personal belief matters little since, by this time, her fiction and personal thoughts seem interwoven. Even if the event were a product of Jackson's imagination, the note suggests her doubts about their marriage and a lack of confidence in her own ability to retain Hyman's love.

Their marriage helped Jackson make many new friends,

have children whom she showered with love and generosity, and establish a profitable career, but these blessings brought with them a physically exhausting lifestyle, the demands of which created a highly stressful environment. Jackson's traditional values forced her to work hard at fulfilling the role of wife and mother. She was still her mother's little girl trying hard to be normal and win approval. During the years when her children were young, however, she also published an astonishing number and variety of articles and fiction, a near superhuman accomplishment which forced the young mother/writer to keep up a grueling schedule which endangered her physical health and added ever increasing stress to her already troubled psyche.

Even though Jackson wanted to be a successful writer, she may have believed she had to write to provide financially for the growing family. Although Stanley Hyman had been the first of the couple to obtain a job and was employed as a professor at Bennington for several years, his writing career was never lucrative.⁵ Jackson, therefore, felt obligated to produce salable works on a regular basis. Writing a few stories may provide catharsis for a housewife, but having to sell at least one story per month to pay the bills is quite another matter. In a typewritten journal entry dated only December 3, Jackson indicates the stress:

i am oddly self-conscious this morning because
stanley is at home and there is literally no

telling him what i am doing. i think he would regard me as a criminal waster of time, and self-indulgent besides i feel i am cheating stanley because i should be writing stories for money.⁶

Jackson had always been driven to sell her works. This drive for financial gain may have led her to write hurriedly, perhaps producing less thoughtful or finished works than she was capable of writing. In a 5 October 1949 letter to her parents, she comments that magazines will not buy good stories because audiences do not want them, "i simply figure that at a thousand bucks a story, i can't afford to try to change the state of popular fiction today." The constant doubts about her writing must have caused anxiety for someone who took such pride in her craft.

The tension and open hostility toward Hyman becomes even more apparent in an undated diary note:

it is, now clear to me -- after a year spent hoping and endeavoring to make sense from an impossible situation -- that stanley intends at all costs to obstruct my serious writing in any way he can. he is perfectly happy with my money-writing, happy to think that after so much work i have at last ahcieved [sic] a point where i can make a great deal of money, which he cannot, by simply writing. that i should do anything more, anything thing [sic] he cannot participate in, is horrible to him.

consequently he will not allow me to write anything in which i feel that i am doing more than only writing for money.⁷

The numerous errors and uncharacteristic, rambling style attest to Jackson's emotional disturbance.

The demands on her stamina led Jackson to drugs. In order to lose weight, Jackson began using amphetamines when she was living in Westport in 1949. She discovered, however, that not only did she lose weight, she had more energy as well. She was able to care for and play with her children afternoons, entertain almost nightly, and still be able to rise early the next morning to write. Oppenheimer reports that the highly tense writer also began using tranquilizers about the same time she began the amphetamines and never stopped using either drug (148). The long hours of housework and writing, and the late night socializing, which included heavy alcohol consumption combined with drugs, began to affect Jackson's physical and emotional health.

Ironically, the work for which Jackson is most remembered also added to her emotional breakdown. Published in the 26 June 1948 issue of The New Yorker, "The Lottery" generated more mail than Jackson or even the magazine had ever received before. The magazine forwarded more than twenty thousand letters to the author. Jackson joked that of the twenty thousand, thirteen were favorable, and they were from her friends. By this time Jackson was no longer

the unpopular, lonely individual of the Rochester years. The wife of a respected university professor and critic, the mother of two children with another expected, an outgoing hostess who enjoyed entertaining, and a writer whose work had appeared in The New Yorker, The New Republic and Best American Short Stories, Jackson should have been too confident to feel hurt by adverse criticism. An emotionally insecure person such as Jackson can be devastated by attacks such as:

Tell Miss Jackson to stay out of Canada.

I expect a personal apology from the author.

I will never buy The New Yorker again. I resent being tricked into reading perverted stories like "The Lottery."

I read the story quite thoroughly and confess that I could make neither head nor tail out of it.

The story was so horrible and gruesome in its effect that I could hardly see the point of your publishing it.

Never has it been my lot to read so cunningly vicious a story as that published in your last issue for June. I tremble to think of the fate of American letters if that piece indicated the taste of the editors of a magazine I had

considered distinguished. (qtd. in Jackson,
Come Along 220-22)

Unable to forget all the negative criticism, Jackson even included it in "Biography of a Story," an article she often presented at writer's conferences. In 1964 when she was asked about "The Lottery," she answered, "I hate it! I've lived with that thing 15 years. Nobody will ever let me forget it."⁸ The vicious attacks on her writing prompted what I believe was a second near emotional breakdown and triggered possibly her first attack of agoraphobia. The only evidence exists in a story published in October 1948, in Mademoiselle. In "Pillar of Salt," the protagonist, Margaret, experiences an initial anxiety attack resembling those suffered by agoraphobes. In 1948 Jackson often wrote short fiction, made only minimal revisions, and quickly mailed the story to her agent. In "Biography of a Story," she told of writing "The Lottery" one afternoon and mailing it the following day. Her reputation insured quick sale of her stories, and they might be published in the next issue; other publishers wanted to capitalize on her recent fame. Since Jackson often utilized experiences from her own life, "Pillar of Salt" suggests that the author may have experienced an anxiety attack during the late summer, soon after receiving negative mail regarding "The Lottery."

In "Pillar of Salt," a young New Hampshire couple, Brad and Margaret, leave their children at home and take a two week vacation in a friend's New York apartment.⁹ Jackson

emphasizes the manner in which the couple begin their trip, excited, savoring the newness, the disruption of their familiar New Hampshire routine. However, in unfamiliar circumstances, agoraphobes experience feelings of alienation which causes extreme fear. At a friend's crowded party in his New York apartment three flights up in an old building, Margaret begins to feel slightly claustrophobic. She goes to the window, and leaning out, she hears people on the ground shouting, "The house is on fire!". Frantically she tries to tell the other guests and to find her husband, but no one listens. In blind panic, she runs down the stairs and out into the street only to discover that the fire is two doors away. The experience ends Margaret's pleasure; she constantly feels insecure, especially in moving crowds. She thinks people notice her nervousness. She begins to notice the cracks in walls and the aging buses. She fears the world is coming apart. Walking on a Long Island beach, she and Brad discover a human leg washed ashore, proof to her anxious mind that people as well as things are coming apart. On a shopping trip the following day, a severe panic attack prevents her from crossing the street to the apartment. Completely traumatized, she phones Brad to come for her. Simply told, but with vivid crescendos of terror, the story resembles a textbook explanation of an agoraphobe's initial panic attack and resulting anxiety.

The story appears to relate an actual event in

Jackson's life. By 1954 when she wrote works such as The Bird's Nest and Witchcraft of Salem Village, Jackson often researched for ideas for her fiction, but in 1948 she frequently drew on her own life for subjects.¹⁰ Jackson and her husband lived in Vermont instead of New Hampshire, but they had many New York friends and made frequent trips into the city without the children. This story may be Jackson's first description of her own illness.

After "Pillar," other agoraphobia symptoms began to creep into Jackson's fiction. Her protagonists often equate security with familiar surroundings; for example, a wife in "A Day in the Jungle" (1952) leaves her husband and apartment and moves to a hotel but later succumbs to the need for familiarity and phones her husband to come for her (Come Along 130-142). In a 1949 story, "Elizabeth," the title character expresses the same security associated with familiar settings as she surveys her apartment:

with a sureness that came of habit rather than conviction; after more than four years in this one home she knew all its possibilities, how it could put on a sham appearance of warmth and welcome when she needed a place to hide in, how it stood over her in the night when she woke suddenly. . .

(The Magic 77)

These and other fiction works during the 1948-54 period suggest emotional disorders that Jackson was experiencing. The writer who likes to "lose herself in her fiction"

(Metcalf 649) often depicts characters who display abnormal behavior. In Hangsaman, lonely and mentally disturbed Natalie invents a friendship. The Bird's Nest, based on an actual case study, records the multiple personalities of Elizabeth Richmond. Jackson had become so adept at covering her feelings, however, that it was not until the summer of 1954 that friends and family members as well as her personal physician, Dr. Oliver Durand, noted Jackson's depression and tension. She had just completed The Bird's Nest, which required extensive research. Dr. Durand attributed her illness to overwork and advised her to get more sleep (Oppenheimer 191).

Jackson did spend the summer resting more than normal and appeared to recover her health. The years between 1954 and 1958 were good years both for Jackson's career and for the Hyman family. The children grew to young adulthood and the family prospered. Film rights and play adaptations from some of Jackson's novels brought increased revenue and recognition, and she continued selling short fiction regularly and was always at work on a novel.¹¹ At one point Hyman commented that the sale of one more novel would bankrupt them financially as it would put them in an even higher tax bracket. Both Jackson and Hyman became popular lecturers at writing conferences, and the two often traveled together. In the early 1960s Jackson's physical health, a problem for years, began to deteriorate rapidly. She sometimes had to cancel speaking engagements. In a letter

to her parents dated 15 November 1961 by Library of Congress, she describes her ailment:

i have not been well again; each time i think of something screwier, and this time i think i have really surpassed myself. i had a return of my old friend colitis, and oliver put me right back on my former medicine, but even though it helps i have a side-effect which i don't really care for: he figures it this way: the colitis induces a sudden attack of nausea, which is all right; that is what it's supposed to do. but the sudden nausea causes an abrupt drop in blood pressure of perhaps twenty degrees, which is exactly like getting kicked in the stomach, and i all but pass out; i get dizzy and sick and staggery and shaking, and of course very scared.

Jackson's symptoms are similar to the physical condition which M. H. Lader and A. M. Mathews believe produces an anxiety attack. As her blood pressure dropped, causing her to be "sick and staggery and shaking," she was in a physical state to succumb to fear. Within a year Jackson was no longer able to keep the fears hidden. At her son's wedding in 1962, she began crying uncontrollably and had to be taken out. For perhaps the first time "friends and family members had been given a piercing glimpse into her true emotional state" (Oppenheimer 245). By Thanksgiving Jackson could not force herself to leave home.

Often she stayed in the bedroom, cowering beside the bed. The stress of her mother's critical letter concerning the Time photograph combined with her son's wedding and months of long hours completing We Have Always Lived in the Castle had finally left her vulnerable to the fears she had fought so long.

For perhaps the first time she openly discussed her emotional disorder. An undated letter from her agent, Carol Brandt, indicates how well Jackson had previously kept her secret:

Dear Shirley--How grim for you--In our many telephone calls I never suspected it--That you are making progress is so good--That writing is your release is so natural and inevitable. I am sending your letter to Pat and asking him to destroy it. Otherwise it is your work that speaks for you in this caring city.

A similar message dated 11 February 1963, from members of the Suffield Writing Conference expresses "deep shock" at being informed of her illness. A letter to her parents dated by Library of Congress catalogers as April 1963, indicates the extent of her illness. In it she mentions that Dr. Durand believes she was suffering from the "nervous breakdown" for at least the past eight years (when he first prescribed tranquilizers). She has begun the therapy with her psychiatrist, Dr. James Toolan, who began a behavior therapy which encouraged her to take speaking engagements

and to gradually attempt doing all the things she feared. She mentions her progress at being able to take an automobile trip. By May 1964, she says she can do almost anything except go to a large supermarket. By the time of her death in August 1965, she was near complete recovery from the fears that had plagued her most of her life.

In 1987 when Judy Oppenheimer published Private Demons: The Life of Shirley Jackson many of Jackson's friends did not believe that Oppenheimer's neurotic, fear-obsessed subject was the Shirley Jackson they knew. A 2 July 1991 letter from Virginia Olsen to the Library of Congress, now housed in the Jackson collection, describes Jackson as "a happy, jolly person and a delight." The agoraphobia victim had successfully masked her fears, having exposed them only in her writing and to a few close friends during therapy. Few persons were aware of Jackson's dual personality, which seems to have existed since her teens. An undated poem, also a part of the Library of Congress collection, but probably written while Jackson was a student at Syracuse, reveals the duality, the pain, and her method of enduring the pain through her fiction:

Childhood

These I remember.

A lonely child who couldn't play,

Who watched the others swinging on the swings

Laughing as their feet brushed the ground and

They shot upward again.

This I remember.

Pushed by a loving mother to the dance

Where she sat at the side

And watched.

This I remember.

There were two selves then,

The one that watched

And the other that acted

The princess. Scuffing her feet along

The dust road, but making it a soft carpet

Of flowers ----

And there were white horses before and

Behind.

There was the rock made by God,

Where He and the child communicated.

Nobody knew what the cleft in the rock meant--

But she did,

As she placed pleading letters to God

To wrest her to him.

It had to break.

Her God never came

But she was delivered.

Here in my peace

I remember.

Notes

¹ From Jackson's private journal housed in the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. As in the previous chapter, all subsequent entries from diaries, journals and letters are from the Library of Congress collection unless otherwise noted.

² Unpublished until Stanley Edgar Hyman included it in Come Along With Me, 33-34.

³ A letter from Stanley Hyman to Jackson dated 18 July 1938. All letters from Hyman to Jackson are also from The Papers of Shirley Jackson, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress unless otherwise noted. In the letters he writes to Jackson, Hyman uses lower case as Jackson did.

⁴ The year has been added by the Library of Congress staff.

⁵ In 1948 Stanley Edgar Hyman published The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism, a work that, according to Friedman, "established him as an eminent critic" (78). The dedication page of Jackson's first novel reads: "For Stanley, a critic." In 1964 Hyman published another critical book, The Promised End.

⁶ Jackson seems to be using the writing in an attempt to work out of her depression. On the same page, she writes, "writing is the way out. writing is the way out."

⁷ The undated writing appears on the familiar yellow

legal pages which Jackson used for her drafts. It is in Box 42 of Jackson's Library of Congress collection.

⁸ From a New York Post newspaper article in the Library of Congress files. The byline is missing, but the clipping has been dated 10 May 1964 by a clipping service.

⁹ Published first in Mademoiselle (October 1948): 152-3, 242-50, the story also appears in The Magic of Shirley Jackson, 25-39.

¹⁰ Witchcraft of Salem Village (1956) was a children's work based on the Salem witch trials.

¹¹ The Bird's Nest received favorable reviews from Dan Wickendan, William Peden, and Edmund Fuller. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer purchased the book for a film production which was titled Lizzie.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REFLECTED WOMEN

As the author's emotional health declined, her protagonists grew increasingly disturbed until Jackson created Merricat Blackwood, a psychotic killer. Even as her illness became more disabling, however, Jackson's creative skills continued developing, enabling her to construct a killer who is, at the same time, her most intriguing and dynamic character. Creation of her alter ego, Merricat, also forced Jackson to confront her repressed anxieties which had surfaced in the form of agoraphobia throughout her life. Although it led to the author's breakdown, the act of facing her disturbance forced her to seek psychiatric help and eventually brought recovery. Once recovered, Jackson again created a character in her image, this time her first emotionally healthy protagonist.

