The Call Is Coming from Inside the House: Surveillance and Haunted Houses in Contemporary Literature

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Virginia, 2022

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

University of Virginia
May 2023

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Abstract

From the very beginning of gothic literary history, preternatural forces have haunted architectural structures such as castles, abbeys, and manors, giving the impression that the buildings themselves are alive. Perhaps they even have eyes. In contemporary literature, these grand literary estates of old have evolved into houses, which, though still imposing, are far more ubiquitous and therefore far more accessible to a contemporary audience. The plots of these haunted house stories adhere to a long gothic tradition of the uncanny, with their horrors incorporated directly into the houses' structures. The contemporary haunted house's architecture informs the protagonist's relationships to the house, encouraging a sense that they are eternally and inescapably under the house's watchful eye. Using theory presented in Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, this thesis analyzes Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), Anne Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door* (1978), and Ruth Ware's *The Turn of the Key* (2019) to explore how surveillance in contemporary haunted house literature intentionally attacks our inmost desires.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Cynthia Wall, my wonderful advisor who encouraged me when I needed encouraging and challenged me when I needed challenging. Thank you to all my past English professors and teachers, especially Philip Krauth and Sarah Becker, who taught me how to write and without whom I probably would not have pursued a bachelor's degree in English, much less a master's degree. Thank you to Emma Lehman for always supporting me from three thousand miles away. Thank you to my parents, Kathryn and Matt Erskine, for instilling in me a love of reading, writing, and storytelling. Thank you to my siblings, Anna and Matthew, for tolerating me as we grew up in what we're all convinced is a (peacefully) haunted house. And finally, thank you to my grandfather, Dr. Gary Ferraro, who has always been an enthusiastic and steadfast supporter of my education, and to whom I imagined writing this thesis every time writer's block struck.

Foundations: The Historical and Theoretical Progenitors of Contemporary Haunted Houses

A landline phone rings loudly, breaking up the surrounding silence. Alone in her large suburban home for the evening, high schooler Casey picks up the handset only to be met with the deep voice of a caller she doesn't recognize. In her dark lipstick and short blonde bob, receiver to her ear, Casey is the epitome of a '90s teenager. Her interlocutor asks what she's doing and what her favorite movie is. She giggles; he's probably trying to flirt with her. He asks her name, which she refuses to tell him, playfully asking why he wants to know. He responds, "I want to know who I'm looking at." Casey's smile drops. She is being watched.

Played by Drew Barrymore, Casey Becker is just one of a long line of fictional characters haunted within the home. In Wes Craven's iconic 1996 horror-satire *Scream* (00:30-02:47), serial killer Ghostface tauntingly calls many of his potential victims on the phone, creating an environment of fear and apprehension before going in for the kill. Surveillance operates in the film as a way for Ghostface to exhibit the power he has over his victims. He knows his victims' identities and locations, but his victims know nothing about him, as he uses a voice modifier on the phone and only kills when wearing a full body cloak and a mask.

I use "surveillance" in this thesis to demonstrate a continual power-imbalanced state of observation, as demonstrated by Ghostface in *Scream*. "Surveillance" comes from the French *surveiller*, "to watch," and now has taken on the more detailed meaning of "watch or guard kept over a person, etc., esp. over a suspected person, a prisoner, or the like" ("surveillance, n."). While I also mention "observation" throughout this thesis, "surveillance" connotes a more hostile relationship between victim and surveillant. In most cases, characters watched in or by haunted houses cannot see their surveillant. To capture surveillance's inherent power imbalance, I turn to Jeremy Bentham's image of the panopticon. His 1787 plan for a utilitarian prison consists of a circular building in which many separate cells surround a central "inspector's lodge" (Bentham 31). Bentham explains that the main features of the panopticon are "the *centrality* of the inspector situation combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for *seeing without being seen*" (43, emphasis original). Michel Foucault recognizes the panopticon's potential for discipline; he reiterates that the goal of the panopticon is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (qtd. in Wagner 553). As the houses surveil their residents, therefore, they gain power over them that enacts itself even when the houses are not actually watching. From Bentham's concept I have developed the term "panopticonic" to label a situation in which there is constant surveillance that is sensed but not provable by the character. The word "panoptic" could suffice, but it implies that the subject is the one seeing everything, not the one being seen. In these novels, although the protagonists surveil others, they are first and foremost victims of surveillance, and the term "panopticonic" concisely addresses this.

Surveillance and haunted structures have a long literary history dating back to the eighteenth century. The houses' victims compete not only with preternatural forces but also with the spirit of the houses themselves. The call comes from inside the house, literally — from its walls, its doors, and its windows, creeping through every corner, nook, and crevice. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was the first novel to explicitly call itself "gothic" (Wagner xliii). In this novel, Prince Manfred tries to navigate the eponymous castle as it is ravaged by a curse. Manfred's son, Conrad, is to be married to Isabella in order to guarantee Manfred an heir; however, on the morning of the wedding, Conrad is "dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being" (Walpole 19). Manfred resolves to marry Isabella, anxious to secure an heir. As Manfred attempts to seize Isabella, "the portrait of his grandfather […] uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast" (26), saving Isabella from imminent sexual assault. In using its architecture to frighten its residents, Otranto becomes the first example of haunted architecture in gothic literature.

The dark and cursed version of haunted architecture illustrated by *Otranto* continues in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), in which the evil Montoni imprisons Emily St. Aubert in Castle Udolpho. The castle's aesthetics are typical of a gothic setting: It has "an extensive gothic hall, obscured by the gloom of evening, which a light, glimmering at a distance through a long perspective of arches, only rendered more striking" (Radcliffe 228). Udolpho's surreal architecture foregrounds Emily's and Montoni's phantasmal experiences throughout the novel. Montoni's selfishness and Emily's instinct for self-preservation continue the traditions established by Manfred and Isabella in *Otranto*.

In the nineteenth century, surveillance starts to make a more explicit appearance in connection with haunted architecture. In Jane Austen's gothic satire *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Catherine Morland visits the titular abbey and suspects, after having read too many gothic novels, that the brooding General Tilney killed his wife. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane works as a governess in the mysterious Thornfield Hall. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Catherine Earnshaw pines after Heathcliff on the eponymous estate and eventually becomes the ghost that haunts the grounds. Surveillance manifests in these novels as one human watching another: Catherine Morland snoops around Northanger Abbey to monitor General Tilney; Bertha Mason, locked in the attic of Thornfield Hall, spies on Jane Eyre; and Catherine Earnshaw's ghost stalks Heathcliff.

Around this time, the gothic established itself in the adolescent nation of the United States, inciting a shift from haunted estates to more modest haunted houses. Charles Brockden Brown wrote the first major American gothic novel *Wieland; or the Transformation* (1798); however, it was not until the early- to mid-nineteenth century that the U.S. developed a distinct gothic voice through the writing of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Washington Irving (Savoy 172; Bailey 7). Unable to set their haunted tales in ancient, crumbling castles because castles were not endemic to the U.S. the way they were in Europe, the American gothic writers set their tales in residential houses instead (Bailey 7). In developing the house as the American gothic setting, early American writers attacked "our primary marker for class and our central symbol of domesticity" in lieu of the palatial symbols of European aristocracy (Bailey 8). Surveillance imbues the American gothic the same way it imbues the European gothic. Much of Hawthorne's writing, for example, depicts the nightmarish events that happen at the hands of Puritan surveillance and persecution (Bendixen 38).[1] This history influences the novels that I analyze in this thesis in that it illustrates the U.S.'s importance in the gothic literary tradition and in that it moves horror literally closer to home.

