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Domesticating political feeling, affect and memory in Marilynne Robinson's *Home*

'What does it mean to come home?' (106) the central character of Marilynne Robinson's *Home* (2008) reflects. After returning to her childhood house following a split from her fiancé, and to look after her dying father, Glory Boughton continually ruminates on the meanings and significances of home. In the past, Glory 'had dreamed of a real home for herself and the babies,' that was 'different from this good and blessed and fustian and oppressive tabernacle' (107). The way in which the adjectives here slide from good to oppressive highlights the fusion of complex emotions at the heart of Glory's relationship to the home; that it is a tabernacle underscores the role of religion in the novel too. Glory's dreamed dwelling though is forever out of reach: 'She knew … that she would never open a door on that home, never cross that threshold … Ah well' (107). This impossible home—which Glory here imagines in purely physical terms—haunts her father's abode and the rest of the novel. The final sigh of resignation also illustrates the dominant tone of sadness that inflects the book. It shifts in idiom from *Gilead* (2004) to a feeling of sorrow; as Sarah Churchwell's review in the *Guardian* states, *Home* is 'one of the saddest books [she…] ever loved.'

This chapter will expand on that statement, following the ways in which emotion, especially sadness, circulates through the rooms of a quiet Iowan home in the mid-twentieth century. While the home is a near-universal fixture in the cultural imaginary, in Robinson's writings it signifies on the United States' familial, social, and cultural spaces. I suggest that Robinson utilizes the (negative) affects and feelings that are activated and mediated by the family home to probe the relations between memory, race, and nation. I argue that the centrality of domesticated feeling in this novel is politicized, not least in relation to memories

from the larger nation, the wider community, and this particular family. While we might call the Gilead trilogy historical fiction, this chapter sees *Home* as a work of cultural memory[i]: a remediation of the mid-twentieth century in the American Midwest. The memories at once held back *and* acknowledged are deeply entangled with familial strife and national racism. The two intertwine when Jack returns home and agitates a range of uncomfortable, and sad, affects. Put simply, the chapter will argue that *Home* explores the ways in which personal emotions like sadness affectively charge the home-spaces of the Boughtons; moreover, these emotions are rooted in not only personal, but larger national, conflicts. From Jack's childhood and adulthood tribulations to the burgeoning Civil Rights movement, *Home* shows how emotions move, and can move people. Yet, as other critics have argued, the racial politics of the mid-twentieth-century U.S. are often cast to the side or background in Robinson's novels. The chapter will intervene in this discussion through close textual attention to issues of remembrance and feeling.

Home, as its title suggests, is a book about people returning to a place that they call 'home.' Reverend Robert Boughton is dying, and in addition to Glory, another child, Jack, comes back to see him. Jack, as introduced in *Gilead*, is a prodigal son, estranged from the rest of the family. As a child, and on through his youth, Jack is set apart from his siblings, and when he impregnates a young girl from the town, scandal sticks to him. His life in Gilead was, for Glory, 'A decade of betrayals, minor and major' (6). Following years away from the Boughtons, Jack finally returns, after separating from a black wife (Della) and child (Jack) in St Louis. The powerful emotions that Jack both elicits and circulates upon his return are compounded and underlined by Glory's own confusion about being back in Gilead. When Jack sends a letter home about finally visiting, Glory thinks, 'He had better have a good reason for rousing these overwhelming emotions in his father' (24-5). Yet, Robinson makes clear that the rousing of emotions is not a straightforward process. Affect does not simply lie

dormant until it is triggered, but is the constant processing of forces between people, places, things and situations. In their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader* (2009), Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg simply state that affect has no clear origin, but 'arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon.' Affect is 'found in those intensities that pass body to body …, in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves.' In short, 'affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations' (Seigworth and Gregg 1). Affect's multivalent and multidimensional qualities are central to its tangibility as well as its immateriality.

The study of affect has bloomed in recent years, extending from the psychological sciences to the humanities. More particularly, queer theory has pressed upon questions of how affect functions, what it can do, what its role is in public and private spheres might be, and what thinking through it may do for changing queer people's places in the world. Sedgwick (2003), Ahmed (2004), Love (2007) and Cvetkovich (2003) have examined a range of queer affects, from sadness and shame, to happiness and trauma; Stewart (2008), Ngai (2005), and Berlant (1997; 2011) have asked how affect and feeling structure personal and public spaces; and, of course, critiques of affect have emerged (Leys, 2011), which call into question a supposed separation of affect from critical knowledge. As Leys argues, 'affects must be viewed as independent of, and in an important sense prior to, ideology—that is, prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs' (437). Or, as she says more pointedly, affect studies has a 'commitment to the idea that there is a disjunction or gap between the subject's affective processes and his or her cognition or knowledge of the objects that caused them' (Leys 450). For Leys, the biggest problem with affect is its extension beyond immediate comprehension or logic; this gap is, in her argument, something that prohibits full

understanding or cognitive mastery. Yet, as Park et al point out, affect is a 'flux that is always in context—immanent—and thus draws on a situational ethics and therefore on the social and spatial milieu. Infused with power, grounded in place and located bodies, affect is viscerally political' (5). For these authors (and many other affect theorists), affect is central to politics because it works so consistently in, through, and on bodies as well as within particular spaces and locations. Reading the affects of *Home*, then, involves examining the multiple ways in which intensities, capacities, resonances, feelings and immersions structure the novel.