Although suffering from agoraphobia for most of her life, Jackson successfully camouflaged the worst of her fears. She always believed writing helped her to control them. In his famous "Preliminary Communication" on hysteria, Freud wrote that "hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences" (7). The reminiscences the hysteric suffers are not conscious, but repressed, mutely displaced across the body as symptoms or illness. For Jackson, the symptoms were her terrible bouts with fear and depression. Freud believed psychoanalysis provided a way of reaching the repression. Writing autobiography represents a form of

psychoanalysis. Many psychologists suggest that patients write about their lives to help them confront and resolve anxieties created by repression. The process forces patients to acknowledge the existence of feelings they may have kept hidden all their lives. Although she clearly drew on events of her own life, Jackson wrote fiction. In her fiction, she assigned her fears to fictional characters but continued repressing feelings about herself. Writing about her fears offered less therapeutic value for Jackson than for most victims of emotional disorders since the purpose is to bring problems into the open for rational consideration and discussion with a therapist. She never admitted they belonged to her. Instead, she assigned her fears to her characters, and they displayed the depression and fears she did not permit herself to exhibit. When she finally confronted the evil she believed she possessed in the creation of Merricat, Jackson finally brought her depressed anxieties into the open.

Jackson published six novels during her lifetime, beginning with the publication of The Road Through the Wall in 1948, and was at work on a seventh at the time of her death. Critics who study Jackson's novels and short fiction in depth generally agree that the author perceives herself not only experiencing but also narrating events through her female characters. Jackson scholars also allude to the similarities between Jackson's life and her fiction. Friedman accurately refers to the setting of The Road

Through the Wall, Jackson's only California background, as representative of Burlingame, California, the San Francisco suburb where Jackson spent her early years. In a similar vein, Oppenheimer finds the village of We Have Always Lived in the Castle representative of Jackson's home of North Bennington, Vermont. Tracing the settings of the novels clearly reveals the geographic course of Jackson's life. Charting the emotional course of a person's life presents far more problems; however, a close study of Jackson's life clearly indicates the periods when she suffered most. The protagonists who appear to represent Jackson during those periods mirror the author's emotional disorders.

Like many writers, Jackson began her novel writing with loosely disguised autobiography. As her writing skills increased, she continued to draw on her own experiences but also borrowed from other literature and research and expanded with purely fictional events, characters, or places; therefore, some of the novels, although similar in theme, are less related to her own life. The Road Through the Wall, Hangsaman, We Have Always Lived in the Castle, and Come Along With Me all suggest specific periods of the author's life, and the protagonist of each exhibits Jackson's emotional condition during that period. Comparison of the protagonists of The Road Through the Wall, Hangsaman, and We Have Always Lived in the Castle reveals the author's intensifying emotional disorder embodied in characters, from Harriet Merriam, a troubled, self-conscious

teen to Mary Catherine Blackwood, a psychotic murderer. Angela Motorman of Come Along With Me, on the other hand, flaunts self-assurance and emotional stability, reflecting the recovered Jackson after therapy. More important, even while the author's characters deteriorated and recovered along with her own emotional health, her writing skills continued to grow, enabling her to create unique, moving works of art.

In Jackson's first novel, Harriet Merriam represents the young author as a teen. Early in the novel Jackson establishes the poor relationship between Harriet and her mother as largely responsible for Harriet's lack of assurance. Fourteen-year-old Harriet deems herself large, awkward, and unattractive, especially in the slim, poised presence of her mother. Extremely perceptive, Harriet expresses her written thoughts fluently and creatively but often stammers, particularly when speaking to her mother. She writes poetry and stories entitled "Moods" and "Me" and locks them in a desk (17-18). As the novel opens, Mrs. Merriam has just read a letter taken from the locked desk. Angered by what she has found, Mrs. Merriam creates an emotional scene and forces Harriet to burn all her writing. Hours later Mrs. Merriam apologizes, hugs Harriet, and attempts to encourage her writing. Mrs. Merriam's erratic behavior, along with Harriet's obvious nervous tension in her mother's presence and thoughts of "how pleasant it always was after these scenes" (37), make two points clear:

Harriet has emotional problems, and her mother is largely responsible.

Mrs. Merriam also attempts to control Harriet's social life. She wants Harriet to end her friendship with Marilyn Perlman. Although the Perlman family has a large library, and the two girls enjoy sharing and discussing books, the family is the only Jewish family on the block.

As a young girl Jackson also had a difficult relationship with her mother. Through appearance and actions, the two resemble the fictional Merriams. A dark, slim, attractive beauty, Mrs. Jackson was always alert to social etiquette and quick to correct Jackson accordingly. Large boned and fair like her father, Jackson believed she was unattractive and had little concern for the social life her mother enjoyed. In a 1938 college journal Jackson wrote, "I am not going to be pledged to Delta Gamma . . . Mother will be sorry. Dad will be sorry. . . but---God help us, I'm glad! I won't have to worry, ever again, about being a lady." Jackson's early journal writing (referred to in chapter two) also resembles the fictional Harriet's. The fictional scene probably represents Jackson's memories of having destroyed her own early writing and of her mother's reading her private papers. In a journal kept in college, she also tells of a time when her grandmother and mother read one of her poems to guests, and everyone laughed about it. Recalling the laughter as she attempted her first novel must have been painful for Jackson. She feared risking more

writing failures. Both Jackson and her fictional twin reflect a tension and lack of confidence produced by the meddlesome and overprotective mothers that psychologists associate with agoraphobes.

The fictional Natalie Waite of Hangsaman suggests Jackson during her first college experience at the University of Rochester. Excited about going off to school, Natalie nevertheless becomes disillusioned with college life early. An aspiring writer, she enjoys her freshman English class and instructor, Arthur Langdon, but dislikes every other class. She makes few friends and isolates herself more as the school year progresses. After Thanksgiving, Natalie begins skipping classes and then even stops going to the dining room. The other girls avoid her, and she finds being alone at a table humiliating. Her dormmate informs Natalie that all the other girls think she is spooky. Although lonely, she fosters no new friendships, preferring instead the company of her journal. Jackson distorts the narrative, making it impossible to determine whether Natalie's one new friend, Tony, is imaginary, real, or a devil figure.¹ Becoming even more disturbed and frightened, Natalie barricades herself in her room by placing the bureau in front of the door. Just when it appears Natalie will succumb to her madness, she spends a bizarre night in the woods with Tony and emerges triumphant and alone. As the novel ends, Natalie appears stable and glad to be in school. Although Natalie has obviously recovered her emotional

stability, most critics believe the novel's abrupt, unsubstantiated ending weakened it.²

Many features of the novel parallel the author's life. Jackson was near an emotional breakdown when she quit Rochester in 1936. Although, like Natalie, she had eagerly entered college, by February she had begun skipping classes and remaining in her room writing obscure journal passages. The passages register the agoraphobe's fright and reluctance to leave her room. Jackson's journal entry, which I discussed in chapter two, told of studying for a test but not attending class to take it. Such acts resemble those of Natalie. Jackson also revered an English teacher, Leonard Brown; however, this was later when she attended Syracuse.³ Natalie's friend Tony may be modeled after a friend Jackson had in college. A French girl, Jeanne Marie Bedel (Jeanou), was one of the author's friends at the University of Rochester. With intelligence equal to Jackson's, Bedel helped Jackson develop confidence and learn to verbalize her opinions. This benefit may explain the novel's optimistic conclusion.

Most important, Natalie's emotional instability represents the breakdown Jackson suffered at the close of her University of Rochester years (see chapter two). While it may sometimes be therapeutic to discuss past periods of a person's life, remembering unhappy times also causes emotional stress. Re-living this troubled time by writing of it fifteen years later proved difficult for the busy

writer. Making the task even more disconcerting was the fact that in 1950 and 1951 while writing the novel, she was also still distressed by unfavorable comments regarding "The Lottery," which had received renewed interest in 1949 upon publication of the collection The Lottery or the Adventures of James Harris. Her busy schedule had also taken its toll on her emotional health. During the fifteen-year period since the Rochester experience, she had published over fifty articles and short stories, a novel, and a short story collection. In addition, she had taught part time, married, hosted parties on a weekly basis, given birth to and cared for four children, overseen three moves for the family of two adults, four children, several animals, and thousands of books. Remembering and writing about her first near breakdown brought her seriously close to another. She managed, however, to continue concealing her own emotional turmoil, partially purging it through the emotions of her character, Natalie.

After this painful involvement with her own past, Jackson wrote three successive novels which do not portray a specific period of her own life. The novels include The Bird's Nest published in 1954; The Sun Dial, 1958; and The Haunting of Hill House, 1959. These works include characters (discussed in later chapters) who are influenced in several ways by the author's fears and anxieties. While the protagonist of each may suffer fears similar to those of Jackson, she does not represent the author at a particular

period in her life. Since she was not writing about a time in her own life, Jackson was able to become more objective and developed her skill as a novelist significantly.⁴ Meanwhile, her own emotional disorders also expanded. She often expressed secret concern about depression and madness. These fears for her own sanity may have led her to the theme of madness in all three novels; however, she was always interested in psychology. She had taken several psychology courses in college, including abnormal psychology at Syracuse.⁵

The madness of The Bird's Nest involves the dissociated personality, which Jackson became familiar with through research of a 1906 case history by Dr. Morton Prince entitled The Dissociation of a Personality. The novel closely follows the doctor's notes, which reveal the depth of Elizabeth Richmond's (fictional name) schizophrenic behavior. Another of her own personalities is attempting to kill her. Although working with four characters, Jackson develops each into a multi-dimensional, entirely diverse personality. Elizabeth is quiet and ladylike, but drab. When her behavior becomes wild, her Aunt Morgan insists she visit a doctor. Using hypnosis to examine the troubled girl, Dr. Wright discovers other distinct personalities. Although she did use the study as a basis for the novel, Jackson's concern about her own sanity may have led to the research.

Four personalities compete for attention within

Elizabeth's body. Dr. Wright prefers Beth--cheerful, attractive, and intelligent. Betsy is evil and coarse, a foil for the quiet, well-mannered Elizabeth. Bess, the last to emerge, is also cold and calculating and appears the strongest. She attempts to kill the others. Through the use of flashback and intermittent scenes with Dr. Wright, readers learn the events leading to Elizabeth's disorders. Dr. Wright continues therapy, and the characters continue competing for survival, attempting to destroy one another until Elizabeth finally emerges healthy and feeling "all alone" (359).

Jackson received more critical acclaim for the novel than for earlier ones. The more sharply focused portrayal of the characters creates reader concern. Although the novel ends with a promising future for Elizabeth, the ending is more believable than Natalie's unexplainable recovery in Hangsaman. Elizabeth has undergone several months of therapy before recuperating. The combination of humor with traditional symbols provides Jackson with a distinct tone which she maintains. The opening scene describes a large crack which has formed on the third floor of the library directly under Elizabeth Richmond's desk. The crack, which threatens the structure of the building, also represents Elizabeth's own personality that is about to disunite and multiply:

It is not proven that Elizabeth's personal equilibrium was set off balance by the slant of

the office floor, nor could it be proven that it was Elizabeth who pushed the building off its foundations, but it is undeniable that they began to slip at about the same time. (150)

The passive voice and accumulation of be verbs and official-sounding words such as "personal equilibrium" produces a stale, bureaucratic style. When combined with absurd statements, they produce an irony that characterizes Jackson's humorous prose. The humor enables Jackson to distance herself from the mad Elizabeth while she secretly harbors concerns for her own sanity.

The madness of The Sun Dial involves the state of the world at the time. When the novel was published in 1958, Americans were concerned about the possibility of a nuclear attack. They feared countries more advanced in space technology and warfare. It was an age of anxiety. The novel's tone accurately reflects a time when people considered constructing private bomb shelters. John Parks calls it a representative modern apocalyptic novel concerned "with the way desperate people grasp a belief and make it their truth" (75). When Aunt Fannie predicts the world will end in a matter of days and only those in the Halloran mansion are to be saved, the entire family carries out insane preparations.

Less successful than The Bird's Nest, The Sundial did, nevertheless, receive favorable reviews. Some critics faulted it for the overabundance of characters and lack of

clear viewpoint. Evident in the novel is the author's ever increasing skill in creating an absurd world. Intermingled with the bizarre, Jackson returned to a preoccupation with evil evident in works such as The Road Through the Wall and "The Lottery." Instead of evil as representative of an outside force apart from the main characters, major characters themselves represent evil. Both Oriana and Fancy are greedy and capable of killing to obtain their desires. Although Fancy obviously commits premeditated murder when she kills her grandmother, readers have had a clear look at the child's environment and can at least understand, if not overlook, her actions. Since Grandmother was both unlikable and a murderer herself, readers normally agree that Granny received her just reward.

Focusing on individual and group madness, The Haunting of Hill House portrays Eleanor Vance, an emotionally disturbed woman who experiences fears similar to Jackson's. Eleanor Vance, an insecure individual, a loner, desperately needs friendship. She clings to the absurd lifestyle of Hill House in preference to her former, lonely one, and even commits suicide rather than leave it.

In 1962 Jackson created her most emotionally disturbed character and suffered her own complete breakdown, finally diagnosed as agoraphobia. The combined years of objectively creating characters sharpened her writing skills, but, at the same time, her own illness progressed into an uncontrollable phobia, sometimes causing her extreme

depression. Facing the anxiety of again writing about a setting that was her own increased the stress. "No book had ever been closer to mirroring her own fears, and no book would ever be as ultimately damaging" (Oppenheimer 236). While all of Jackson's fiction reflects a personal element of her life, most had been written long after she had experienced the events. We Have Always Lived in the Castle involved her relationship with the small community of North Bennington and was written while she was still living there. This anxiety combined with her sharpened skills led to creation of not only her most deranged but also her most delightful character.

She began the novel in 1960, shortly after the completion and success of The Haunting of Hill House. The setting is the Blackwood mansion on the outskirts of a small New England community much like North Bennington. The Blackwood sisters, Merricat and Constance, reside in the house with Uncle Julian. The three are the only survivors of the poisoning that killed four members of their family six years earlier. Constance, who was the cook of the family, was tried and acquitted for murder, but the culprit was never convicted. Like other Jackson characters, they prefer isolation, particularly Constance who cannot abide the whispering, staring villagers. The entire Blackwood property, from the highway to the creek, is fenced with padlocked gates and signs saying, "PRIVATE NO TRESPASSING" (26).

Mary Katherine Blackwood (Merricat) is the disturbed character of We Have Always Lived in the Castle. Utterly mad, eighteen-year-old Merricat says, "I have often thought with any luck at all I could have been born a werewolf, because the two middle fingers on both my hands are the same length, but I have had to be content with what I had" (1). Totally unpredictable, she speaks with the syntax and vocabulary of a child yet may punctuate her phrases with words like Amanita phalloides and Solanum dulcamara (146). She seldom washes or combs her hair and prefers sleeping in caves, yet happily spends hours helping Constance clean and tidy the Blackwood mansion. In short, she assumes an attitude somewhere between that of a child and an untamed animal. Completely controlled by superstition, she may break a mirror to cast an evil spell, bury an object to place a hex on someone, or nail objects to trees for perimetric protection. She considers Thursdays her most powerful days and chooses certain magic words daily, whispers them into a glass, fills it with water, and drinks it.