I point to two final stories as the immediate predecessors of contemporary haunted house novels: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). In "The Yellow Wallpaper," an unnamed narrator writes in her secret diary while her husband forces her to participate in a rest cure because she exhibits signs of postpartum depression. A woman-like figure seems trapped behind the room's peeling yellow

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1. Examples include "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) and "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836).

wallpaper, and the narrator starts ripping the paper down to free her. At the end of the story, the narrator's husband unlocks her door, only to find that the narrator believes herself to be the woman trapped within the walls. Haunted with the constant medical surveillance of the narrator's husband, the story uses the narrator's insanity to highlight the dangers of women's oppression in the late nineteenth-century in the U.S. and England. In *The Turn of the Screw*, a governess cares for young Miles and Flora in Bly, Essex. After Miles is expelled from school, the governess suspects that something horrible caused the expulsion. Concurrently, the governess sees the ghosts of two former employees, Miss Jessel and Peter Quint, around the manor. Haunted by the ghosts, the secret of Miles's expulsion, and the eerie behavior of both children, the governess gradually becomes more anxious, convinced that the ghosts control Miles and Flora. In the end, Miles dies inexplicably in the governess's arms. Surveillance in this narrative puts the governess at a disadvantage; she feels constantly watched by both the children and the ghosts of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint.

All of the stories and novels previously mentioned influence the three novels I analyze in this thesis: Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), Anne Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door* (1978), and Ruth Ware's *The Turn of the Key* (2019). Each of these three haunted house novels takes place in the contemporary era — after World War II — and features a female protagonist that intimately interacts with a haunted house. As explained by Dale Bailey in his book *American Nightmares*, the formula for the American haunted house involves "a flatly prosaic description of the supernatural in which the house itself is sentient and malign, independent of any ghosts which may be present (and very frequently none are)" (5-6).[2] While ghosts may not manifest in these contemporary novels in the same manner as in earlier texts, the houses' sentience and the technological developments of the contemporary era permit a surveillance-as-ghost analysis in which watching and being watched intensify the horrors of the narratives. Surveillance-as-ghost creates a tense, panopticonic environment in which each house gains the knowledge necessary to attack its victims' inmost desires.

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2. Although *The Turn of the Key* does not take place in the U.S., American haunted house novels have undeniably influenced Ware's work, so I apply Bailey's theory here as well.

The Foyer: Entering Texts through Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* and Additional Theory

Throughout this thesis, I turn to Gaston Bachelard's seminal work *The Poetics of Space* (1958) to further my arguments about the protagonists' relationships to the physical and psychological spaces they inhabit. *The Poetics of Space* explores the image of the house and its connections to human (sub)consciousness and imagination. His phenomenological approach explores the entire house, especially spaces that are typically overlooked, such as cellars, garrets, drawers, and corners. Throughout the volume, he uses literature — excerpts from poetry, short stories, and novels — as his evidence for the connection between space and imagination. I summarize below a few significant points from Bachelard's text that are relevant to my argument.

In the first chapter, "The House. From Cellar to Garret. The Significance of the Hut," Bachelard positions the house as the central conscious space: "For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (26). None of the houses I analyze in this thesis are the protagonists' childhood homes; however, the intimacy of these spaces reveals a comparable connection between space and imagination. Bachelard explains that a house "appeals to our consciousness of verticality" and that "a house is imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality" (39). Our consciousness develops using a house's verticality and centrality; the house is our point of reference. The notion of verticality raises the problem of the cellar and the garret, both of which lie at opposite ends of a house's vertical spectrum. Bachelard claims that the cellar "is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (39, emphasis original). We think only of walking down into the cellar or up into the garret; therefore, the cellar represents dark fears and tragedy, while the garret represents aspirations (46-47). The images of the cellar and garret appear many times throughout haunted house literature, and Bachelard's analysis of their representations of the imagination allow for deeper understandings of the protagonists' (sub)consciousnesses as they climb up towers and fall into basements.

Also relevant to this thesis is Bachelard's sixth chapter, "Corners." Continuing his portrayal of the house as an image of centrality, Bachelard emphasizes corners' potential for both sanctuary and isolation: "A living creature fills an empty refuge, [...] and all corners are haunted, if not inhabited" (159). Empty corners do not exist; they are occupied either physically or spiritually. His concept that "the corner denies the palace, dust denies marble, and worn objects deny splendor and luxury" depicts the corner as a location for revealing the truths that lurk behind a façade (161). The corner thus provides analytical potential for discovering the protagonists' deepest desires.

In addition to Bachelard's writings, Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny underpins my approach to the gothic in this thesis. Freud defines the uncanny — or *Unheimlich* in the original German — as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (qtd. in Wagner 545-546). Crucial to this definition is the proximity to the familiar; in many instances, an event almost seems normal but is frightening due to its slight deviation from the expected. Freud theorizes that the element of the uncanny that we find frightening is "a secret intention of doing harm, and certain signs are taken to mean that that intention has the necessary power at its command" (qtd. in Wagner 548). We assume that the slightly unfamiliar intends to attack us and that its slight familiarity gives it every opportunity to do so. The uncanny surfaces in the architecture of Hill House, the House Next Door, and Heatherbrae as an inexplicable unease despite the objective normality of the houses' appearances. I use the concept of the uncanny in conjunction with Bachelard's *Poetics* and Bentham's panopticon to develop a picture of surveillance within sentient, gothic spaces.

Upstairs: Climbing Towards Happiness in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)

Shirley Jackson's 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House* follows Eleanor Vance after she receives a request from researcher Dr. Montague to spend the summer with him in Hill House while he observes the house's infamous supernatural events. Lonely after years of caring for her mother, Eleanor takes Dr. Montague up on his invitation. In merely a week's time, however, Eleanor experiences the horrors of living in Hill House, and her mind slowly becomes one with the house itself. After Dr. Montague and the other residents request that she leave for her own sanity, Eleanor drives away only to crash to her death against a large tree in Hill House's driveway. Eleanor's social anxiety, which results from years of isolation caring for her mother, instills in her a desire to be accepted socially and to live independently. Hill House's surveillance lulls Eleanor into a false sense of security and ultimately drives Eleanor away from her dreams of acceptance.

Jackson wrote and set *Hill House* in the 1950s, a time marked by its extremely strict social norms. After the end of World War II, soldiers returned to the U.S., and women who previously worked for the war effort returned to their homes to become housewives, thus emphasizing the nuclear family as a "bastion of social order" (DuBois 593). As a result, gender roles — "men's role as breadwinners and women's as wives and mothers" — were redeveloped and reinforced (DuBois 593). As pointed out by Diane Long Hoeveler in her exploration of the American female gothic, in Shirley Jackson's work, which is "firmly situated in the historical realities of the twentieth century, we can see the toll that large-scale war and genocide have taken" (111). Eleanor's need to be accepted does not connect directly to gender roles; however, this cultural context intensifies the social anxiety Eleanor experiences throughout the novel. The tension — and the threat of surveillance both during the war and in the postwar era — pervades the text and is therefore worth noting as a prelude to Eleanor's nuanced relationship with surveillance and social acceptance.