Like Bess of The Bird's Nest, Merricat is innately cruel. She wishes she would find her neighbors "lying there crying with the pain and dying" (12). Both a pyromaniac and a psychotic, deranged killer, Merricat poisoned four members of her own family seven years earlier and allowed her gentle sister Constance to face a murder trial for the crime. Evil and mad on the one hand, she is devoted and kind on the

other.

Merricat's appealing side is as unique and interesting as her evil one. Highly spirited, Merricat possesses a delightful sense of humor and a keen awareness that resembles that of Huck Finn. Naive and innocent in many ways, she can spot evil in the cleverest of con artists. Although unaware just why, she immediately dislikes cousin Charles, who suspiciously befriends them years after their parents' deaths. Readers easily detect his interest in valuable objects and his constant search for money. In contrast to her contemptible behavior, Merricat bestows loving devotion on her sister Constance in an ironic attempt to protect and provide for her even after allowing her to be tried for a murder she committed. Her childlike sadness also captures readers' sentiments as she wistfully compares villagers' kind acts to one another with the cruel chants and jeers they reserve for her.

The sadness which Merricat reveals is reminiscent of the young Jackson's early poem printed in chapter two. In the poem, she described the sad child who sat alone watching others play. The "child who had watched" others but could not play herself reflects the lamentable Merricat. In the poem, the author describes her own duality. Since that time, the adult Jackson had kept the feelings repressed, believing something evil existed within herself. In the novel she finally portrays both personalities. Oppenheimer believes both Merricat and Constance reflect characteristics

of Jackson herself. Constance, she says, mirrors the side of Shirley her older daughter called 'the queen of charm,' the woman who 'made comfort' for people, fluffing the pillows, serving hot cocoa, buttering toast better than anyone else in the world. Merricat mirrors the other side. She is uncivilized, bold and fierce, incapable of compromise. (234)

Writing the novel, Jackson confronted a dilemma which had disturbed her her entire life. She had repressed her more assertive nature and assumed the charming Constance personality. She had denied herself to avoid confrontation. As a child, she learned to defer to her mother; in marriage, to the more assertive Hyman; later, to her children; and always, to friends, neighbors, and even strangers. Insecure, Jackson still longed for acceptance, and to obtain it, she gave of herself, like the loving Constance, while some part of her wanted to be Merricat. Multiple fears tormented Jackson, but her greatest fear had been confronting her other self. Twice she had attempted to view that other self: in Hansgaman, through the character of Tony, and in The Bird's Nest, with the evil Bess. Each time she forced the evil other back into repression, allowing only the good Natalie and the good Elizabeth to survive to the novel's end. This time she allowed the stronger and evil alter ego to live in Merricat.

The therapeutic value of writing may have been

questionable for Jackson in the past. But this time she had openly confronted her own emotions, and it was damaging. Allowing her other self to surface in the novel brought her hidden fears to the surface. She realized that her overwork, particularly this novel dealing with emotional issues, had a debilitating effect on her. Soon after completing We Have Always Lived in the Castle she wrote to a friend, "I have written myself into the house" (qtd. in Oppenheimer 237). Jackson's months involving the daily tension of creating and describing a character who shared her own terrors may have exaggerated her illness. The overwork and stress of writing had intensified the condition which she had previously managed to keep hidden. Now it threatened to keep her as much of a prisoner as the Blackwood sisters.

She could no longer keep her disorder hidden. During 1962, she had to cancel speaking engagements and conferences; she broke down at her son's wedding; and, finally, she visited a psychiatrist. The years of stress and overwork coupled with the direct confrontation with her own difficulties with the community and her own dual nature led to her final breakdown. For several months during 1962 and 1963, Jackson was unable to go outside her home. The final result of her breakdown, however, was rest and a therapy program with a psychiatrist, Dr. James Toolan, who helped to bring the writer to the best emotional state of her entire life.

By the time she began her last novel, Jackson had a new self concept, which is reflected in Come Along With Me. Angela Motorman represents the emotionally secure Jackson. She exhibits Jackson's delightful sense of humor, but none of her anxieties. She feels good about herself in a way that the author never had before. Motorman describes her own exhilaration as "A fine high gleefulness; I think you understand me; I have everything I want" (3). The changed attitude is even more apparent when she says, "More than anything else, more than art movies or zoos, I wanted to talk to people; I was starved for strangers" (5), a considerable change from the Blackwood sisters who locked themselves in their house, from Natalie who feared going to the dining room, and from Jackson herself who only months before had spent days crouching beside her bed.

Jackson had always thought of herself as physically unattractive, and her characters frequently exhibited similar doubts about their appearance. Angela Motorman, on the other hand, expresses confidence in her somewhat unusual features. Both her age and size are forty-four, and she seems happy about it. She expresses no concerns about her looks as Jackson's former protagonists, or as Jackson herself, might have.

Motorman has just moved to a new city and a new life. A recent widow, she sold everything after Hughie's funeral, took the money, and caught the first bus. She even adopts a new name, borrowing it from the streetcar driver. A

distinct contrast with other Jackson characters, Motorman portrays no fears, eagerly meets strangers, and aggressively pursues what she wants. Motorman's only familiar characteristic is her unusual psychic powers. She hears voices from the dead and frequently holds seances.

Although she may have used the witch element for sales promotion, Jackson also believed she possessed certain magic skills. Her children say she had an uncanny "psychic awareness" which magnified her interest in old houses (Oppenheimer 224). Among other psychic talents, Jackson believed she could determine events of the past from visiting old houses. She also predicted the future. Friends and family members talk of Jackson's apparent premonition of her own death. Her death was sudden. She merely went to bed to take a nap as she did every afternoon and died in her sleep. Although her health had been deteriorating for several years, neither doctors nor those close to her realized the seriousness of her illness. However, after her death, several persons recalled hearing her mention a trip she was going to take. Days after her death, friends received letters from her. Her agent, Carol Brandt, received the most unusual one which told of a trip the author was taking, alone.

Did Jackson possess some psychic power which enabled her to know of her own death? Or were her statements and last letters a final chapter in the life of a talented storyteller? We cannot know. Nor can we be certain what

literature Jackson might have written had she lived past her forty-ninth year. What we can be certain of are her contributions to literary form.

Notes

¹ In recording the development of Jackson's technique, Michael Nardacci notes that reality and fantasy begin to merge in a distinctive style with Hangsaman and The Bird's Nest (674-A).

² An exception was a New York Times review of Hangsaman by Alice S. Morris, who applauded Jackson's talent for creating believable characters and situations.

³ Jackson dedicated The Haunting of Hill House to Brown. The following year when he died suddenly, she, Stanley, and other former students wrote a tribute to him.

⁴ The Bird's Nest brought Jackson the most favorable critical acclaim of any of her novels to that time. Critics such as William Peden called it a "kind of twentieth-century morality play" that depicts the struggle between good and evil through the four personalities of the protagonist (11). The sale to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer later brought rewarding profits although Jackson's disappointment in the movie Lizzie released in 1956 is registered in an undated (but probably the same year) letter to her mother. She concludes that movie producers "don't know much about psychology."

⁵ Included in her files at the Library of Congress are

notes from an abnormal psychology class at Syracuse. She has written notes concerning a dissociated personality.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE REVISED GOTHIC

Jackson's use of setting is the primary Gothic element noticeable in her fiction, but it is far more complicated than a mere adaptation of Gothic form. As she made use of Gothic conventions out of respect for the genre, she also revised the form by projecting her own suppressed emotions into setting, characters, and themes. Instead of fearfully running from frightening scenes, Jackson's women take refuge in them. Like many other mid-twentieth-century American female writers, Jackson employed Gothic conventions in a manner that emphasized women's lack of freedom in society. Jackson extended her theme of women as victims to depict women as prisoners in various roles of modern society.

Psychologists might term Jackson's illness a symptom of her repressed feelings of inadequacy she had harbored since childhood. Born into a society which valued a woman's physical beauty over her intelligence, Jackson, like many others, believed society placed women in subservient roles. As she wrote, the author projected her own agoraphobic fears into her female characters, but she also projected her suppressed anger at the society which had generated these fears. Her characters, like the author herself, seek protection from public places, fictional worlds governed by males. For her, the Gothic backdrop helped identify women's

lack of freedom as she rewrote the form by portraying female protagonists who seek and take comfort in the settings earlier prisoners found frightening. After a time in the setting, her characters sometimes feel as trapped as the earlier victims did. In her non-Gothic writing, Jackson also depicts females as victims and often releases her repressed anger on her male characters by placing them in unflattering roles.

Critics often comment on the extent of Jackson's use of gloomy old houses. Most refer to it as an adherence to Gothic tradition. Others perceive it as a family interest inherited from her architect grandfathers. Originally, both circumstances may have led the author to incorporate haunted-looking houses into her fiction; however, she focuses on many types of settings, not only houses but whole neighborhoods, offices, and apartments that are secluded, isolated spaces. Rather than providing a mere backdrop, the settings help Jackson to emphasize their psychological impact on the characters, troubled individuals whose survival depends upon sheltered, familiar surroundings. But familiarity itself can become destructive when it prohibits freedom. Drawn to habitual retreats, agoraphobes sometimes experience contrasting feelings of entrapment as they analyze their own irrational behavior and desire a normal life. Many Jackson characters react with both agoraphobic and claustrophobic tendencies, similar to the author's when she was unable to leave the confinement of her home. If for

no other reason, the proportionate number of characters who seem similarly affected suggests the influence Jackson's illness had on her writing.

Jackson's interest in architecture is evident in her personal life as well as her fiction. Her manuscript files at the Library of Congress contain newspaper clippings of pictures of houses that may have suggested fictional settings. In their initial move to North Bennington, the Hymans even settled in a large (fourteen room) old house, which may have provided a mask for the writer. According to an autobiographical summary prepared for a book jacket, the house afforded space for the Hymans' books, children, dogs, and cats. Although she provides little concrete physical description of the house, the summary describes the house as "a dank old place with a ghost that stomps around in the attic."¹ Jackson jests that she makes charms to appease the spirit. Another summary obviously written about the same time, signed by Stanley Edgar Hyman and dated 27 September 1947, suggests that Jackson is a witch.

Aligning herself with the Gothic tradition and employing this witch mask may have lowered Jackson's critical standing. Few Gothic writers have ever been recognized as significant, and critics continued to emphasize her interest in demonology throughout her career.² Obituaries mention that she owned more than five hundred books concerning witchcraft and demonology at the time of her death (Krebs 11). Five hundred books seems a

significant number, but far less impressive in a family believed to own as many as one hundred thousand books.³

From its inception in the eighteenth-century, the Gothic novel was primarily intended to produce apprehension in the reader. Leslie Fiedler explains the Gothic as one which moves "out of the known world into a dark region of make believe" (114). Within this make-believe world, traditional Gothic writers include props such as the supernatural, haunted medieval castles with secret passages, dungeons, winding stairways, and an atmosphere of gloom and mysterious events that produce mystery and anxiety.⁴ Many critics credit Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) as the earliest Gothic novel. The Castle of Otranto occurs in a medieval castle that has become obscure through supernatural events. Jackson always claimed the eighteenth-century novelists were her favorite. Her interest in Walpole is evident through her use of the name Walpole as a character in at least two short stories and the use of props similar to those of Walpole's in much of her fiction.⁵

The traditional Gothic castle, tomb, or attic exudes a frightening atmosphere and holds a woman prisoner. In another classic Gothic novel, The Mysteries of Udolpho by Ann Radcliffe, Emily awaits her fate while locked away in the castle Udolpho.⁶ Specters and horrifying screams add to the fearful backdrop. Likewise, in Otranto castle, morbid deaths occur as a result of supernatural acts such as statues that grow to enormity and murder innocent victims.

Every detail of the setting seems geared toward producing fear.

Nearly from its beginning, American Gothic focused on the psychological dilemma of its characters. Writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe borrowed sinister settings from European models but placed characters within these settings to examine their emotional turmoil. Poe's characters undergo horrifying emotional trauma but exert little physical action, in contrast to Walpole's characters whose frenzied reactions supply most of the plot, particularly the young maidens' flee from terror.

The first American Gothic writers were male, and they portray protagonists who may voluntarily turn inward or imprison another character, usually a woman. Hawthorne, for example, often portrays "mad scientists" who create their own world within a Gothic setting. Like their European counterparts, these protagonists imprison others, for example, Rapaccinni, of "Rapaccinni's Daughter," who holds his daughter prisoner, or Aylmer, of "The Birthmark," who imprisons his bride. These characters typically create their own Gothic worlds, and, like Adam, desire a woman to make it complete. Jackson's characters, typically female, flee to the Gothic setting because the outside world frightens them.

Contemporary writers utilizing Gothic settings have revised the tradition. Irving Malin emphasizes the characters' isolation as an important and common factor of

what he calls the "new American gothic" (25). He believes the characters "do not and cannot belong to the outside world." Gradually they turn more and more inward "until they begin to love themselves"(25). This self-love eventually "mechanizes" them (49). The ambivalent characters within these settings "want to see the big world but are afraid to leave the little world" (79). Although Malin's definition may be an over generalization, it applies to many recent American Gothic works. Examples occur in Truman Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms and Carson McCuller's The Heart Is the Lonely Hunter.

Jackson's characters are also mechanized and isolated but differ in their attitude toward the outside world and themselves. Primarily female, they neither harbor self love, nor do they want to see the larger world. Instead, the world drives them to their isolation. A patriarchal world forces them to seclusion rather than a male villain taking them prisoner in a Gothic setting. At first, the Gothic setting may appear slightly frightening to them, but they soon begin to take comfort in the familiarity and protection it offers. They grow to love the surroundings but never themselves. As all American Gothic writers have tended to do, Jackson focuses on the character's emotions within the "haunted" houses, and her characters reflect the troubled psyche of their creator. They reveal a wide range of fears and often cower in seclusion, unable to venture far from their surroundings. This inability frequently causes

them to express self revulsion at their own weaknesses.

One of the best examples of the manner in which Jackson revised the Gothic tradition appears in The Haunting of Hill House (1959). Jackson makes use of traditional Gothic props such as a haunted house, a mad scientist, and frequent suggestion of the supernatural, but she alters the form with her character, Eleanor Vance. In the novel, Dr. Montague, the scientist, has chosen Hill House outside the small village of Hilldale as the site of an experiment to test the possibility of apparitions. No one has lived in Hill House, owned by the Sanderson family, for at least a decade. The narrator informs readers frequently that the personified house is insane. A number of its previous occupants have met with bizarre, premature deaths, causing the villagers to swear it is haunted. Even Mrs. Dudley, who agrees to act as housekeeper and cook during the experiment, serves dinner promptly at six, leaves the dishes on the table, and hurries away each evening vowing never to remain in the house after dark.

To increase the chances of psychic phenomena, Dr. Montague has brought together persons who have previously experienced inexplicable events in the hope that they will "intensify the forces at work in the house" (73). When Eleanor Vance was twelve, stones had hailed down upon her house for three days, breaking windows and damaging the roof while neighbors and sightseers watched horrified. Theodora was invited because of her uncanny ability to identify cards

correctly before turning them over. Unlike prisoners in the Gothic models, none of the characters has been abducted and taken to the Hill mansion; instead, they come to the house of their own accord. Although responding to Dr. Montague's invitation primarily out of curiosity, all the characters have led lonely, purposeless lives and hope to fill an emptiness.

Jackson employs the typical Gothic setting. The house appears frightening to the guests as they first approach it. Eleanor becomes increasingly wary as she confronts the thick, oppressive trees, the chained and barred gate, and finally the somber guard who snickers and says, "Me, I don't hang around here after dark" (32). As she stops the car and observes the Gothic spires and gargoyles, the house seems "vile, diseased" (32). An uncanny premonition warns her to escape it at once, yet an equally inexplicable motivation pushes her on.

Although the house's appearance frightens the central characters at first, they soon discover something comforting in its seclusion. This comforting security represents the primary difference between Jackson's Gothic settings and the typical ones found in Walpole or Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolfo. Jackson's setting, equally as frightening as that of earlier writers, nevertheless becomes a place that provides security for the characters. Her straightforward prose and humor mingled with the terror cause readers to study the characters' reactions rather than

concentrate on the startling, freakish events. Staged in a central area similar to a Greek drama, much of Jackson's fiction has easily been adapted to the stage or screen. In addition to causing the most fright for agoraphobes, the central area insures closer reader attention to the characters.

At first, nervous and slightly frightened in Hill House, Eleanor is mysteriously assuaged even though phenomena such as doors mysteriously closing and rooms suddenly becoming cold and drafty attest to the fact that the house may indeed be haunted. By afternoon of the first day, however, the guests, especially Eleanor, are relatively calm.

Jackson's settings often develop character-like traits.⁷ As characters, the houses often appear to protect, observe, or entrap their occupants. Hill House becomes an active participant in the drama, protecting rather than endangering those enclosed in its walls:

Around them the house steadied and located them, above them the hills slept watchfully, small eddies of air and sound and movement stirred and waited and whispered, and the center of consciousness was somehow the small space where they stood, four separated people, and looked trustingly at one another. (58)

As the house watches, the four misfits are drawn together. Previously a loner, Eleanor experiences friendship for the

first time in her life and looks forward to a long stay, but Dr. Montague warns that the house may try to hold them prisoner:

Hill House has a reputation for insistent hospitality; it seemingly dislikes letting its guests get away. The last person who tried to leave Hill House in darkness--it was eighteen years ago, I grant you--was killed at the turn in the driveway, where his horse bolted and crushed him against the big tree. (67)

Nevertheless, Eleanor feels secure and develops a sense of identity; for the first time in her life, she begins to think about what she likes or dislikes. As she sits in the parlor with Dr. Montague, Theodora, and Luke in the evening, she enjoys the security of being among friends.

Hill House itself does not keep Eleanor from leaving. Instead, upset at being forced to leave the familiar reliability of Hill House, Eleanor commits suicide. Although Dr. Montague and the others may have her welfare in mind, their insistence that she leave pushes Eleanor to her death. As she enters the car, it feels awkward and unnatural to her. "I'm too used to the comforts of Hill House," she tells herself (245). Finally, pretending to leave, she says, "They can't make me leave. I won't go" (245). She accelerates the car and turns the wheel to send the car racing directly toward the great tree at the curve of the driveway. Seconds before she hits the tree, she asks

herself why she is doing this. With that question Jackson maintains the suspense after the novel has ended. Did the mysterious, insane house in some way maintain its hold on Eleanor? Or did Eleanor, like Jackson herself, suffer from agoraphobia and need the security and camaraderie of Hill House so desperately that she was willing to die rather than leave it?

With The Sundial (1958), Jackson became even more obvious in her use of a house as a protective device. A stone wall completely surrounds the estate, creating a separate world made up mostly of Hallorans. Inside, the family awaits a storm that is to mark the end of civilization; they make careful plans to exclude the servants and any other outsiders. As they await the fatal event, Mrs. Halloran orders provisions that allow them to remain inside. The huge orders of canned goods, paper supplies, tools, and other supplies resemble the frequent orders Jackson herself made by both mail and phone. Long before she was diagnosed with agoraphobia, she was purchasing many gifts and household goods by telephone or mail, indicating that she might have disliked venturing from the house years before friends and family members knew of her illness. It seems logical that a writer experiencing agoraphobia might create a story about a house in which a family feels protected from outside forces.

In her 1962 novel, We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Jackson again portrays women who feel protected by a Gothic

house. The Blackwoods prefer isolation, particularly Constance who cannot abide the whispering, strolling villagers.⁸ The entire Blackwood property, from the highway to the creek, is fenced with padlocked gates and signs saying, "PRIVATE NO TRESPASSING" (26). People who desire familiar surroundings populate many of Jackson's works, but several contain obvious agoraphobes. Constance Blackwood is one example. In the opening pages of the novel, she goes to the edge of the garden to meet Merricat, who is returning from town: "Look how far I came today" (27), she says, indicating progress at reaching this destination, which is still well within the fenced Blackwood property. Within a year Jackson herself would be writing to her parents that she had achieved a similar goal by venturing out to the Post Office for the first time in months.

Although only Constance cannot leave the house, both sisters fortify themselves against the community's hatred. They spend most of their time behind the house, which faces the village. Merricat explains:

We left the front of the house turned toward the highway and the village, and went our own ways behind its stern, unwelcoming face. Although we kept the house well, the rooms we used together were the back ones, the kitchen and the back bedrooms and the little warm room off the kitchen where Uncle Julian lived; outside was Constance's chestnut tree and the wide, lovely reach of lawn

and Constance's flowers and then, beyond, the vegetable garden Constance tended and, past that, the trees which shaded the creek. When we sat on the back lawn no one could see us from anywhere. (28-9)

Unlike situations in which a house or other structure provides security, in this scene the trees, flowers, and lawn act as the familiar comfort zone for the characters. Just as if they had been transported to the house by a Gothic villain, the two sisters are prisoners even if held only by their own emotions. Within their boundaries, they control their lives. Uncle Julian, the only male in the household, is incapable of making any decisions. Though they care for him, they pay little heed to his digressive attempts to record the murders accurately. Instead, they create their own semblance of order by cleaning the house and maintaining a rigid schedule in an attempt to cope with their circumstances. The Blackwoods have never experienced social interaction with the community; therefore, they have never developed ontological security. Without this security of an ontological self that also acts as a part of the outside world, they have no real sense of themselves, and they perceive only evil outside their gates. Jackson also felt "differentiated from the outside world" (Laing 42). Through interiorization of Merricat Blackwood, Jackson persuades readers to share the girl's opinion of the outside world, a world as hostile to other women as it is to the

Blackwood sisters.

In typical Gothic castles, a tower holds a young princess against her will. Jackson incorporates towers into some of her fiction, but these fictional women, like those isolated elsewhere, seem content in their towers. In "The Lovely House," Margaret visits a classmate's house and wanders into a tower as she investigates every part of the house.⁹ There she meets another mysterious Margaret, said to be the hostess's great aunt who lives in the tower and has "spells of hiding away" (Come Along 101). Although young Margaret is a fearful young lady who is "stricken with fear at meeting the owners of the house" (Come Along 92) and appears frightened of her own room, she seems unalarmed by her visit to the tower. Even at the story's end, when it is suggested that Margaret must remain in the tower, she accepts her fate with a smile. Although mysterious, the house affords a security for which the hostage is willing to forgo her freedom. Like Jackson herself, Margaret believes being a captive in the house is better than the perceived dangers of the outside world. Both the suggestion of safety within virtual captivity and the great aunt's "spells" suggest Jackson's agoraphobia was ever present as she wrote.

Other barriers provide the same protection afforded by houses. In The Road Through the Wall (1948), a wall closes Pepper Street, making the neighborhood not easily accessible from the outside. The inhabitants like the dead-end street, for it keeps unwanted elements of society from entering,

thereby ensuring social stability. Although the suburban California neighborhood attracts relatively affluent families, most of them plan to move to an even nicer neighborhood as soon as they can afford it, but for the present, the wall protects them from the obvious encroachment of lower classes and from other unknown evils. Within the neighborhood, parents believe their children are safe from harm. Only Mrs. Mack, a recluse, sees evil in the wall, saying it relates to prejudice and to obstacles man builds to keep him from the grace of God. Families never hear Mrs. Mack's warning because they seldom see her. They overlook her eccentric behavior because she owns a small piece of neighborhood property where she has lived for years and because no one knows of a single person she has harmed. Yet rumors circulate that she is a witch, and on rare occasions when she ventures out of her house, she appears agitated. Living in a shack with boarded-up windows hidden behind a heavy hedge, Mrs. Mack comes out only on the warmest sunny days. Mrs. Mack's actions resemble those of many agoraphobes (as discussed in chapter one) whose emotions are influenced by the weather. Although Jackson left no journal notes or any other indication that differing weather conditions affected her own despondency, she probably noticed that sunshine or rain made a difference in her mood since this is a common characteristic. Mrs. Mack's hesitancy to exit the house, her boarded windows, and thick hedge all suggest that she too is agoraphobic.

Just as Jackson often disguised her own disorder through humor, she inserts Mrs. Mack into humorous scenes parodying many husband-wife situations. As the unfortunate woman and her dog Lady sit at the table, Mrs. Mack scolds her for being late to dinner much the same way that down the street Mrs. Merriam scolds her husband. Since The Road Through the Wall is Jackson's first novel and contains a character named Harriet Merriam, who is a thinly veiled portrait of the author herself as a teenager in a California suburb, it seems likely that Jackson might also include details of her illness. Although Mrs. Mack is perhaps the only identifiable agoraphobe, many other people of Pepper Street also appreciate the security of enclosures and familiarity.

Families such as the Desmonds sit in their living rooms in the evenings with their Venetian blinds securely closed, an added device for closing themselves off. When "the destruction of the wall put the first wedge into the Pepper Street security, . . . security so fragile that, once jarred, it shivered into fragments in a matter of weeks" (The Road Through the Wall 148), the Desmonds were one of the first families to consider moving. After tragedy struck with the deaths of two Pepper Street children, many families moved.

For Jackson, urban settings may also serve as protective areas. Many of the short fiction characters are young career women in New York. Written during the 1940s,

when Jackson often wrote at night as her children slept, many of these stories reflect the stress of her busy life. Sometimes the character's comfort and security occur from her association with a particular neighborhood. In "Villager" (1944), Hilda Clarence takes refuge in the idea of being a Greenwich Villager (The Lottery 49-56). Unable to achieve the role of dancer, the aspiration which brought her to the city from a small town, Hilda, alone and lonely, experiences a feeling of security solely from the name Villager, her only identity.

Another small town girl in New York, Elizabeth Style, of "Elizabeth" (1949) requires stability in her life. She fears change so much that she hides away in an office at a job she hates, settles for a man she cares little for, and follows a dull routine all because of her compulsive need for uniformity (The Magic 76-108). When a young woman threatens to disturb her routine, she exhibits a rare assertiveness to maintain the evenness she requires. She turns away family and opportunities because she fears anything new more than she despises the monotony of her current life.

In "Trial By Combat" (1944), the protagonist's security is disturbed by an intruder (The Lottery 41-48). When Emily Johnson returns to her furnished room, she discovers that some of her handkerchiefs are missing. When she learns that the thief is someone with fewer possessions and an even emptier life

than her own, Emily feels forgiving and less violated.

Whenever agoraphobia victims understand their own disorder, they realize their fears are virtually holding them prisoners, and they may regard the protective surroundings differently. Although the continuity affords protection from their irrational fears, the familiar surroundings also restrict them from a normal lifestyle. Jackson shows evidence of this realization in her fiction by depicting characters who sometimes attempt to escape.

A lifestyle itself or even an imagination can provide the protection as well as escape. In "The Island" (1950), the author intricately weaves an analytic study of two characters who represent both attitudes toward familiar surroundings. Miss Oakes, a neurotic with obsessive compulsive behavior, requires constancy in her life and surroundings, and Mrs. Montague, a diagnosed madwoman, desperately tries to escape the tedium of her life. Wealthy old Mrs. Montague is trapped amid luxury provided by a loving but usually absent son. Instead of offering the comfort and protection he intends, the comfortable penthouse, elegant clothes, and attentive companion restrict and confine the old woman, driving her into further madness. She reveals her sadness through the blue pictures she colors. She may be mad, but she understands the destructive capability of the unrelenting monotony of her life and seeks escape, attempting unsuccessfully to run away. She searches for beauty and freedom in brief daily walks and finally

frees herself in the only way possible, through daydreams of a lovely island with no "cumbering clothes" (Come Along 86), bland oatmeal diets, or restraining companions. Jackson wrote the story in 1950 when she might have been experiencing feelings of confinement at rearing three small children. She may also have been depressed as a result of negative response to "The Lottery."

Described as "unswerving," with "superhuman control," a person who must forcefully "allow a smile to touch her face" (Come Along 90), Miss Oakes is as sturdy and unbending as her name implies. She has maintained a rigid routine for six years "broken only by the regular visits from Mrs. Montague's son" (86). However, beneath her stable exterior lurks an insecure agoraphobe who imagines everyone's eyes upon her when she goes out. She hates dress shopping because she cannot stand the department store's "insinuating lights" or the salesgirls' eyes (87). Insecure, she glances in the hall mirror as she passes "from a nervous compulsion rather than any real desire for information" (84), and longs for "the security of her white uniforms" (80), since she despises the conspicuous, brightly colored dresses her inadequate budget forces her to wear.

Miss Oakes hates being a companion to a madwoman. It takes superhuman control to watch the woman carelessly overturn dishes, make the same wrong turn day after day, color everything in a picture blue, or listen respectfully as Mrs. Montague tells her she is not pretty. Yet the

setting provides the uniformity Miss Oakes so desperately needs, for her, an "island" of refuge.

For Mrs. Montague, the penthouse has become a prison and Miss Oakes, a cruel guard who withholds food and other privileges at will. The poor old lady's only diversions are the short walks and her coloring. Her only real escape is into the dark recesses of her mind, where she imagines lush tropical islands. Jackson's talented combination of wit, symbol and irony combine to make this story one of her best. In the final scene Mrs. Montague, coloring one of her pictures "with a vague smile on her old face" (90), carefully places a bright splotch, obviously intended to represent Miss Oakes, high in the treetop. As readers observe the old woman's keen sense of justice, they sympathize even more with her desperate, inescapable situation. Written soon after Jackson had received wide attention for "The Lottery," "The Island" suggests that as a very private person, the author may have been suffering from the widespread publicity and searching for her own island of escape.

In addition to setting, critics have long recognized various other Gothic characteristics in Jackson's works. In Love and Death in the American Novel, Leslie Fiedler identifies additional characteristics of the Gothic novel including a dream landscape, a sense of guilt, a type of crime, and a deformity, many of which are evident in Jackson's fiction. The author frequently varies these

conventions; for example, few of Jackson's characters possess a physical deformity, but several are misfits, what Ellen Moers refers to as freaks when she says the "keynote of modern post-war American Female Gothic was its obsession with freaks" (92). Many of Jackson's characters resemble Sherwood Anderson's "grotesques" or Flannery O'Connor's freaks. Lonely, desperate individuals, they are made to suffer for their differences from society's norm.