Eleanor's main goal throughout the novel is acceptance by her peers as well as the chance to live independently without judgment. This desire stems from years of caring for her mother with little time for herself:

> [Eleanor's] years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair. Without ever wanting to become reserved and shy, she had spent so long living alone, with no one to love, that it was difficult for her to talk, even casually, to another person without self-consciousness and an awkward inability to find words. (Jackson 5)

Eleanor's need to care for her mother forced her into a "reserved and shy" personality that she never wanted, and her "self-consciousness" causes her to check or surveil herself constantly to fill the hole left by her mother's militance. Later, Eleanor reveals that she feels responsible for her mother's death: "It was my fault my mother died. […] She knocked on the wall and called me and called me and I never woke up. I ought to have brought her the medicine; I always did before. But this time she called me and I never woke up" (233). That Eleanor neglects her mother reveals her desire to be free from oppressive judgment and from a life tied constantly to another person's existence.

Eleanor's journey toward Hill House further demonstrates her attempt to move toward an independent life free of judgment. Not only does driving alone empower Eleanor, but her encounters with strangers on the trip also illustrate her increasing independence. While on the road trip, Eleanor stops at a restaurant and notices a small girl crying because she does not have her favorite star-speckled cup from home. As if casting a spell, Eleanor urges the young girl to disobey her parents:

> Don't, Eleanor told the little girl; insist on your cup of stars; once they have trapped you into being like everyone else, you will never see your cup of stars again; don't do it; and the little girl glanced at her, and smiled a little, subtle, dimpling, wholly comprehending smile, and shook her head stubbornly at the glass. Brave girl, Eleanor thought; wise, brave girl. (22)

Eleanor recognizes in this moment both the oppressive constrictions imposed by those around us and the bravery it takes to resist those limiting expectations. Because this moment happens as Eleanor pursues a more independent life, it also provides us with a clear metaphor for Eleanor's desires: She, too, is insisting on her cup of stars.

Eleanor arrives at Hill House, whose implied sentience confirms that it surveils its residents. The narrator claims that "No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house" (35), personifying the house by describing its "face" and implying that it has a soul able to contain "evil." The narrator continues, "yet somehow a maniac juxtaposition, a badly turned angle, some chance meeting of roof and sky, turned Hill House into a place of despair, more frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake" (35). The description of the house's "face" implies that the house has eyes just like its residents. Nor can the house be spied on in return, as "no human eye can isolate" the element that makes the house evil. This introduction to the house immediately frames the narrative as one of watching and being watched.

The descriptions of Hill House's architecture confirm this panopticonic unease. Eleanor, the first to arrive at Hill House, is assigned the blue room for the duration of her stay. Alone in the room, Eleanor observes that it is “chillingly wrong in all its dimensions, so that the walls [seem] always in one direction a fraction longer than the eye could endure, and in another direction a fraction less than the barest possible tolerable length” (42). This description of the room aligns with Sigmund Freud’s notion of the uncanny in that the room is almost familiar but not quite. Eleanor’s observation of the room also betrays her instinct for vigilance. The walls are “a fraction longer than the eye could endure,” highlighting Eleanor’s attempt to see as far as possible. She is equally observant when scanning the parlor: “It was not a cozy room, certainly. It had an unpleasantly high ceiling, and a narrow tiled fireplace which looked chill in spite of the fire which Luke had lighted at once” (62). The parlor, like the blue room, is uncanny in that its “high ceiling” and “narrow tiled fireplace” make it seem stretched vertically, leaving it slightly taller and thinner than it should be. According to Gaston Bachelard’s theory that verticality represents one’s consciousness, this description illustrates the slight stretch of the residents’ minds, especially Eleanor’s.

As Eleanor becomes acquainted with the house, her methods of social observation begin to mirror the house’s surveillance. Not only is Eleanor there for the express purpose of observing the house’s peculiarities, but she also approaches social situations with the same scrutiny. Throughout the novel, the narrator reminds us that the house is watching: “Around them the house studied and located them, above them the hills slept watchfully, small eddies of air and sound and movement stirred and waited and whispered” (61). This process of “studying,” “locating,” and “watching” mirrors Eleanor’s social strategy, a process in which she observes those around her in order to place herself more appropriately in her environment. After successfully contributing to a conversation among the Hill House residents, Eleanor mentally describes herself as “An Eleanor […] who belongs, who is talking easily, who is sitting by the fire with her friends” (64). This third-person evaluation of the self illustrates Eleanor’s constant self-monitoring; she briefly dissociates from herself as if to process the entire situation objectively and locate herself within it. She also studies the other residents: “Eleanor, watching, thought wryly that it might sometimes be oppressive to be for long around one so immediately in tune, so perceptive, as Theodora” (65). In addition to gauging the appropriateness of her own behavior in this situation, Eleanor also notes the other residents’ personalities and characteristics. This observation of others is mostly innocuous, as Eleanor thinks “wryly,” implying social equality rather than feelings of subordination. Eleanor feels capable during these moments of observation; she uses this scrutiny as a strategy to evaluate her social success.

Eleanor’s observational skills stop bringing her closer to her goal of social acceptance as she realizes Hill House’s ability to overpower her with its own surveillance. In her attempts to understand the house, Eleanor always senses something beyond her empirical abilities: “Nothing in this house moves […] until you look away, and then you just catch something from the corner of your eye” (120). Eleanor tries to watch the house, but the house can sense where she looks and manages to move only when mostly out of sight. The feeling that the house notices its residents’ movements adds to its sentience. Hill House also has the ability to read its residents’ minds to its advantage, introducing an element of surveillance that Eleanor objectively cannot achieve on her own. After waking up suddenly and calling “Coming, Mother, coming,” in the middle of the night, Eleanor kicks over a table and thinks, “That is not the table falling, […] my mother is knocking on the wall” (139). The knocking sound in Hill House evokes the knocking of Eleanor’s mother on the night she died, manipulating Eleanor’s guilt in order to further the trauma of the haunting. Because Eleanor has not admitted this guilt aloud by this point in the novel, Hill House’s tailored haunting therefore reveals its ability to surveil not only the actions but also the minds of its residents. The panopticonic surveillance extends beyond the physical to the psychological space; Eleanor knows she is being watched but cannot watch the house in return.

As the hauntings begin, Eleanor's confidence starts to waver. As she stares at her reflection one morning, she thinks,

> It is my second morning in Hill House, and I am unbelievably happy. Journeys end in lovers meeting; I have spent an all but sleepless night, I have told lies and made a fool of myself, and the very air tastes like wine. I have been frightened out of my foolish wits, but I have somehow earned this joy; I have been waiting for it for so long. (149)

These affirmations recall Eleanor's earlier dissociative observations in that they provide a seemingly objective view of her social performance; however, these affirmations reveal deep anxieties about her relationships to those around her. She recognizes her joyfulness but condemns her earlier behavior, in which she "told lies and made a fool of [herself]." Although she thinks in the first person, she does so while looking in the mirror, implying the same dissociative perspective as before. She attempts to evaluate and comfort herself while also watching over herself, revealing the first mental effects of the house's surveillance on her own desires.