From the late nineteenth century through the post World War II years, many American women writers adapted conventions of the European Gothic to their own works. One common characteristic was a variation of the female-as-prisoner/victim which women writers used to emphasize their own lack of power in a patriarchal society. Elaine Showalter says, "It [American female Gothic] has become one of the most versatile and powerful genres of American women's writing, with elements that have changed in relation to changes in women's roles and American culture" (129). Ironically, many of Jackson's more humorous fictions and autobiographical family tales reveal her adaptation of the Gothic tendency for women to appear as prisoners or victims. She may have been one of the first to portray what Judith Wilt has labeled "matriarchal comedy" (qtd. in Carpenter 145).

For Jackson the housewife is often the family member victimized through overwork, lack of thoughtfulness by other family members, or even her own low self esteem. Instead of

being held prisoner in a castle, she is imprisoned by the roles society imposes upon her as wife and mother. During the 1940s and 1950s Jackson wrote many fictionalized autobiographical tales (what Friedman calls "family chronicles") involving her life as a busy homemaker. In these family portraits, Jackson again employs her humorous tone to distance herself as she had in writing The Bird's Nest, but the pain of a victimized housewife is evident. Her personal feelings that remind her of being a prisoner in a Gothic novel are evident even as she titles the family chronicles Raising Demons and Life Among the Savages.

Much of the fiction she wrote during this period also reflects variations of the female victim theme. In "Beautiful Stranger," (1946) a young wife meets her husband at the airport after he has just returned from a business trip. His business takes him away often; meanwhile, she must remain at home caring for small children (Come Along 58-65). When he returns, he seems worldly and handsome, different somehow but making her feel dowdy and unintellectual by comparison.

Other fiction depicts a domineering and masterful father, which also suggests that mother is victimized. Stories such as "Don't Tell Daddy" (1942) and "Box" (1952) depict a busy and preoccupied father who either is not available to help in the disciplining of children, or one who cannot be disturbed because his work is more important than Mother's. Meanwhile Mother, humorously cast into the

role of a stereotypical frazzled housewife/maid/ babysitter, frequently bumbles in her attempts to create order. These characteristics indicate that Jackson may have experienced the reactions of the typical agoraphobic wife who marries a more dominant husband. Once needing the security he provided, she, like Mrs. Montague, longs for freedom. The volume of work Jackson published during the 1940s and 1950s in addition to having four children, moving twice, and frequently acting as a hostess shows ample cause for the author to have felt stress. The works record the anxieties, and as she continued to write stories involving depressing settings and themes, the writing itself may have increased the anxiety. In a taped program on the life of Sylvia Plath, writer A. Alvarez comments that the emotional subjects the poet worked with may have exaggerated her own depression ("Sylvia Plath"). Jackson's biographer and members of her family likewise believe the author's subject matter may have aggravated her illness.

The works depicting women in roles of enslavement demonstrate another way Jackson revised the traditional Gothic novel. No longer incarcerated in a castle by a villain, modern women may seek the protection of marriage because they feel threatened alone in a patriarchal society. As indicated by the Goldstein and Chambless study, agoraphobic women pursue dominant males. Soon, however, the woman finds herself as much a prisoner and victim as one in a traditional Gothic tower. Ironically, the boundaries she

helped erect now entrap her.

In Jackson's fiction, male characters typically take advantage of women or abuse them verbally. These fictions differ from the family chronicles. The male figures become more aggressive, the women even more subservient and manipulated by men. In "The Dummy" (1948), a ventriloquist's dummy makes embarrassing remarks to two women (The Lottery 199-208). In "A Cauliflower in Her Hair" (1943), Father insults and attempts to seduce his daughter's friend while Mother waits unknowingly in another room. In "Like Mother Used to Make" (1948), a weak-willed female allows a man to force her out of her own apartment so that he can entertain a male friend there (The Lottery 29-40). As Hyman says, Jackson's fictional world is representative of the troubled times in which she lived. In these stories, Jackson indicates the way society restricts women. In 1948, when "Like Mother Used to Make" was published, many women were being forced away from factory and business positions as soldiers returned from World War II to resume the positions they had held before the war. Although these women had contributed to the war effort by filling positions vacated by the war, they were no longer needed. Placing male characters in contemptible fictional roles offers Jackson a subtle way to challenge the restrictions for women.

Other familiar settings, such as kitchens, often imprison women. No longer Gothic, these modern settings

confine women as certainly as do castle towers. An example appears in Hangsaman. The author says, "The kitchen was, in fact, the only place in the house that Mrs. Waite possessed utterly" (20). Mr. Waite, a university professor perhaps modeled after Stanley Hyman, is a brilliant but domineering husband who speaks incessantly of his work but never appears to do anything except talk. Every Sunday evening he entertains with a cocktail party for his colleagues and expects Mrs. Waite to prepare and serve food. "Mrs. Waite, one day a week, was allowed a length of time unmolested except for the company of her daughter" (20).

Jackson's fiction and the narrator may not represent the author herself, but the similarity between the Waite and the Hyman household is strong, and an underlying anger seems evident in those lines. In the biography, Oppenheimer includes an interview with June Mirken, a long-time friend of the Hymans, which reveals the possibility of such anger: "She not only ran the damn house and did everything else and brought up her kids and waited on Stanley and then had dinner parties at night and on weekends, but she wrote" (195). Although Jackson appeared to enjoy the domestic duties, the strain may have produced a repressed hostility. Her depiction of a mother/housekeeper/cook/caregiver who is allowed only a brief period of time per week unmolested when she is also expected to prepare dinner for thirty guests suggests she chooses to vent her anger on her male characters. Jackson also responds to a common problem of

post World War II women. Many new professions had been opened to them, but most discovered that they had to become superwomen to keep their jobs because they were expected to carry out the duties of wife and mother in addition to their new professions.

More than any other of her works, Hangsaman reflects the modern Gothic convention of women as victims. It contains the only rape scene in Jackson's entire collection. In addition, Mrs. Waite is trapped in the kitchen, and Mr. Waite is a domineering tyrant who directs his wife's domestic duties and his daughter's education. As in much of her fiction, more than one of the characters resembles Jackson herself. Mrs. Waite represents the older Jackson married to university professor/critic Stanley Hyman, who liked having his university friends around him often and who had also attempted to direct Jackson's reading. A younger portrayal of the author is depicted in Natalie Waite, whose college experiences closely parallel the author's.

The novel is also a tale of Natalie Waite's emotional breakdown. When Natalie goes away to college, she finds making new friends difficult (as Jackson herself probably did), begins to skip classes, and finally suffers a complete breakdown.¹⁰ Like her mother, who finds safety in the kitchen, Natalie also discovers a safe, familiar place where she can find peace. For Natalie it is "her own sweet dear home of a mind, where she was safe, protected" from danger (88).

Throughout her writing career Jackson emphasized the anxiety that her characters experienced. It is not surprising that a writer so paralyzed by fear herself would choose to dwell on the fears of her characters. As she realized that familiar settings alleviated her own suffering, she provided the same comfort to her characters. For some, the security came from old rambling houses similar to the one in which Jackson herself found peace. For others, neighborhoods, sheltered gardens, kitchens, or their own imaginative minds served as well. An accomplished cook and hostess herself, Jackson often assuaged her emotional trauma in the kitchen, and her imagination often became her salvation, as it did when she continued to write during the worst attacks of 1962 and 1963.

Through her writing Jackson eased her fears, but she also responded to the source of her discomfort. As she began to understand women's lack of freedom in society and the stress of her own life, she retaliated by placing men (the suggested cause of the anxieties) in unfavorable roles in her fiction. While gaining sympathy for her victimized female characters, Jackson also rewrote the Gothic novel.

Notes

¹ From an undated draft in the Manuscript Division,

Library of Congress.

² In "Faith of a Woman Writer," Lynette Carpenter argues that both Jackson's Gothic writing and her autobiographical stories involving her family lowered her chances for recognition as a respected writer. Likewise, in The American Short Story William Peden argues that Jackson suffered from the initial popularity of "The Lottery" and her association with the Gothic. Peden believes that she was both an "impeccable craftsman and thoughtful person, whose fierce visions of madness and cruelty and terror constitute a sensitive and faithful anatomy of our times" (109).

³ This information appears in the center photograph insert of Oppenheimer's book beside a picture of Jackson at her typewriter in a small room covered floor to ceiling with bookshelves. Photographs of various rooms of the house reveal book shelves in nearly every room.

⁴ Jackson's settings frequently contain houses that have the appearance of being haunted. Characters see and converse with ghosts in "Home" and "A Visit."

⁵ In "Jackson's Use of the Gothic," John Parks provides an excellent reading of Jackson's female protagonists, describing them as "lonely, desperate women who reflect the disintegrations of modern life" (20).

⁶ Ellen Moers provides a brief but helpful reading of Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho. In Works Cited.

⁷ Other critics have commented on Jackson's development

of houses as characters. In Shirley Jackson, Friedman includes a chapter called "The House as Personality." Jackson may have gleaned ideas for personification of houses from Algernon Blackwood, a British writer during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Blackwood personifies the house in The Empty House, (1906).

⁸ Jackson's use of the name Blackwood may also imply her respect for Algernon Blackwood.

⁹ Originally titled "A Visit," this story was first published as "The Lovely House" in New World Writing in 1952. After Jackson's death, Hyman restored the original title, "A Visit" and dedication, "To Dylan Thomas," and published it in Come Along With Me. Oppenheimer provides details of a possible brief affair between Jackson and Thomas which led to the dedication.

¹⁰ Note the similarity to Jackson's own first year at Rochester, discussed in chapter two.

CHAPTER FIVE

JACKSON'S UNIQUE PORTRAYAL OF FEAR

Even though she turned from the typical use of Gothic devices as fear producers, Jackson created new ways to evoke fear. This contribution to modern horror fiction brought her recognition and a large, dedicated audience.¹ Among her fans is popular horror writer Stephen King. King accurately described the way the author creates fear when he dedicated Firestarter "to Shirley Jackson, who never had to raise her voice" (x). Jackson's quiet, unique style creates suspense through "low-keyed, disciplined craftsmanship" (Peden, The American Short Story 108). Jackson's horror fiction derives from several sources, sometimes from inserting the unusual into ordinary settings as in "The Lottery." Other times, she evokes fear by the suggestion of evil through an allusion. She often delineates fear through close, detailed focus on characters who react by revealing hidden, or previously disguised, phobias. But, as King and Peden agree, she transports readers into a fearful scene without the use of elaborate devices or actions.

Jackson determined early in her career to create the most marketable fiction possible. She discovered that the public had a taste for the supernatural and began to implement unusual, often bizarre, elements into her work in 1944.² As a conscientious craftsperson, she researched ways of introducing the sense of mystery that readers seemed to enjoy. She read about demonology and otherworldliness and

combed past literature for allusions to the supernatural. She continued her study of psychology, including abnormal psychology. Her personal acquaintance with writers, publishers, and critics in the forefront of contemporary fiction offered her a unique advantage.³ Jackson's fictional skills and exceptional literary knowledge permitted her to combine traditional allusions, modern psychology, and her own experiences to create fiction characterized by her own special blend of horror.

Jackson understood well that an individual's worst fear is the unknown. A sense of mystery produces anxiety, and Jackson often creates open-ended stories. In other stories, she distorts the narrative allowing uncertainty and causing readers to experience an anxiety similar to the character's. She also creates anxiety through the suggestion (the quiet voice King alludes to) of evil. Jackson reviewed the mythologies and histories of various countries and carefully borrowed from other authors who had evoked a sense of uneasiness. She particularly liked the manner in which ballads create suspense and began drawing on familiar, traditional ballads for plot, character, theme, and setting. An important example of her use of the ballad to evoke suspense occurs in "The Daemon Lover," an old ballad popular in Scotland, England, and America. The ballad provided a character, James Harris, found in many of Jackson's short stories.⁴ In the ballad Harris, a seaman, is believed to have died at sea, but he returns after seven years to claim

his love, who, in the meantime, has married and given birth to two children. He persuades her to run away with him, but after they are at sea, she discovers his cloven feet and realizes he is really the devil taking her away to a distant place he calls hell. The ballad ends with the ship crashing and breaking apart upon the rocks. The audience must assume this is Harris' way of taking his wife to hell, but they can never be sure.

In the February 1949 Woman's Home Companion, Jackson published a story entitled "Phantom Lover," which draws loosely on the ballad. Later renamed, the story appears in The Magic of Shirley Jackson as "The Daemon Lover," title of the original ballad. Jackson's story resembles the original ballad in title, character, and theme. In the beginning, an anxious, thirty-four-year-old bride waits for her bridegroom, James Harris. Jackson builds suspense by directing the reader's attention to the bride's insecurity. The nervous woman repeatedly checks the mirror, changes from one of her two suitable dresses into the other, and straightens her shabby apartment. Clearly the desperate woman considers the marriage her only opportunity for happiness. With her bridegroom more than two hours late, she goes to his apartment building to look for him but discovers he moved out that morning. None of the neighbors really knows him. Other residents vaguely recall a man living in the designated apartment but can recollect no specific details of his appearance, occupation, or habits.

On the trip back to her own apartment, the frantic woman stops at various shops to inquire about him and is mysteriously directed to another apartment building. No names appear on the boxes, but she climbs to the third floor, which has only two apartments. Knocking on both doors, she thinks she hears voices, but no one answers the door. The story ends with her confusion:

She knew there was someone inside the other apartment, because she was sure she could hear low voices and laughter. She came back many times, every day for the first week. She came on her way to work, in the mornings; in the evenings, on her way to dinner alone, but no matter how often or how firmly she knocked, no one ever came to the door. (The Magic 27-28)

Jackson emphasizes the woman's loneliness and desperation while drawing on the ballad for both title and character. She need not mention the cloven feet, depicted in the original ballad. Readers view the woman's torture and perceive the demonic involvement. The mystery persists. The woman's anxiety is apparent. Her fear, though not life-threatening, nevertheless is real as she contemplates a long, lonely life. Another of the lonely, frightened women who populate Jackson's fiction, the would-be bride resembles the agoraphobes who face their fears in the security of seclusion. Just as women writers such as Emily Bronte and Jane Austen depicted women's lack of freedom in the

patriarchal society of the nineteenth century, Jackson suggests that society has not made significant changes. By 1949, American women could vote, attend most schools, and choose from a wide variety of professions. However, society still regarded unmarried women with suspicion or with pity.

In many of the stories collected in The Lottery or The Adventures of James Harris, the mysterious Harris exists as a threatening character who seldom makes an appearance but is discussed by other characters.⁴ Inclusion of his name in the title as well as in many of the stories provides a link between the several otherwise unrelated works, a device for creating a whole or sequence rather than just a collection of stories.⁵ The name's source suggests a mystery that improves marketability, but it also is a constant reminder of men who threaten women. Mystery and a sense of foreboding permeate all Harris' minor roles. He is the unseen neighbor whose chickens Lady Walpole has killed in "The Renegade"; the apparently evil husband of Lucy Harris, whose cutting jokes alarm Mrs. Winning in "Flower Garden"; the mysterious former lover in "Elizabeth"; the obviously domineering yet unseen husband in "Of Course." This offstage menace suggests a greater threat than a visible character might. Combining the mystery with the Harris devil allusion, Jackson creates anxiety as she concocts her special blend of suspense.