As Eleanor continues her self-monitoring, the house reveals its history of enforced surveillance through Hugh Crain's scrapbook for his daughter Sophia, which Luke finds in the library and which dates back to 1881 (coincidentally around the 1892 publication of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"). Luke explains that Hugh Crain made the scrapbook because "his little girl is to learn humility" (185), and the pages depict alarming scenes of hell and punishment for misbehavior (185-189). The scrapbook expects of Sophia the same self-monitoring that Eleanor inflicts on herself; in fact, the discovery of the scrapbook exacerbates Eleanor’s anxiety. Luke says, while reading the section about the seven deadly sins, “‘Note pride, the very image of our Nell here.’ ‘What?’ [says] Eleanor, standing up. ‘Teasing,’ the doctor [says] placatingly. ‘Don’t come look, my dear; he’s teasing you’” (188). Despite being the humblest of the house’s residents, Eleanor anxiously jumps up when Luke calls her proud. Eleanor’s obliviousness to Luke’s irony reveals her preoccupation with the others’ perception of her, and this anxiety contradicts the cool confidence she had during her first interactions with the other residents. This increased nervousness illustrates Hill House’s effectiveness in using surveillance to move Eleanor further from her goal of social acceptance.

Eleanor’s compulsion to surveil herself in order to perfect her image eventually catalyzes the attachment of her subconscious to the house itself. This conflation of subconscious and house begins with the architecturalization of Eleanor’s mind: “I am learning the pathways of the heart, Eleanor thought quite seriously, and then wondered what she could have meant by thinking any such thing” (181). “Pathways” — rather than “veins” or something similarly anatomical — connotes architecture and landscaping; she begins to see her mind as a house of its own. Bachelard also explores pathways briefly in his work, stating, “And what a dynamic, handsome object is a path! How precise the familiar hill paths remain for our muscular consciousness!” (33). Paths are locations for muscle memory, not only in the literal sense but also in the sense that one might have a train of thought that follows a winding path. According to Bachelard’s theory, the pathways in *Hill House* illustrate Eleanor’s (sub)conscious merge with the house itself due in part to the rhetorical use of the concept of paths in connection with consciousness and thought. Pathways therefore become a location that should be straightforward but instead blur boundaries of thought and reality, of person and place. Eleanor is becoming one with the house.

Hill House uses its surveillance abilities and its connection to Eleanor to exacerbate Eleanor's insecurities and move her away from her desire for acceptance. While outside, "She heard clearly the brush of footsteps on the path and then, standing back hard against the bank, heard the laughter very close; 'Eleanor, Eleanor,' and she heard it inside and outside her head; this was a call she had been listening for all of her life" (Jackson 236-237). The house haunts Eleanor telepathically, using its connection to her to convince Eleanor that her friends at the house exclude and laugh at her. While hearing these calls "inside and outside her head," however, Eleanor is not frightened. Instead, "this was a call she had been listening for all of her life," as if fate determined Eleanor's preternatural abilities. Surveillance, though objectively contrary to Eleanor's goals, lulls her into a false sense of security by providing her with increased opportunities to gauge social situations. Anxious that she is not accepted by her peers, Eleanor continues spying on others. Assuming Theodora and Luke are talking about her behind her back, Eleanor follows the two of them: "Theodora laughed, and Eleanor, hidden deep in the shadows behind the summerhouse, put her hands over her mouth to keep from speaking to let them know she was there; I've got to find out, she was thinking, I've got to find out" (240). Though she does not use her mental connection with the house to spy in this moment, Eleanor still uses the architecture of the house and its shadow to hide and allow further surveillance. The sense that she has "got to find out" confirms that her motivation for surveillance still originates from her social anxiety. Despite Eleanor's instinct, however, Theodora and Luke say nothing about her. She is not even on their minds.

Eleanor's supernatural surveillance abilities only increase as the novel continues. Eleanor begins spying on her fellow residents, and "From a great distance, it [seems], she could watch these people and listen to them" (245). Eleanor and Hill House's surveillance unite into one ability: Eleanor's hearing should not be able to function at this "great distance," and yet she can hear and see anywhere the house exists. The scope of her abilities continues expanding, and soon "She could even hear, with her new awareness of the house, the dust drifting gently in the attics, the wood aging" (246). As she prepares to climb the iron staircase in the library and the other residents desperately try to find her, she hears someone say "'Coming? Coming?' […] far away, somewhere else in the house, and she heard the stairs shake under their feet and a cricket stir on the lawn" (254). All these moments intentionally converge Eleanor with the house, isolating her from the other residents.

Surveillance and the convergence of mind and house bring Eleanor to her breaking point, preventing her permanently from achieving a life of independence and acceptance. In a trance-like state in the middle of the night, Eleanor makes her way to the library, a room she previously refused to enter. She thinks, "I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home. […] I am home, I am home[…]; now to climb" (256). At this thought, she ascends the rickety tower stairs, the same stairs on which a companion of Hugh Crain's daughter committed suicide by hanging. The possibility of suicide combines well with Bachelard's idea that "We always *go up* the attic stairs, which are steeper and more primitive. For they bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude" (46-7, emphasis original). Eleanor's ascension of the tower stairs therefore illustrates her hope for tranquility, which, after her increasing anxiety and isolation, she can seemingly only achieve through death. The house succeeds in attacking Eleanor's desire for an independent life free of judgment. Although Luke prevents her from dying on the staircase, she later dies by crashing her car into a tree outside, implying a completion of the ascension she attempts in the library.

For the first time in her life, Eleanor insists on her cup of stars, but Hill House's surveillance and its ability to target Eleanor's biggest dreams prevent her from ever finding it. The sense of being watched pervades the novel, and despite the ambiguity of the cause of Hill House's malevolence, one cannot deny the prevalence and insidiousness of its surveillance. In Eleanor's case, surveillance briefly provides Eleanor a sense of security, but this feeling only lures Eleanor deeper into isolation. Surveillance layers over Hill House's phantasms, becoming a kind of ghost in itself. Surveillance-as-ghost in *The Haunting of Hill House* thus lays the groundwork for future Eleanor Vances whose desires are made unachievable by panopticonic spaces.

Downstairs: Falling into Tragedy in Anne Rivers Siddons's *The House Next Door* (1978)

After centuries of gothic literature focusing mostly on the hauntings of older structures, Anne Rivers Siddons's 1978 novel *The House Next Door* challenges the notion that haunted houses need to have deep histories by including the construction of the House Next Door[3] within the narrative. The House Next Door also has an atypically contemporary design, further challenging the precedent set by earlier gothic literature of architecture adopting design elements from bygone eras. In the novel, Colquitt Kennedy, a married woman in her mid-thirties, narrates the construction of the House Next Door, which she observes closely with her husband Walter. Colquitt befriends Kim Dougherty, the architect of the house, as well as the Harralsons, the Sheehans, and the Greenes, the three families that live in the house over the course of the narrative. She frequently gossips with her neighbor Claire Swanson, a mother of adolescent boys that lives across the street; and Virginia Guthrie, an uptight older woman who lives on the other side of the House Next Door. Imbued with Colquitt's instinct to maintain her relationship's and her neighborhood's predictable contentment, *The House Next Door* explores the incompatibility of new residents to an established community with a fastidious social equilibrium. The House Next Door attacks everyone's inmost desires so long as it has enough time to observe them; surveillance manifests in the novel as a tool through which the house customizes, and therefore intensifies, its horrors.