James Harris typically represents a threat to other characters. In three of the above mentioned stories, Mrs.

Harris acts as a messenger for her husband. Not only does she deliver his messages, which have an alarming effect on others, but the message bearer herself is also clearly intimidated by her husband. In "The Renegade," when Mrs. Harris says, "You'll have to do something about the dog" (The Lottery 72), Mrs. Walpole experiences cold chills. She visualizes the angry chicken owner with his rifle and worries about how to save Lady. In "Flower Garden," when Mrs. Harris makes scathing remarks about her newcomer neighbor, even stoic old Mrs. Winning does not judge the speaker too harshly. Instead, she says, "Nothing wrong with Mrs. Harris getting away from that man of hers wouldn't cure" (The Magic 125), compounding the impression of James Harris as a cruel, thoughtless man who harms others, especially his wife. James Harris from "Of Course" abuses his wife too, but in a less physical manner. He wants to control her mind, a situation more frightening for Jackson than physical abuse. Mrs. Harris mentions her husband's aversion to movies, radio, and newspapers. He finds them "intellectually retarding" (The Lottery 231) and does not permit his family members to indulge in them. As the new neighbor unconsciously reveals insight about her husband, even Mrs. Taylor begins to feel nervous, "the way she felt when something was dangerously out of control" (The Lottery 232). Mrs. Taylor's uneasiness illustrates the alarming effect Harris has on everyone.

Although the frequently recurring character of James

Harris may originally have been intended to provide continuity, both the mysterious devil allusion and the fear Harris obviously evokes produce a threatening element as well. Jackson's use of a mystery character, introduced only through the dialogue of other characters who obviously fear him, allows her to focus not on him but on their fear. She capitalizes on their fright, creating horror through mystery and close study of the victims. The combination contributes to the unique horror which made her financially successful and helped her portray what Hyman calls "a sensitive and faithful anatomy of our times," an era fraught with fearful encounters ("Shirley Jackson" 61). In the 1990s, domestic violence is a frequent topic of talk shows, the news, and fiction; but in the 1940s, Jackson avoids the taboo subject and only suggests danger. Nothing in Jackson's journal suggests physical violence; however, many entries imply emotional abuse, such as Taisse Kellman's calling Hyman "a terrible tyrant" (Oppenheimer 97).

Many of Jackson's other short stories employ similar suggestions of evil and resulting dread. In stories such as "The Visit" and "The Rock" a stranger makes an appearance, his purpose to carry away the protagonist, a young woman.⁶ In each story the young woman's selection seems predetermined through no action of her own. In both, an old woman guides the young woman to the Harris-like stranger. The mystery and implied evil surrounding the stranger suggest his association with the devil. Readers recognize

the suggested theme, popular since classical mythology, which portrayed Hades carrying Persephone away. Jackson's concise style requires few words to suggest her allusion; instead of lengthy descriptions, she expands the area of the unknown. In "The Visit," for example, Carla repeatedly evades Margaret's questions about the tower and the old woman who resides there. Jackson's craftsmanship led her to use every rhetorical device possible to create mystery and fear. Close readers have little difficulty interpreting the stories. However, many readers have more difficulty understanding the stories which involve fear produced through psychological phenomena.

Jackson's own disorder and knowledge of psychology provided material for some of the stories readers find most bizarre. When compared to case studies of victims experiencing anxiety attacks, these once-confusing scenes become clearer. Many of these scenes can best be described in psychologist's terms of depersonalization and derealization. Depersonalization acts as a safety device for anxiety attack victims. Some researchers speculate that "it is a mechanism to reduce sensory stimulation" (Lader and Wing 145), the body's defense against overstimulation which might result in a heart attack or other extreme physical result of fear. Richard Hallam defines depersonalization as "a sense of detachment, as if the body and self are separate, and the self is observing the body" (65). It may include a victim's loss of emotion even though the behavior

associated with emotion is present, a sense that "actions are willed" by instinct rather than through conscious thought (Hallam 65); for example, a person may shed tears but be unaware of feeling sad or of crying.

Persons experiencing depersonalization often have an accompanying feeling of derealization, a sense of estrangement from the world, which has become obscure or dreamlike. A 1977 study of strange combined experiences involving accident victims and psychiatric patients provides information helpful to understanding Jackson's most obscure scenes (Goldstein and Chambless 67). Data compiled from the study indicated three similar factors: a feeling of detachment from the world, a clouding or hazing of consciousness, and a contrasting state of hyperalertness or sharpness of perception. These conditions are evident in much of Jackson's fiction involving fear. Jackson, of course, never mentions experiencing depersonalization specifically. Most research studies involving depersonalization have occurred since the writer's death in 1965. If she did encounter such sensations, she may have been unaware that others had similar feelings. Also, like other agoraphobes, she attempted to keep her fears hidden or wrote anonymously of them (Vose 22-23). Her keen interest in psychic powers and demonology also suggests she may have been searching for answers concerning her own unexplainable experiences.

Although she made no mention of it in her journals,

Jackson may have been familiar with depersonalization. Her fictional characters undergo experiences which resemble textbook studies. Some of these scenes are included in stories which critics have found obscure and difficult to explain. Shortly after publication of "The Lottery," when the author was admittedly anxious about her fan mail, Jackson wrote "The Tooth" (1948), a story whose protagonist undergoes an unusual experience explainable in terms of depersonalization. Clara Spencer, a young suburban housewife, faces the dreaded prospect of having a tooth extracted. In order to reach New York City for an early morning appointment, Clara must board a bus in her small community shortly after midnight. Drugged from codeine to lessen the pain, the young housewife dozes throughout the night, waking only to stagger into coffee shops when the bus makes intermittent stops. When the dentist examines her, he tells her she must have the tooth extracted, forcing her to go to yet another Manhattan office and receive still more drugs. The combined lack of sleep, fear of going to the dentist, and use of drugs cause her to dream and wake up disoriented. The pain of the throbbing tooth has become so intense that she imagines herself a tooth instead of a person. When the technician completes the x-rays, her thoughts become even more confused:

Her tooth, which had brought her here unerringly, seemed now the only part of her to have any identity. It seemed to have had its picture taken

without her; it was the important creature which must be recorded and examined and gratified; she was only its unwilling vehicle, and only as such was she of interest to the dentist and the nurse, only as the bearer of her tooth was she worth their immediate and practiced attention.

(The Lottery 276)

As she describes the young woman's confused state, Jackson depicts an individual's inner consciousness, which appears to have moved outside itself and, just as the participants in the studies described watching themselves, Clara too seems to observe the scene as if she were not a part of it. However, instead of watching her entire body, Clara only sees the all-important tooth which she believes she has become. Like the participants in the psychological studies, Clara feels no emotion, yet her body reacts automatically. She feels tears rolling down her face, and the nurse wipes them away as the dentist removes her tooth, her only identity. The tears flow, not as a result of physical pain; she is anesthetized. Instead, the tears mourn the lost Clara.

When she leaves the office, Clara goes to the restroom and discovers she has indeed lost her identity. Horrified, she glances into the mirror of the crowded restroom and realizes that she has no idea which face is hers:

She looked into the mirror as though into a group of strangers, all staring at her or around her; no

one was familiar in the group, no one smiled at her or looked at her with recognition; you'd think my own face would know me, she thought, with a queer numbness in her throat. (The Lottery 283)

Thus Jackson depicts a woman whose identity had focused on a painful tooth, now extracted. With the tooth removed, Clara has nothing with which to identify herself. Jackson carefully records the character watching herself, the confused state of mind, and finally, the hyperalertness.⁷ As she discovers a barrette with the name Clara engraved on it, the woman perceives this must be her name.

Dissatisfied with the severely pulled back hair, the torn stockings, the pale complexion, Clara carefully removes the barrette, the stockings, loosens her hair, and applies make-up generously. She walks out of the building minus tooth and the identifying features of Clara. Most critics read the ending as a typical escape story since she goes to meet a young man whom she has met on the bus. No one can deny the woman has obviously chosen to abandon the old Clara when she removes the pin and changes her appearance, but why? One can only determine that her "out of body experience," in which she observed herself as a tooth, has left her consciousness unable to return once the tooth is extracted. The woman known as Clara no longer exists. Jackson anticipates women of later decades who leave husbands and children to go in search of their own identities. They often feel they have no identity apart

from those of wives and mothers. Today Americans are more aware of the importance of self identity to mental health and thus are more likely to understand why a woman might need to escape. In 1948, Jackson can only suggest an escape.

The extent of Jackson's reliance upon her own experiences for her fiction is again emphasized in a letter to her parents, dated 13 June 1949, in which she discusses having to take the bus to New York several times to have teeth pulled. In the same letter, she discusses their three-year-old Shepherd dog, whose description suggests Lady Walpole. In the wake of the women's movement, we now frequently encounter women in literature and society who have learned that they cannot cope with their lives as wives and mothers. Today women realize they must become whole persons before they can successfully carry out the demands of being wives and mothers. In 1948, society was not so empathetic. If Jackson experienced such feelings, she believed she must hide them in her fiction as well as in her own life. Repression of these thoughts added to her anxieties.

Psychologists' studies determine that a form of derealization usually accompanies depersonalization. Best described as a departure from the real world, derealization is defined by Hallam as "a sense of estrangement from the world, which appears distant, remote, dreamlike or two-dimensional" (65). Vose describes her personal

experience: "Everything around me became totally unreal, and I neither knew or cared who or what anything was" (54). While depersonalization causes victims to experience a sensation of being outside their own bodies looking back at themselves, derealization moves them out of their known world and into a fantasy. Jackson's fiction commonly portrays such a world.

In "The Tooth" the fantasy takes the form of the drug-induced dreams Clara experiences on the long bus trip and later under the influence of the dentist's anesthetic. She imagines an attentive stranger helping her during the night bus ride and sees his "hand [wave] to her from the crowd across the street" as she goes from one office to another (The Lottery 277). Just as depersonalization provides a respite from an over anxious state, this dream world helps Clara forget the tedium of her life. In contrast to her serious, conservative, unnamed husband who represents the responsibilities of housework, children, and finances, the tall stranger, identified as Jim, suggests distant tropical islands where flutes play, and the moon shines on the water. Unlike her husband, who puts her on a bus alone and tells her to phone if she needs him, the attentive stranger says, "I'll watch out for you" (The Lottery 273). As Clara goes from the station to the dentist's office, she glimpses the stranger in the crowd waiting nearby in case she needs him. When she emerges from the dentist's building minus her old identity, Jim waits to

take her hand and lead her to a new life; she imagines herself walking barefoot on a sandy beach. This break from reality, best described as derealization, produces a sense of foreboding. The clever use of the name Jim also reminds faithful readers of James Harris and brings with it the fearful connotations.

In "Farther than Samarkind: The Escape Theme in Shirley Jackson's 'The Tooth,'" critic Richard Pascal explains the outcome in terms of the escape theme. Pascal suggests that throughout Jackson's writing, both the clearly autobiographical family chronicles and the fiction, the author hints at a desire to run away from it all. She desires to escape the overwork and lack of appreciation of family life and the community which places her in an extraneous position. Jackson does suggest a desire to escape; furthermore, in 1948 when writing "The Tooth," Jackson may have also wanted to escape the critics and fans whose uncomplimentary letters she was receiving at the time. However, instead of simply utilizing the escape theme as a writing convention, Jackson creates a unique type of fiction by concentrating on Clara's bizarre thoughts. This unusual depiction of a person observing her own actions clearly describes depersonalization. Moving away from reality suggests the accompanying derealization.

Closely related to "The Tooth" is another story involving a character under the influence of drugs, taking a bus trip, and undergoing fearful experiences. Just as Clara

has boarded a bus after taking codeine, old Miss Harper of "The Bus" (1965) climbs on a bus for a night trip after having taken a sleeping pill to make the long ride bearable. She immediately falls asleep, and when the driver wakes her, she appears to be in a dream world or perhaps experiencing derealization. However, unlike Clara, whose dream involves the future, Miss Harper's nightmare combines everyone's worst fears through the use of a house which suggests a type of deja vu experience from her past. The driver awakens Miss Harper and says it is her stop, putting her off the bus and driving away before she discovers she has been ejected in a deserted roadway in the middle of a driving rainstorm.

Left alone, cold, wet, and frightened, she begins to hallucinate. When two disreputable-looking young men stop for her, they appear to present more danger than her being alone on a deserted road late at night. They take her to an old mansion converted to a saloon, which Miss Harper thinks resembles the house she grew up in. Forced to rent a room for the night, the frightened old woman sleeps fitfully and awakens to noises coming from the closet. Inside, objects such as wooden snakes and dolls remind her of childhood toys, but they suddenly begin to call her names and gyrate with frightening, evil gestures. This action foreshadows scenes in typical Stephen King novels and movies popular today.

Characteristically, Jackson enhances the scene with her own unique twist. Normally most concerned with portraying

characters' reactions to fearful situations, Jackson allows old Miss Harper hardly any reaction at all. Writers also frequently elicit reader support for their characters first by making them likable or relaying thoughts or peculiarities with which readers identify. Only then does the author present a conflict. Jackson has turned the process around. In the opening passages Miss Harper appears extremely unpleasant: she complains to herself about the "dirty, small bus," and she tells the bus driver she plans to report him for his unfriendly behavior (180). Miss Harper does not lure reader support until she wakes from a nightmare during the night in the evil house and sees objects of her childhood. In obvious loneliness, she tries to touch the familiar toys, but they begin an evil dance and shout and call her names. When she finally turns and runs, her reaction registers as much hurt as fear: "'Mommy,' she cried, and fell, going down and down into darkness, turning, trying to catch onto something solid and real, crying" (192). Jackson emphasizes Miss Harper's need for reality, clarifying that this has been a dream made up of the peculiar mixture of images from the past that Freud says we retain and remember in dreams. This dream state or derealization provided many scenes in which Jackson could utilize her vast knowledge of and experience with fear.

That Jackson's fiction was often misunderstood and that she was frequently labeled "the Virginia Werewolf of seancefiction" was unfortunate (Peden, The American Short

Story 109). It caused many readers to disregard much of her well-crafted fiction. Most critics agree, however, that she possessed an uncanny ability to create believable, fear-provoking prose. She herself said, "i think all my books laid end to end would be one long documentation of anxiety."⁸ Her expertise derived from the blending of research, acquaintance and interaction with some of the best writers and critics of her time, and a thoughtful recording of her own experiences. These experiences extended to other new uses in fiction.

Notes

¹ Robert Phillips calls her a master of the novel of psychological horror (203). Darrel Schweitzer dates the inception of the modern horror novel with the publication of The Haunting of Hill House (1), which Phillips calls a "masterpiece of the preternatural" and compares to Henry James' The Turn of the Screw (110).