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3. The house in this novel does not have a proper title like Hill House and Heatherbrae. I capitalize House Next Door for clarity and because I use it as a title in the same manner I use "Hill House" and "Heatherbrae."

Central to *The House Next Door*'s plot is Colquitt's acute awareness of her neighbors' socioeconomic status and the life of comfort this status provides. She recognizes that she and Walter are not as wealthy as the rest of the neighborhood — they were only able to afford their house because of a wedding gift from her parents (Siddons 2) — but they still perform their wealth in expected ways: "There we are, this week, Walter and I. Sitting on the white wrought-iron patio chairs, looking just like what we are—mildly affluent people in their middle thirties, well and casually dressed, tanned from a summer of not-so-good tennis at the club" (3). Colquitt describes a life that acknowledges social status but prioritizes comfort; their affluence is "mild," their dress "casual," and their tennis "not-so-good." This introduction to the Kennedys highlights their satisfaction with the life they build and their desire to maintain this tranquility for as long as possible.

Colquitt and Walter's attitude toward wealth and leisure reflects the predominant attitude in the neighborhood, creating a seemingly peaceful environment that secretly resents the invasions of dissimilar personalities. Prior to the introduction of the House Next Door, the neighborhood welcomes and accepts people so long as they behave in the proper way: "Walter and I are not natives. And we certainly are not in the same financial league with some of our friends. But we are *of* them precisely because we understand the way we choose to live. It is our way too; we find grace and substance, a satisfying symmetry and a kind of roundness to it" (11, emphasis original). This lifestyle allows leisure even for those that may not be as wealthy, but this acceptance requires certain behavior, which Dale Bailey alludes to in his analysis of the Kennedys' namesake: "With a single name, Siddons evokes the Jekyll and Hyde faces of the American Dream, the shining idealism of the Kennedy myth, with its wealth and success, and its seamy underside" (84). These dual potentials of success and horror haunt Colquitt and Walter as they navigate the construction of the House Next Door and their relationship to the revolving door of neighbors. The uncertainty of the turnover threatens the dependability and predictability of their current lifestyle.

Colquitt reflexively interprets the House Next Door's construction as an invasion of her privacy and of the neighborhood's carefully curated lifestyle. The Kennedys' house has many windows that look directly into the adjacent lot, and Colquitt worries that the new house will allow her new neighbors to see in: "The lot was a buffer, a grace note. Any house there, any house at all, no matter how well done, would stare directly into the core of our living" (Siddons 14). Colquitt's personification of the house unwittingly foreshadows its sentience; she also sees the construction as an affront to the "core of our living," not just of her privacy.

Despite Colquitt's hesitance, once she sees Kim's plans, the architecture immediately impresses her. Scanning over the blueprints, she notes that the house "[soars] into the trees and along the deep-breasted slope of the ridge as though it [has] uncoiled, not as though it would be built, layer by layer and stone by stone" (26). When she compliments Kim, she says, "It looks so … organic or something, at least in your sketches. You wouldn't *maintain* a house like that; you'd feed and water it. You'd need to give it nourishment and love to keep it alive and healthy" (36, emphasis original). Like the *Hill House* narrator, Colquitt highlights the house's verticality, implying, according to Gaston Bachelard's theory of verticality as consciousness, that as the house "grows," it will become a sentient and conscious being, requiring someone to "feed and water it." Colquitt no longer views the house as an inevitable invasion of privacy, but the house's need for sustenance maintains the sense that it is alive. No matter Colquitt's opinion of the house's aesthetics, the House Next Door is still watching.

The house attacks Pie and Buddy Harralson, the young couple responsible for the house's construction, before the structure is completely finished. Pie Harralson's father, Mark Gladney, helped pay for the house, and Pie talks about her father, Buddy, and the baby she and Buddy are expecting with an annoyingly bubbly enthusiasm. According to Pie, she wants to be an exemplary housewife — "I knew I was going to marry Buddy and have babies and a *super* house way before [Daddy] knew it, so what difference did grades make?" (24, emphasis original) — while Buddy dreams of becoming a precociously successful lawyer at his firm — "He cares more about that silly firm than he does about me" (43). The house then illustrates its surveillance abilities by targeting Pie: "When the shell was up and the interior finish work begun, Pie fell down an unrailed flight of stairs leading into the basement of the house and miscarried" (46). Pie's fall marks the first obvious haunting by the House Next Door, and it invokes Bachelard's concept of the cellar, which "becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy" (Bachelard 41). The fall demonstrates the House Next Door's ability to discern Pie's deepest desires and attack them. In causing a miscarriage, the house pulls Pie away from her dream of becoming a stay-at-home mom.

The House Next Door's final attack on the Harralsons gets at the heart of their inmost desires: Pie's dreams of familial harmony and Buddy's career ambitions. Pie introduces her parents to the finished house during a neighborhood-wide housewarming party, and Colquitt notices that, as Pie shows her parents around, "Her skin [glows] like her incandescent pearls. Look, Mama and Daddy. Look what I did. Look what I have. Look what I *am*" (81, emphasis original). Pie appears in this moment to grasp at the identity she fervently desires. As the party reaches its peak, however, Pie screams from the downstairs bedroom, the same place she miscarried during construction. Colquitt, Walter, and members of Buddy's firm run down to find

Mark Gladney dead and Buddy in a naked embrace with his colleague and mentor, Lucas Abbott (91). Interestingly, the horror of the scene resides more in the sudden queerness than in Mark Gladney's dead body: Colquitt focuses on the way the two men are "staring […] as stilly as wild animals pinned in the headlights of an oncoming car" (91). The focus on the destruction of reputation rather than the loss of life illustrates the effectiveness of the house's detailed and customized horror. Not only can Pie no longer have the domestic life of her dreams, but Buddy also cannot return to his life as a successful, up-and-coming lawyer. The House Next Door has surveilled the Harralsons since the beginning of construction, as evidenced by its meticulous targeting though miscarriage, paternal death, and queer infidelity.

After Pie and Buddy move out, the House Next Door uses similar surveillance tactics to victimize its new residents, Anita and Buck Sheehan. Before their move into the House Next Door, the Sheehans are traumatized by the loss of their son during the Vietnam War. As a result, Anita enters a catatonic state and Buck, desperate for the attention he does not receive from his wife, begins drinking heavily and has an affair.[4] Colquitt meets the couple when they move in next door, both desperate to heal Anita's nervous condition and to repair their marriage. Anita immediately senses the house's sentience upon walking in: "When Buck brought me in to see it for the first time and I opened the door and went in, it was just as if it had been waiting for me to come home" (122). Starting as soon as Anita enters, the House Next Door watches her, and because she spends more time in the house than Buck, she falls victim to the house's torture

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4. For a more detailed explanation of Anita and Buck Sheehan's backstory, see Virginia Guthrie's monologue (Siddons 132-139).

more often. Anita wants more than anything to accept the death of her son, but the House Next Door constantly reminds her not only of her son but also of her son's violent death. She wakes up one night to a movie about Vietnam playing on television: "She said she woke up just as his helicopter was going down, and she could see him in the cockpit, and there was fire around him, and he was screaming" (152). Virginia Guthrie checks the *TV Guide* and calls the stations, but nothing had been playing about Vietnam (153). Once again, the House Next Door has determined the deepest desires of its residents and chips away at them slowly.

At this point in the novel, the House Next Door reveals that it has been watching Colquitt, Walter, and Kim in addition to its own residents. While housesitting for the Sheehans, who are out of town recovering from Anita's deteriorating condition, Colquitt takes Kim to the House Next Door to keep her company while she waters the plants. Once inside the house, Colquitt suddenly kisses Kim against her will: "Even as his mouth devoured mine and my own opened to his, a thin thread of pure consciousness that was all that was left of me, of Colquitt Kennedy, crouched in a corner of my head and whimpered, high and childishly" (166). Colquitt describes her mind architecturally, painting her shrinking identity as "crouched in a corner." Colquitt's vanishing consciousness reflects Bachelard's theory that "all corners are haunted, if not inhabited" (159); Colquitt's receding into the corner of her mind reflects the intensity of the haunting in this moment. That the house attacks Colquitt's relationship with Walter, one of the pillars of Colquitt's ideal life of dependable contentment, further proves the intensity of this haunting. The House Next Door, having observed Colquitt over the months, knows to target her relationship's stability in order to haunt her as much as possible.

The moment between Colquitt and Kim represents a turning point in Colquitt's relationship to the house, in which she begins to see completely its ability to destroy people. In the aftermath of the kiss, which Walter sees and responds to by approaching them with a knife, Kim hypothesizes reasons for their uncharacteristic actions:

> You said once, Col, that [the house] would bring out the best in whoever lived there. You were wrong. It takes the best. It took that miserable Pie's kid, and her marriage, and her daddy. It took that poor sonofabitch Buddy's whole future. It took that Abbott guy's future. It's taking Anita Sheehan's sanity—I know damned well there was more to her little 'setback' than you told me, Col—and it took my talent. And tonight it almost took you and Walter away from each other for good. (Siddons 170)

Kim's analysis highlights the house's ability to monitor its frequent inhabitants, revealing the panopticonic nature of living near or within the home. He explicitly mentions that all of the targeted features are "the best" of each victim, which he means in the present tense but which also extends toward the victims' desired futures. For example, Pie's "kid," "marriage," and "daddy" are all present concerns, but they also all lay the groundwork for the idealized domestic life for which she yearns. The features that the house targets are not only "the best" in the present moment; they are also "the best" because they are crucial components of the victims' future aspirations.

Soon after Kim's revelation, the House Next Door targets everything the Sheehans hold close, making Colquitt complicit in its surveillance in the process. Colquitt receives a package meant for the Sheehans and brings it next door, noticing something unusual behind the house's big glass window: "Blinded with the glare from the glass and perspiration running into my eyes, I could see nothing at first. I heard the sounds, though, and I stayed my knock, puzzled for an instant by the half-familiar, half-disturbing noise" (204). Although spying on the Sheehans does not motivate Colquitt's visit, her curiosity prevents her from revealing her presence, thus positioning her as a temporary panopticonic inspector. Colquitt hears glass break, and “alarmed, [presses] closer to the sliding door” (204). She still does not reveal her presence but increases her ability to see inside the house. A tableau unfolds before her of Buck and Virginia having sex in front of Anita, who appears to be in a state of resigned shock. A bottle of gin lies next to the couch, implying that Buck has started drinking again (204-205). This moment attacks everything the Sheehans yearned for: Anita’s mental stability, Buck’s sobriety, and a commitment to monogamy. The house’s determination to make Colquitt witness the event reminds us that someone (or something) is always watching, even in the most private and traumatizing moments.

One final family moves into the House Next Door before the Kennedys go public about their concerns: The Greenes, who, after a particularly embarrassing sickness at their Twelfth Night party, die at the hands of the patriarch’s murder-suicide. These deaths convince the Kennedys to try and warn potential buyers, and *People* magazine publishes an article about the Kennedys and the House Next Door, much to the dismay of the neighborhood. Colquitt announces her concerns about the house in an attempt to protect the stability of the neighborhood, but ironically, the *People* article completely upsets the neighborhood’s equilibrium. Many readers show up to gawk at the house, and notably, these visitors are clearly not as wealthy as the residents of the neighborhood: “They gazed impassively at the house, and looked with slanting suspicion over at our house and at the other houses on the street, as if knowing their paths would never lead them to streets and houses like this, and resenting it” (328). The fear of the house’s surveillance introduces a new surveillance; as long as the house stands, the neighbors are watched.

At the end of the novel, Colquitt and Walter learn that the evil within the house comes from Kim’s designs, to which the architect seems oblivious. Colquitt and Walter kill Kim and put his body in the basement of the House Next Door, which therefore multiply becomes Bachelard's "walled-in tragedy." As she and Walter prepare to set fire to the house with Kim's corpse inside, they wait until they are not surveilled by their neighbors: "There are only a few lights on the street now. Since it is a weekend night, they will burn later than usual. I am uneasy about that. But it cannot be helped. We must wait until they all go out, and then wait at least another hour after that" (352). In the same way that Hill House permanently prevents Eleanor from achieving acceptance, the surveillance of and surrounding the House Next Door permanently prevents the Kennedys from achieving their desire for a life of dependable contentment. After they burn down the house, they will never live normal lives.

Though *The House Next Door* challenges many expectations set by earlier haunted house novels, especially regarding the house's architectural design, it remains similar to other contemporary haunted house stories in its depiction of surveillance. By observing its residents and frequent visitors, the house develops customized horrors that attack its victims' deepest desires. Colquitt and Walter lose their dependable lifestyle, Pie loses her future as a stay-at-home mom, Buddy loses his job, and Anita loses her sanity, among multiple other attacks. The House Next Door's sentience is at first comforting then chilling, reminding the victims and the reader that someone is always watching. The novel also reveals the potential for human complicity in surveillance, as Colquitt spies on the Sheehans and the readers of *People* magazine spy on the house and the neighborhood. *The House Next Door*, though mostly preoccupied with the sentience and surveillance of the house itself, establishes the potential for consequential human surveillance, which I explore in the next chapter.

The Servants' Quarters: Human Surveillance in Ruth Ware's *The Turn of the Key* (2019)

Through cameras, key codes, and electric cars, Ruth Ware's 2019 novel *The Turn of the Key* modernizes Henry James's classic gothic novel *The Turn of the Screw*. The epistolary novel comprises multiple letters sent by Rachel Gerhardt to solicitor Mr. Wrexham from prison, hoping he will represent her in the case of a murder she claims she did not commit. In these letters, Rachel explains that after taking a nannying position at the fancy Scottish manor Heatherbrae, she begins to suspect the house is haunted as she cares for Sandra and Bill Elincourt's unnerving children. To make matters worse, the antique architecture of Heatherbrae clashes with the Elincourts' recently installed glass walls and brand-new technology, such as "Happy," the smart system that connects to all electronic devices around the house, including the cameras strategically placed in each room. Rachel reveals late in the novel that she applied for the nannying position under a fake name because Bill Elincourt is her biological father, making Rachel a surveilling figure alongside the house's surveillance. Though Rachel suspects ghosts haunt Heatherbrae, the end of the novel reveals that Maddie Elincourt causes all of the hauntings. Because the horror of the novel is entirely man-made, surveillance in *The Turn of the Key* is the purest example of surveillance-as-ghost. Rachel goes to Heatherbrae to fulfill her desire to observe and anonymously participate in the life she could have had, but Heatherbrae's surveillance overpowers hers and prevents her from achieving this goal.