² Jackson began publishing in 1941 with humorous tales such as "My Life With R. H. Macy." She had already spent a year writing 1000 words per day before she re-entered college where she worked on the college newspaper staff and also began a journal with Stanley Hyman called The Spectre. She did not begin writing the works focused on fear until 1944, after her fictional skills were well developed.

³ Jackson's college studies and her life with Hyman provided her with the unique opportunity of being in the midst of publishers, contemporary writers, and critics. Hyman began encouraging her to read modern authors while they were still in college. During the 1940s and 1950s, they maintained close friendships with neighbors Kenneth Burke, Howard Nemerov, and Bernard Malamud. Other writers who often visited or with whom Jackson corresponded include Nat Hentof, Ralph Ellison, Thomas Pynchon, John Updike, Malcolm Cowley, William Empson, and I. A. Richards. In Hangsaman, Natalie elaborates the Sunday afternoon discussions her father and his friends engaged in and mentions the books that they were likely to want to consult during discussions. Included is The Golden Bough. I believe this reflects the nightly discussions Hyman engaged in with the above mentioned associates. As a listener and a participant in these discussions, Jackson had extensive knowledge of literary technique.

⁴ The last seven stanzas of the Scottish version of the James Harris ballad (Childe Ballad No. 243) appear as an epilogue to the stories in The Lottery or The Adventures of James Harris (1949). In 1941, the Irish writer, Elizabeth Bowen also wrote a story called "The Demon Lover" in which a lover, killed in World War I, returns twenty-five years later for an appointment with his fiance.

⁵ Friedman says the James Harris figure had been added to the collection to provide "some semblance of unity" (67)

but finds no relationship between the characters. On the contrary, the name alone suggests a sense of mystery which adds tension to the stories. In addition, the seldom seen Harris obviously exerts a fearful power over the other characters.

⁶ "The Rock" was written in 1950, titled by Stanley Hyman and published for the first time in Come Along With Me in 1968. "A Visit" was published in 1950 in New World Writing as "The Lovely House." Hyman restored the title Jackson had originally suggested and published it in the 1968 anthology Come Along With Me.

⁷ Richard Hallam reports individuals being unable to recognize photographs of themselves when experiencing depersonalization (67).

⁸ An undated journal entry.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEW ALIENATION

Readers expect to encounter alienation themes in modern literature; however, as a result of her emotional distress, she revised the theme. Jackson not only employs the theme more frequently than most authors, she also alters it significantly. Typically, modernists portray alienation in cities and regard small communities as pastoral. Jackson reverses the tradition. Small communities represent closed societies that are evil.

For her, alienation has a special meaning. She knows agoraphobes' struggles with uncontrollable fears produce anxiety that leads to alienation. When away from familiar surroundings, agoraphobes remain in a constant state of alertness, commonly described as fight-or-flight preparedness. Every new encounter threatens them. When making new acquaintances, agoraphobes may make bad first impressions. In their guarded state, they may also misinterpret nonresistant or even friendly overtures as hostile. Agoraphobes, therefore, experience alienation more frequently than self assured, emotionally stable persons. Although she could not control her fears regarding new situations, Jackson understood the logical cause. Always alert and willing to utilize any fictional possibility, the author incorporated scenes involving insecure persons encountering new situations into her fiction. Many of these

situations only appear threatening or suggest alienation. Readers must often determine for themselves.

Jackson's severe bouts of depression also influenced her use of the alienation theme. Personal journals and letters reveal the perseverance that made her write even when the emotional disorder depressed her. For her, writing provided therapy even when she could not leave her house. Sigmund Freud noted that what agoraphobes fear most is repetition of a previous attack in conditions they cannot escape. Staying away from places which cause the attacks offers the only certain avoidance. Only their own homes offer genuine security to agoraphobes. As they lock themselves away from human contact, their alienation increases. When fear forced Jackson to isolate herself from human contact with only her typewriter for companionship, she tried to escape through her characters, but frequently, those characters reflect the same alienation that she was experiencing.

Jackson encountered alienation several times in her life. During the early teen years she found it difficult to make close friends. When she attended Rochester, being away from a familiar home environment for the first time proved problematic. Years later, when she moved to North Bennington, she experienced the disturbances of moving from the city to a small town. At about the same time, she was undergoing the trials brought by her first major acclaim as a writer. Each of these periods of estrangement produced emotional disturbances which Jackson dutifully recorded,

first in journals and diaries and later in fiction as well.

Jackson's move to North Bennington provided her with a personal symbol for alienation. She was eager for the move to a small community; however, because she arrived in North Bennington with a previous emotional disorder, she entered every new situation in a guarded state and interpreted many encounters as threatening. Re-enactments of these scenes soon appeared in her fiction. For her, small New England towns symbolized closed societies and evil. Residents of such communities desperately attempt to block a newcomer's entrance since new residents might bring dreaded change. Just as she incorporates the evils of closed communities into her fiction, Jackson also emphasizes the good in those individuals victimized by native societies.

The conservative, working class citizens of North Bennington often turned a critical eye toward the progressive college and its faculty. A vast cultural distance separated their lives. Anna Fels, a faculty member's child, expressed life in North Bennington thus: "You got the message as a child that you were different from everyone else in the town, which you were" (qtd. in Oppenheimer 198). Similarly, Jackson's fictional towns are usually inhabited by tradesmen and blue collar workers who appear to have little formal education. Silent persons but quick to act, they often make rash judgments instead of asking questions with which to make logical decisions. They also follow age-old traditions and believe hearsay without

question. In We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Jackson describes them: "In this village the men stayed young and did the gossiping and the women aged with gray evil weariness and stood silently waiting for the men to get up and come home" (4). Accustomed to living near persons with similar traits, they suspect anyone different, and newcomers, particularly sensitive individuals who dare to question tradition, often become scapegoat figures.

Judy Oppenheimer describes North Bennington, Vermont as literally and figuratively removed from the college campus. (The larger town of Bennington itself, with its shops, restaurants, and single movie theater, is a few miles to the east.) A small mill town, New England to the core, North Bennington is a place of sharp divisions between rich and poor, residents and summer vacationers, mill people and shop owners, and of course, natives and college folk; a town whose citizenry is overwhelmingly white and Christian, and innately suspicious of those who are not. Many villagers proudly trace their ancestry back to three or more generations of North Bennington forebears. A stranger here is not necessarily a person who arrived yesterday; it could well be someone who has lived in town for ten years. For the most part, town and college eye each other mistrustfully, separated by an unbridgeable gulf.

Villagers are connected by intricate webs of tradition, custom, marriage, and blood; communication among them is as swift and mysterious as that among various cells of a single body. It is a given that everyone knows everyone else's business. (111)

Jackson's rural settings mirror this New England atmosphere; characters who populate these fictional environments reflect the beliefs and habits of North Bennington folk. Within the fictional small villages, Jackson places non-native characters like herself, who, at first excited about moving to a small town, soon find themselves alienated from local society.

Like a small group of other modernists such as Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, and Willa Cather, Jackson perceives an alienation in small communities rather than cities. Proof of Jackson's contrasting attitude concerning the actions of typical small town natives and those of persons who live in large urban communities occurs in two short stories involving similar characters who both possess a penchant for letter writing. Mrs. Hope in "When Things Get Dark" (1944) writes secret letters to other community members who need encouragement. When she hears of persons experiencing difficulty, she sends anonymous letters that help them focus on the good in their lives and thus provide hope. Mrs. Hope, as her name implies, persists like a beacon of hope to everyone. Like Mrs. Hope, Mrs.

Strangeworth of "The Possibility of Evil" (1965) sends anonymous letters.¹ Unlike Mrs. Hope's letters, however, those of Mrs. Strangeworth are poison-pen letters filled with every imaginable evil, suggesting adultery, lies, and theft. Other than the content of their letters, what is the major difference between these otherwise analogous women? While Mrs. Hope resides in a large city apartment building, Mrs. Strangeworth dwells in the midst of a small community. The latter symbolizes Jackson's characteristic theme of the alienation and evil associated with small, closed communities.

In many of the stories set in small villages, one member of society is shunned, ignored, or actively persecuted by the others. The abuse occurs because the outcast looks different or believes or acts differently from the accepted customs of local citizenry. These unaccustomed practices result from the newcomer's unfamiliarity with or lack of understanding of local behavior. During the time Jackson lived in North Bennington, she wrote many such stories involving fictional characters who did not conform to a local society's accepted standards. Shortly after publication of "The Lottery" in 1948, Jackson wrote several such stories, including "Flower Garden" (1949) and "The Summer People" (1949). In both of these stories, local small New England community citizens eye newcomers suspiciously. Natives critically note the new arrivals' behavior and separate themselves from them, often because

they realize that establishing relationships with these aliens might endanger their own social position.

Fear of losing her own position causes Helen Winning of "Flower Garden" to abandon her newcomer friend, Mrs. MacLane. Helen is bored and unhappy with the dull routine of local persons who spend all of their waking hours in quiet work. They have no time or energy for cultivating or appreciating beauty or friendship. Tradition is so important that they follow established routines without question. Jackson characterizes the Winning tradition by emphasizing the manner in which, after eleven years of living together, young Helen Winning, formerly an outsider herself, has grown to resemble her mother-in-law, the elder Mrs. Winning. Every morning they sit quietly with their morning coffee and begin their morning tasks as Helen's children play, just as "uncounted Winning children had played with almost identical toys from the same heavy wooden box" for generations (The Magic 103).

When Mrs. MacLane and her son Davey move into the little cottage down the road, Helen eagerly visits her, glad for the fresh, new faces. At first, she perceives Mrs. MacLane as the person she would like to be. Repeatedly she expresses how much she had wanted to move into the little cottage herself. Drawn like a magnet to the pleasant woman who creates a warm, cordial setting, Helen Winning visits Mrs. MacLane often. Helen appreciates the newcomer's tasteful decor, and her flower garden yields an aesthetic

beauty absent from the Winning household. Helen and her son spend long hours in the cottage with the enthusiastic woman who speaks congenially and has a happy, friendly laugh. The MacLane cottage's atmosphere starkly contrasts with the dark, somber Winning household made up of grim, purposeful work. Even meals at the Winning table are silent, dreary affairs with diners concentrating solely on the food before them. Members of the Winning family rarely exhibit emotions. As he enters the kitchen for lunch, Helen's husband kisses his mother perfunctorily and only nods to his wife. Perhaps this neglect propels Helen Winning toward the sincere warmth of the MacLane home.

Newcomer Mrs. MacLane, however, does not understand the unstated rules of the small community: never dress, speak, or act differently. When Davey MacLane hears his new friend Howard Winning call little Billy Jones a "Nigger" and parrots the same word, his mother disciplines him, immediately and severely. Helen observes the unusual scene in open-mouthed astonishment. A resident of the community for eleven years, Helen conforms to local tradition. Accustomed to the term "Nigger," she does not even notice when her own son Howard uses the expression. She overlooks Mrs. MacLane's objections without comment, but when the newcomer hires Billy's father to work in her flower garden, Helen has to abandon the friendship. Other residents have begun making condescending remarks and questioning her about her friendship with this "different" woman, and Helen

Winning recognizes the precariousness of her own position. When neighbors object to Mrs. MacLane's hiring Billy's father to work in her garden, Helen realizes the futility of the friendship. Once an outsider herself, Helen has worked hard for acceptance and no longer dares endanger her own position by associating with Mrs. MacLane. One by one the townspeople, who had appeared friendly to the newcomer, stop speaking and instead focus on the strangeness of these former city people. They laugh at their clothes and mock their actions. After a storm has wrecked Mrs. MacLane's lovely flower garden, Helen overhears the unfortunate woman lament that they must return to the city. Instead of reaching out to the woman she once regarded as a friend, Helen turns away without speaking. She has spent eleven years achieving a place, however precarious, in both the Winning household and in the community. She dares not risk it.

Jackson wrote "The Flower Garden" shortly after publishing "The Lottery," during a time of depression caused by unfavorable comments and criticism. This depression may have influenced her attitude toward small community natives, an attitude which she then projected into her fiction. The often quoted story of Jackson's inventing "The Lottery" while pulling her two children up the hill as she returned home from shopping in North Bennington suggests that her own reception there may have been less than warm.² Although many North Bennington residents grew to know and appreciate

Jackson for her kindness, many others always regarded her as different, a part of the learned set from Bennington College whom the natives viewed disdainfully. Jackson reflects a similar attitude in "The Summer People," also written in 1949. The Allison's, like the characters in "The Flower Garden," are not fully developed characters. We know only that they own a primitive cottage at a lake in a remote New England area and have spent every summer there for many years. Robert and Janet Allison resemble Jackson and her husband. Since they have both gone to the lake cottage every summer for many years, Robert Allison must have been a writer or an educator, occupations which would have enabled him to be with his family for the entire summer. Both their speech and mannerisms also indicate their literacy and professional occupations. Since they are now obviously retired and their children grown, they have no immediate need to return to the city and decide to remain past the Tuesday after Labor Day, their customary departure date. However, they soon learn that the village people who tolerate them on a temporary basis resent having them remain past the usual departure time.

Although they have occupied the same cottage for seventeen summers, the Allison's have never established even a personal acquaintance with any local community member. When Mrs. Allison tells local merchant, Charley Walpole, that they will remain on this year, she says she feels they belong and smiles to prove it, as if after seventeen years,

she suddenly wants to appear friendly. She does not know the name of the lady across the store whose face she recognizes. Neither has she bothered to learn the name of the man who delivers kerosene. The Allisons are also quick to note any deficiencies in the natives. When Mrs. Allison considers their mental capacities, she shudders "to think into what old New England Yankee stock had degenerated" (Come Along 68). They joke privately about the natives' backward colloquial speech or customs. The local mannerism which irritates her most, the habit of "taking a trivial statement and rephrasing it downward, into an even more trite statement" (Come Along 67), makes her shudder. The Allisons' impersonal treatment of the persons serving their needs for seventeen summers resembles that of haughty, aloof, aristocrats toward indentured servants. Even though the Allisons personally think they have kept their contempt for the locals hidden, their true feelings have been evident.

The local citizenry distrusts newcomers as much as their stodgy conservatism appalls the new arrivals. The villagers suspect anything "that did not look as permanent as trees and rocks and sky" (Come Along 68). Even Mrs. Martin, who runs the local sandwich shop, is considered a newcomer because she came from a neighboring community, married the local newspaper publisher, and stayed on after his death. The locals tolerate summer people because they need the revenue, but when the Allisons suggest remaining

longer, townspeople react with suspicion and scorn. They hold only contempt for persons like the Allisons who require garbage collectors (natives do not have garbage), people to deliver eggs and other staples, and mechanics to repair their autos. People of this community are more self-reliant. Perhaps a fear of losing their own independence causes them to shun helpless city people.