Rachel's first interactions with Heatherbrae reveal a simultaneous allure and apprehension caused by the house's architecture. When Rachel arrives for her first interview, she notices that she "[feels], in some twisted way, like [she is] coming home" (Ware 23). This moment of returning home tinged with a vague "twisted" feeling evokes Gaston Bachelard's idea that "to attract and to repulse do not give contradictory experiences. The terms are contrary"

(20). Heatherbrae therefore both entices Rachel and perturbs her; this perturbation happens primarily through the house's surveillance. For example, during her introduction to Heatherbrae, Rachel waits for Sandra to let her in after ringing the doorbell. While she waits, she "[feels] curiously both watched and ignored" (Ware 29). Rachel's discomfort evokes the panopticon; someone could be watching her, but she will never know when, if at all.

The morning after her arrival, Rachel gets an official tour of the estate. This tour fully reveals the clash of Heatherbrae's traditional elements with the Elincourts' garish additions, such as the wall of glass at the back of the house: "There was something disconcerting about the way the old and new combined in this house. […] Here there was a strange impression of oil and water—everything was either self-consciously original or glaringly modern" (69). The "disconcerting" contrast gives the impression that something is present in the house that is not welcome. Though at first Rachel assumes the modern additions are unwelcome, eventually she realizes she is the unwelcome one. Later, Rachel acknowledges the house's ostensible sentience:

> There was a strange feeling of split identity too—as though the house was trying hard to be one thing, while Sandra and Bill pulled it relentlessly in the other direction, chopping off limbs, performing open-heart surgery on its dignified old bones, trying to make it into something against its own will. (198)

The descriptions of Heatherbrae having a "split identity" and "trying to be one thing" are only reinforced by Rachel's graphic depictions of human anatomy. Furthermore, Rachel supposes that the house could have "its own will," suggesting a motivation for surveillance's haunting. Though Maddie causes the horrors of the novel rather than supernatural forces, this description of the house shows surveillance's ability to make this structure sentient. Surveillance begets sentience, whereas in *Hill House* and *House Next Door*, sentience begets surveillance.

Rachel's first interaction with the Happy system causes an upsetting visceral reaction, as ghosts might at the beginning of a traditional gothic novel. While Sandra uses the table to watch over the children, Rachel thinks, "I hadn't noticed any cameras last night, so wherever they were, they must be well hidden. Had Sandra watched me go up to bed last night? Had she seen me look into Petra's bedroom? The thought made my cheeks flame" (67). The revelation that these cameras were in place makes Rachel uncomfortable, especially because they were "well hidden" without her knowledge. Learning that she could have been watched by the Elincourts makes her "cheeks flame," and this visceral reaction illustrates the immediate hostility between Rachel and Heatherbrae's surveillance. Later, Rachel sees a camera in the corner of her room: "That would be more than creepy. That would be illegal surveillance. I was an employee—and I had a reasonable expectation of privacy, or whatever the legal terminology was" (97), then covers the camera with a sock. This introduces the legal opposition to surveillance beyond a mere visceral disquiet, even though she cannot place the exact law this camera might violate. The possibility of illegality thus confirms her tacit discomfort, and she places the sock over the camera in a small act of self-protection. The Happy system thus evokes traditional ghost stories in that it causes a visceral reaction and betrays the laws of the land the same way ghosts betray the laws of physics. The house, which Rachel visits in an attempt to reconcile her lifetime of domestic difficulties, therefore uses a technologically updated version of haunting to prevent Rachel from reconciling her relationship to her biological father.

Even as Rachel tries to acclimate to Happy, she recognizes an unease and powerlessness associated with the system, much like the sense of security Eleanor gains from becoming one with Hill House. Rachel acknowledges the benefits of surveillance while watching Maddie and Ellie on a tablet: "Although I still found it a little creepy to be able to spy on the children from afar like this, I began to appreciate how useful it was" (120). She recognizes that this same technology could possibly be used on her in that she "still [finds] it a little creepy," but her feelings have shifted slightly in that she now appreciates the usefulness of the tool. At first, she only uses Happy within acceptable bounds. When Jack offers to soothe baby Petra, however, Rachel "[switches] on the baby monitor and [listens] to the door of Petra's room swish gently open" (127). In switching the monitor on as soon as Jack is out of her sight, Rachel spies on both Petra — whom she is authorized to spy on as part of her job — and Jack, whom she most likely wishes to monitor purely out of her romantic interest in him. The house slowly converts Rachel into its haunting force, much like Hill House's blending with Eleanor and the House Next Door's forcing Colquitt to witness the Sheehans' infidelity.

Beyond mere discomfort, Rachel also experiences the negative consequences of the surveillance system. Constant surveillance heightens the pressure already on her to conceal her true identity as Bill Elincourt's biological daughter. After spending a successful day outside with the girls, Rachel allows them to speak to their mother on the phone. When Maddie smugly hands the phone to Rachel, however, "Sandra's voice [is] clipped and annoyed. 'What's this I hear about you taking them into the locked garden?'" (157). Sandra's reprimand reveals that even beyond the reach of the cameras, the house and its residents constantly surveil Rachel. Maddie takes it upon herself to cover the cameras' blind spots, as evidenced by her reporting this off-grounds misdemeanor to Sandra. This reprimand also attacks Rachel's ability to care for the children, removing her even more from her desire to fit in with her biological family. Just as Rachel begins acclimating to constant surveillance, and even using it to her advantage, Heatherbrae's surveillance reveals that it is one step ahead. Rachel's inability to keep up with surveillance therefore causes surveillance to haunt her even more.

An additionally haunting element of surveillance is its illusion of control: The Happy system provides a false sense of power while actually taking Rachel's power away. The smart system blares and the lights flash in the middle of the night, and Rachel spirals: "I realized I had no way of turning this thing off. What a stupid fucking idea—a smart house? This was the least smart thing I could imagine" (173). Rachel discovers a loss of control — she has "no way of turning this thing off." Instead, Maddie, who turned Happy on, has more control than Rachel, even though Happy supposedly exists to give Rachel control over the household. Like the manner in which Maddie's tattling puts Heatherbrae's surveillance one step ahead of Rachel, thus threatening her control over the situation, Happy's 'malfunction' threatens Rachel with her own lack of control. Additionally, Maddie's control over the household through Happy does not necessarily correlate to intelligence, as illustrated by Rachel's conviction that a smart house is "the least smart thing [she] could imagine." Instead, control and power have to do with knowing relevant information rather than all information, and in that regard, Rachel will always be at least one step behind.

Also during this interruption at night, Rachel begins to suspect everyone, even Jack, whom she previously trusted. She catches herself suspecting him: "But I caught myself. This was pointless. He didn't need to access the controls from the yard. He had a set of keys. Except . . . what better way to make someone think you weren't involved . . . when really you were?" (177). Rachel loses control in this moment by doubting herself and her instincts. She flips back and forth between distrusting Jack and distrusting herself: First she calls her instincts "pointless" before acknowledging a manner in which Jack might manipulate her. Surveillance thus causes Rachel to lose control not only of running the household but also of her own instincts and emotions. Her mind becomes a battleground in which she contends with the house for power.

This is not to say that Rachel is entirely innocent: Rachel, like many other gothic protagonists, is complicit in her own haunting. Prior to her arrival at Heatherbrae, she constantly searches for and monitors the actions of her biological father, Bill Elincourt. In her letter to Mr. Wrexham, Rachel reveals that she was not looking for nannying posts when she found the ad to work at Heatherbrae: "I was doing something totally different, something I'd done many times before. I was googling my father's name" (313). This revelation confirms that her entire time at Heatherbrae results from her own constant attempts to surveil her father. This internet search is not a singular mistake; she has spied on her father "many times before." Rachel therefore becomes responsible for her own misery, as surveillance underlies every uncanny event that Rachel experiences. In her attempt to clarify the reason that she applied for the position, she writes, "I just wanted to . . . well, just to *see*, I suppose" (317, emphasis original). The emphasis on "see" evokes the panopticon, as Rachel becomes a set of eyes that Bill himself cannot see in return. Even when she arrives at Heatherbrae, Bill does not know that Rachel is his daughter, and she is thus able to continue spying on him without his knowledge. Her own surveillance of Bill is the reason she is in this situation; Heatherbrae's surveillance of her is almost a punishment for her own prying.

Unlike *Hill House* and *House Next Door*, *Turn of the Key* concludes with an entirely plausible explanation for the novel's haunting events without the intervention of the supernatural: Maddie is behind everything. In her final night at Heatherbrae, Rachel realizes Maddie is not in her bed. After scouring the house in panic, Rachel finally finds Maddie outside: "She was lying facedown below my bedroom window, sprawled across the cobblestones in her nightdress, the white cotton soaked through and through with blood. […] She was quite, quite dead" (323). Rachel is arrested for Maddie's death, and it is not until the end of the novel that we learn Ellie is responsible for killing her sister. In a letter appended to Rachel's stack of letters, Ellie writes, "it was me […] I pushed [Maddie] because she was going to make you go away like the others" (335). She explains that Maddie used Sandra's old phone to turn on Happy's alarms, set up the attic to appear haunted, and tried to poison Rachel with berries from the garden. Maddie felt that her long string of nannies, Rachel included, threatened her parents' relationship because of Bill's proclivity for infidelity (335-336). Despite the human explanation for all of these events, however, surveillance remains the primary cause of the house's horrors. Maddie not only observes Rachel closely throughout the novel but also manipulates the technology of the surveillance system to haunt Rachel.

Maddie's death and Rachel's subsequent imprisonment reveals that Heatherbrae's surveillance of Rachel is intentional and targeted. Not only is surveillance unable to exonerate Rachel, but its supposed objectivity also paints her as responsible for that inability: "The irony is, Mr. Wrexham, in a house filled with a dozen cameras, there are none that show what happened to Maddie that night" (325). As evidenced by Sandra's introduction of Happy — "It's very handy, especially in a place with several floors. It means I don't have to always be running up and down to check on the girls" (67) — surveillance's primary function in Heatherbrae is convenient safety. Its specific function is to keep the residents safe and secure. For the most part, surveillance is able to perform that function and terrorize Rachel simultaneously. After Maddie's death, however, it prioritizes Rachel's terror over its own job, as in order to make Rachel's life worse, it cannot capture the information that would exonerate Rachel. Both Happy's ability to complete its intended function and its failure to do so therefore haunt Rachel; Heatherbrae's surveillance prioritizes Rachel's terror over its own function in the household. Rachel later recounts that, when being questioned by the detectives,

> I tried to tell them—to explain what it's like to be a young woman, alone, in a strange house, with strangers watching you. I tried to tell them how I was okay with a camera in the kitchen, the den, the living room, the corridors, even with cameras in the girls' rooms. But that I needed somewhere, just one place, where I could be myself, unwatched, unmonitored. […] But the truth is, I did cover up that camera. And if I hadn't, we might know what happened to Maddie. (326)

In this interview, Rachel circuitously takes responsibility for Maddie's death by admitting to covering the camera. Surveillance is therefore not directly complicit in Maddie's death but rather the impetus for the series of horrific actions. Happy and the surrounding surveilling forces hurt Rachel in every way when she does not need the surveillance, and when she does finally need its aid, it abandons her. Even scarier, surveillance does not carry any blame in this scenario, as it is present the entire time for reasons of safety and security.

Though the word "haunting" may evoke ghosts and the supernatural, surveillance as a haunting force throughout *The Turn of the Key* shows that being watched can be just as terrifying as a force out of humans' control. Some of the worst haunting can result from the humans working against each other under the false premise of safety, as happens with Maddie's vendetta against all nannies, including Rachel. The purpose of surveillance throughout the novel is to scare Rachel away, preventing her from getting close to her biological family. Like Eleanor Vance and Colquitt Kennedy, Rachel yearns for a life that the house rips away from her. Heatherbrae's surveillance, as well as Rachel's own use of surveillance, evokes Bentham's panopticon, never allowing a sense of true privacy and simultaneously always providing the inspector the upper hand.

The Path Out: A Conclusion

As I conclude this thesis, I am reminded again of Bachelard's notion of the path. With a palpable enthusiasm, he writes, "And what a dynamic, handsome object is a path! How precise the familiar hill paths remain for our muscular consciousness! […] As I write this page, I feel freed of my duty to take a walk: I'm sure of having gone out of my house" (11). The image of the path implies a simultaneous familiarity and exploration, allowing the mind to wander through seemingly quotidian ideas. The home is something we take for granted, and yet, it reveals more about us and our subconscious than we realize.

Throughout this thesis, I have highlighted a pattern of surveillance-as-ghost throughout three contemporary haunted house texts. The protagonists of each of these novels are initially comfortable with their own relationship to surveillance, but they quickly become the surveilled, forcing them away from their deepest desires. Hill House targets Eleanor's dreams of acceptance, the House Next Door targets Colquitt's idealized life of predictable tranquility, and Heatherbrae targets Rachel's intention to participate in a life she could have had. Surveillance's purpose in these novels is therefore to locate a victim's dreams and destroy them.

These three novels operate within the gothic literary canon in their use of the uncanny and their allusions to earlier texts; however, they add to these gothic traditions a new conception of surveillance, one that is technologically advanced and impossibly perpetual. The moments in which the houses target their victims are scary, but perhaps even scarier is the sense that the houses know almost everything about their victims. This panopticonic anxiety seems characteristically contemporary, as rapid technological advancement moves us toward a powerful and intelligent digital world out of our control. Eleanor's, Colquitt's, and Rachel's dreams are not unique; we all yearn for acceptance, stability, and kinship to some degree.

Surveillance's overpowering ability to destroy these dreams, therefore, is not an unreasonable fear. These novels, in their depictions of extraordinary events, identify a very human instinct to protect ourselves and the values we hold dear; they are worth reading beyond the sheer entertainment they provide. These novels encourage us to protect ourselves, our dreams, our cups of stars.

They encourage us also, however, to be careful. Someone might be watching you.

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