Whether this understandable fear or another darker evil, something seems to cause villagers to discourage city persons from lingering in their midst. However, in "The Summer People" as in many other stories, Jackson only suggests the story's outcome. Often readers question why, if the villagers do not want the Allisons, they do not merely drive them away, but the story ends on a much more disquieting note. The couple soon learns that they cannot expect any of the services provided during the summer: no kerosene and no produce or grocery deliveries. One by one, the Allisons lose contact with the outside world. Weekly letters from their children stop. The phone goes dead. The car refuses to start. An unusual letter from their son Jerry relieves them at first, until they begin to question its uncharacteristic phrasing and observe the dirty fingerprints on the envelope. As the story closes, the aging couple huddle beside a radio whose batteries slowly fade; a fall storm rages outside, and they solemnly admit to one another that the phone line has been cut and their car tampered with. In the same manner in which she created

apprehension through the use of the ballad, Jackson merely suggests foul play. Ultimate alienation combines with fear as Mrs. Allison says, "I wonder if we're supposed to . . . do anything." He answers, "No, I don't think so. Just wait" (Come Along 78). Although the Allisons had perhaps acted contemptibly to the townspeople, one wonders what possible hatred could cause such madness. Jackson's own estrangement from the North Bennington community, coupled with her depression caused by widespread criticism of "The Lottery," may have influenced her creation of this disturbing scene. On a larger scale, the author comments on all societies who exclude persons because of race, gender, age, or social background.

Just as the inhabitants of the lake community act aggressively to keep the Allisons away, two spinsters of a small community operate to keep a city-bred woman out. In "The Little House" (1962), written during a period of Jackson's severe depression, the Colson sisters, Amanda and Caroline, cleverly discourage the young woman from moving into a neighboring house once owned by her aunt, now deceased. The aunt shared the sisters' solid traditions. Jackson informs readers of the aunt's adherence to custom in the opening lines:

The back-door key hung, labeled, from a hook
beside the back door, and the side-door key hung
from a hook beside the side door, and the
porch-door key hung from a hook beside the porch

door, and the cellar-door key hung from a hook beside the cellar door. (Come Along 171)

Through this repetitious, tiring description, Jackson paints a setting perfect for villagers like Elizabeth's aunt and the Colsons. In such a world, peopled by individuals who cringe at the thought of a new idea, similar events occur day after day, year after year. Change frightens them, and people who even suggest change become the enemy.

When they pay their very first call, the Colsons spot an enemy in Elizabeth. A city girl, she smokes, wants plenty of light around her, probably enjoys loud television, will, no doubt, invite many of her noisy city friends, and, all in all, make many alterations to the house. Therefore, they cleverly plant fear in Elizabeth's mind in a desperate attempt to drive her away. They hint about the way Elizabeth's aunt died. Elizabeth, who thought her aunt had suffered a heart attack, is both surprised and alarmed. She has already discovered the back door standing open. She begins to listen intently as they remind her of the broken latch on the kitchen door, report that the killer was not interested in money because he left her aunt's purse intact, and suggest that Sheriff Knowlton may know who the killer is.

Whether the truth or bits of idle gossip, these ideas begin to erode Elizabeth's joy over her first house. Before their arrival, Elizabeth had reveled in the thought that at last she had a house of her very own in a delightful

village. She had planned ways to brighten the somber rooms with flowers, a fire in the fireplace, and floor lamps. She made hopeful plans to entertain, perhaps a cocktail party for her city friends and a tea for her new neighbors who would come to see her new little house. Alone, after hearing their disturbing perversions, paralyzed by imagined noises and darkness, she crouches in the living room, too frightened even to go upstairs to bed. Meanwhile, back in their own house, the Colson sisters criticize their new neighbor. They doubt that she will be a good neighbor; she will want to make changes; she never even offered them tea. The story ends simply with Miss Caroline's wry comment, "Perhaps she won't stay" (Come Along 179). The scene depicts the manner in which even other women attempt to keep women from any new place in a primarily patriarchal society. Elizabeth's fear and estrangement mirrors Jackson's own emotional upheaval in 1962. The frightened girl huddled in the corner resembles the many lonely, troubled women who become a paradigm for the female protagonists of Jackson's fiction. Women who attempt to move into a primarily patriarchal world find themselves in danger.

Usually fictional newcomers try hard to be accepted by members of the community, just as Jackson herself often attempted to make friends. Many local citizens remark that it was not unusual for Jackson to deliver homemade cookies to ailing neighbors. During her busiest times, she was always quick to volunteer her services for the PTA or other

organizations involving her children or the community, an especially benevolent move for an agoraphobe. Her own friendly manner toward local businesses is reflected in characters like Ethel Sloane, a fictional newcomer to a small community in "Home" (1965). Ethel sincerely tries to be accepted by the local folk. A resident for only a single day, she has already been to the post office, bank, service station, and local hardware several times and has made it clear "that all the Sloane grocery business was going to come their way" (65). Knowing small communities' attitudes toward residents who use outside businesses, she asks the hardware manager to recommend a local plumber. Trying hard to become one of them, she even selects her words carefully. When she responds to a villager that the bridge she has just crossed appeared safe and "ought to stand for a while yet," she wonders if she could say, "for a spell" (65) but opts to wait until the colloquial phrases sound more natural on her tongue. Perhaps this exaggerated attention to speech and behavior makes Ethel more acceptable than most newcomers because the hardware owner reluctantly welcomes her after her unusual experience.

She acquires not only their speech but their manner as well. Old timers never discuss the macabre secrets of their community; however, they repeatedly hint to Ethel Sloane of the dangers of the Sanderson road when the creek is up. Scoffing at their warnings, yet oddly touched by their apparent concern, Ethel continues taking the road since she

feels confident of her driving even on the steep, muddy road near the bridge and rising water. When she encounters a strange old woman and a pitiful looking child on the road near the bridge, she is angry that anyone would have a child out in the rain. Later, when she learns that the two are the local ghosts reported to have occupied the area for the past sixty years, she is excited and says she will not be satisfied until she gets "every word of the story" (117), which is exactly why her husband had not told her about them. He realizes better than she that the villagers just do not discuss what frightens them. They merely avoid the road when it is raining. Ethel leaves home that morning, a newcomer anxious to talk to someone about her experience but arrives in town later, a confirmed villager. During a second encounter with the pair, she is nearly killed in an accident caused by the old woman. The near fatality changes her; like the other villagers, she finds herself unable to speak openly about the incident. When she tells the hardware clerk her car skidded on the Sanderson road, she does not add anything about the old woman. A native who may also have confronted the pair, he intuitively understands her hesitancy. His previously withdrawn expression changes, and his manner becomes friendly as he asks Mrs. Sloane if she will be attending a community meeting. Their mutual understanding derives from a shared sense of fear too personal and frightening to discuss, a perception which Jackson understood well.

The author's awareness of danger may also be reflected in other fictional characters created in 1962. This was the year that Jackson completed the novel *Oppenheimer* says deals most openly with her difficulties with the residents of North Bennington. The narrator of We Have Always Lived in the Castle is Mary Katherine Blackwood, called Merricat by her family. Also the protagonist of the novel, Merricat shares many characteristics with the characters of other Jackson novels and with the author herself. Like the Allison of "The Summer People" and the Hallorans of The Sun Dial, Merricat considers her family socially and intellectually superior to the common village folk. Her father and grandfather were very rich men whose huge mansions towered over other houses in the community. Due to their discerning taste, their families had always kept common members of the community at a distance.

Since the family's great tragedy six years ago, they have closed themselves off from nearly everyone. Totally alienated, they neither have a phone nor accept mail or visitors. Before the tragedy, villagers may have quietly scorned the Blackwoods, but no one dared criticize them publicly. Since the family murders, however, villagers verbally attack Merricat when she ventures into town, the only family member who leaves home. Everywhere villagers taunt her. She, therefore, goes to great trouble to avoid direct confrontation. She zigzags through town, crossing the street often to keep from meeting anyone. Able to face

the town's hatred only by blocking it from her mind, Merricat pretends she plays a game as she slowly makes her way through town. She imagines the village marked into little spaces like a board game, and certain events allow her to move forward or backward a prescribed number of spaces. No one in the street, move forward two spaces; children playing ahead, lose two turns. Her loneliness is reflected as she wistfully contrasts the manner people acknowledge her and the way they greet each other. When meeting someone else, they smile and wave, but when they meet her, they jeer and chant, "Merricat, Merricat, would you like a cup of tea? Oh, no, said Merricat, you'll poison me" (155). She wonders if the Blackwoods had ever been a part of the community. As Constance has advised, she never allows them to know that their jeers disturb her, but inwardly her alienation creates a sociopathic reaction, and she wishes she could see them all dead or suffering.

For six years the townspeople demonstrate their hatred only through taunts, but on the night of the fire, their anger turns to action. Merricat herself started the fire, and the firemen fought bravely and put it out leaving the house severely damaged but with the first floor at least intact. But, after having worked hard to save the house, the fire chief himself picks up a rock and hurls it through the glass. Within minutes the townspeople follow his lead, and the sound of breaking glass and shattering furniture echoes around the frightened girls. Soon everything lies in

shambles: food spilled and trampled, dishes shattered, windows broken, Uncle Julian dead of a heart attack. Later, the villagers leave quietly, their bottled hatred spent, vented upon the unfortunate girls who crouch in the woods watching.³

Jackson's harshest fictional treatment of estrangement is, of course, "The Lottery," and like We Have Always Lived in the Castle, it involves not newcomers but a long-time resident of the community. Made a scapegoat by her own friends and family members, Tess Hutchinson represents the extreme of alienation. Before anyone knew that Tess would draw the unfortunate slip with the black mark, neighbors greeted her as a friend, but after she is the delegated victim for the annual sacrifice, no one offers help. Her husband forces the paper from her hands; Mrs. Delacroix chooses a stone so large she has to use both hands; someone even gives Tess' son Davy "a few pebbles" with which to help stone his mother (The Lottery 301). For years critics have questioned Jackson's motive for placing the ancient sacrificial custom within a modern setting. Jackson herself refused to comment except to say that she was pleased, years later, when South Africa banned the story, saying that at least they understood it. By this response, Jackson acknowledged the importance of Tess' denial by her friends and family members. Many critics believe the story is the author's reaction to the atrocities suffered by the Jews during World War II. Married to a man with Jewish

background, Jackson was, of course, sensitive to the subject. Feminist critics have commented on the patriarchal aspects of the lottery completely controlled by men.⁴

Jackson often told an analogy about the manner in which she developed the idea for "The Lottery" while returning home from shopping in North Bennington. Her disclosure suggests the story may have been an immediate and subconscious reaction to something that occurred during the shopping trip, something which caused her to experience a feeling of alienation. During lectures to writing groups, the author often recounted the writing:

The idea had come to me while I was pushing my daughter up the hill in her stroller--it was, as I say, a warm morning, and the hill was steep, and beside my daughter the stroller held the day's groceries--and perhaps the effort of that last fifty yards up the hill put an edge to the story.

(Come Along 211)

Jackson's only acknowledgement of anything disturbing her which could have affected the story was her characteristically humorous mention of the difficult trip up the hill pushing a stroller filled with child and groceries. Nevertheless, she does acknowledge that something indeed did cause her to insert a harsh tone into the story.

Psychologists agree that persons suffering from emotional distress often block the psychological cause from their minds or attribute it to a physical one. Jackson's story may

have been a reaction to common treatment of newcomers by villagers, one that the author had met before but one which may have been more distressing at a time when she was pregnant and overly tired. Since childhood Jackson had blocked out her own emotional distress caused by her discomfort in a society that valued physical beauty over intelligence and social standing over humanity. The agoraphobia which developed from these repressed anxieties created even more alienation than the original low self concept.

The story involving alienation created increased emotional disturbances and resulting disorder for the author herself. In "Biography of a Story" Jackson mentions going to the post office the morning of 28 June 1948, the date The New Yorker published "The Lottery." She says she never knew it was "The last time for months that I was to pick up the mail without an active feeling of panic" (Come Along 211). The author's open admission of the trauma she suffered as a result of the antagonistic response to the story attests to the emotional disturbance she suffered. Her fictional characters react much as the author herself did by depicting the alienation she experienced. Creating her own fictional world allowed Jackson to cope in a world from which she felt alienated.

Notes

¹ John Parks calls "The Possibility of Evil" the key to much of Jackson's fiction because in it she includes "many of the elements basic to her work including a sensitive but narrow female protagonist, a gothic house, economy of language, and an inclination of something 'other'" (320).

² Recounted in "Biography of a Story."

³ In "The Real Horror Elsewhere," Stuart Woodruff discusses the manner in which Jackson portrays the evils of the world by "making life at the castle seem somehow right" and "life in the village somehow wrong, or at least drab and mean" (157).

⁴ See the articles by Peter Kosenko and Fritz Oehlschlaeger.

CONCLUSION

Jackson significantly revised the Gothic format and subverted modernist attitudes toward alienation. That her illness led to these changes is undeniable. The illness itself was a symptom of repressed insecurity and anger fostered by a society that valued physical beauty and social standing above intellect. When Jackson's repression surfaced in the form of agoraphobia, she projected her fears onto her female characters and created a body of the most troubled women in literature.

By placing her protagonists in typical Gothic settings, Jackson rewrote the traditional Gothic novel, first, by portraying the characters' attraction to settings previously regarded as fearful. After removing the frightening aspect of the Gothic, Jackson devised other suspense-provoking schemes based upon her own experience and knowledge of psychology. An individual who always maintained a cheerful appearance to friends and family members, Jackson applied her keen sense of humor as a way of distancing herself from her narrative. Incorporating humor into her fiction and family chronicles allowed Jackson to write of subjects untouched upon in 1950. The humor allowed her to portray modern women as victims trapped in their own kitchens or nurseries long before feminists' expressed similar attitudes.

Modern writers often wrote of the alienation of cities

as they reflected back on a lost agrarian past. Jackson subverted this modernist attitude by depicting the good in urban characters and a wide range of evils in citizens of small, closed communities.

Jackson's early childhood years fostered her feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem. Her mother attempted to mold the author into a fashionable, society-conscious debutante, a role for which Jackson was totally unsuited. Mrs. Jackson cannot be blamed for her emphasis on physical appearance and social behavior. Like all mothers, Mrs. Jackson wanted her daughter to have a good life. In the 1920s and 1930s, a good life for women in the Jackson circle involved marrying a man of equal or better social and economic status. A young woman needed to have the right friends and be attractive. Jackson did not share her mother's opinions, nor did she feel attractive. Inwardly she rebelled; however, she attempted to be or to appear to be, a dutiful daughter. To achieve this stance, she had to repress many insecurities and hostilities.

Marriage to the dominant Stanley Hyman contributed an even greater damage to her psyche. Although he encouraged her writing and introduced her to numerous publishers and other writers, Jackson appeared to believe Hyman valued his own writing and teaching on a scale above her own. He was the critic producing art. She wrote only popular fiction and family chronicles while his writing was regarded as art. Raising a large family and entertaining frequently while continuing a prolific writing career produced more

anxieties. Years of repression and overwork finally surfaced in agoraphobia so uncontrollable that it forced her to seek psychiatric help.

The chronic depression, the insecurity, and the fears were a part of Jackson's life from childhood. Although she kept them hidden, they surfaced in most of her works. These characteristics define her lonely, desperate protagonists from the first short story, "Janice," whose namesake attempts suicide, and continue through Merricat Blackwood, who murders members of her own family. Only Angela Motorman, created after Jackson had undergone psychotherapy, is self assured and happy. Society itself helped create the troubled Jackson, and the author in turn fashioned the disturbed characters of her fictional world after her own image.

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