I want to follow Carolyn Allen's essay, 'The Privilege of Loneliness, the Kindness of Home' (2015), and think about the emotions and affects that move through Robinson's fiction; for Allen 'loneliness and kindness' dominate, but this chapter will trace the dynamics of sadness more particularly. Though Allen borrows Robinson's term 'felt experience,' rather than affect or emotion, I want to attend to how emotions and affects structure and agitate *Home*. Allen argues that Robinson's 'representation of intricate patterns of psychic life and interrelatedness' and 'her attention to commonplace emotional exchanges' are central to the Gilead novels (192). These are not, in Allen's words 'what theorists refer to as "basic emotions"' like 'fear, joy, surprise, anger' but '"felt experiences" of daily life that carry with them a range of emotional and bodily responses' (192). However, I would suggest that the theory of affect has a different way of addressing these so-called 'basic emotions' in a manner suited to Robinson's very nuanced and writerly style which Rachel Sykes has termed 'quiet.' Quietness, for Sykes, is not simply a representational strategy chosen by Robinson, but a larger literary tendency found in contemporary American fiction. The depiction of 'quiet people, locations, and states' (Sykes 109) is perhaps a response to both the 'loudness' of the modern world and the seeming necessity of fiction to declare audibly its relevance in it. The three Gilead novels, Sykes argues, are 'quiet in aesthetically similar ways,' re-presenting the same characters from 'unanimously quiet perspectives' (112). Yet each book has the

volume turned to different dials: *Home* is louder than Gilead because 'the narrative takes place outside of consciousness' and because the novel's quietness 'is troubled by negative affect, anxiety and anger' (113). This chapter will examine those affects further, but it will also complement Sykes' pertinent description of the 'quiet' aesthetic with a 'sad' one. As a very common feeling, sadness is under-theorized in literary criticism.

The quietness of sadness can be framed by Kathleen Stewart's conception of 'ordinary affects.' Stewart examines those 'varied, surging capacities' of affect 'that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergencies' (1-2). Affect is often ordinary because it just 'happen[s]' in 'impulses, sensations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating … in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like *some*thing.' In short, 'Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of. They give circuits and flows the forms of a life' (Stewart 2). For Stewart, then, these affects begin somewhere 'outside' in the public realm, but structure and inhere in domestic or personal realms. As we will see, the sadness that *Home* depicts is entangled with affects that are not necessarily *out there* or *in here*, but are produced in the mediations between these spaces. This aligns with Sara Ahmed's argument in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004).

In this book, Ahmed explores the way in which emotions move in and through bodies and spaces: 'examining how they "stick" as well as move' (4). She states that 'If emotions are shaped by contact with objects, rather than being caused by objects, then emotions are not simply "in" the subject or the object' (6). That is, emotions emerge through contact, rather than originating in a particular thing or person. Emotions, Ahmed writes, 'are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of "towardness" or "awayness" in relation to such objects' (8). Ahmed's orientational description of emotions reconceptualizes the traditional

understanding of them that begins within or without a subject. For instance, emotions are not just things that one has inside, or indeed internalizes from someone or something else. Rather, 'it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the "I" and the "we" are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others' (10). Emotions create and sustain externality and internality themselves, by figuring and shaping our sense of self or other. Emotions are not inside 'the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects' (10). If, as Ahmed goes on, it is 'the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as such,' then 'emotions can move through the movement or the circulation of objects.' In short, 'objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension' (11). We will see how *Home* is a novel 'sticky' with spaces, objects, and subjects saturated with a range of emotions and affects, especially sadness. Following Ahmed, these affects (which cause Glory to cry, Jack to attempt suicide, their father to become angry and confused, their family friend to chastize) do not, as we might think, begin with Jack and his ostensible misdeeds. Rather, the novel shows us how the stickiness of affect was there from the start.

Before thinking more about Jack's impact on his sister, father, and home, it is worth exploring Glory's relationship to the book's title. Indeed, the very opening of the novel contextualizes my reading of memory, sadness, and the home-space in Robinson's writing. '"Home to stay, Glory! Yes!" her father said, and her heart sank' (3). The sadness of this first line sets in motion a range of uncomfortable, but ordinary, affects that are in the Boughton house. This space, while clearly fraught for Glory, is conceived otherwise by her father. For much of the book, Glory is someone for whom crying is an instinctual and consistent response to scenarios and conversations; as Allen says, 'for arguments about affect and emotion, it would be difficult to skirt a character who is in tears for much of the novel' (191).

While the novel is told in the third-person, it is heavily focalized through Glory's perspective, and free indirect discourse dominates. 'The house,' the narrator tells us, 'embodied for [Robert] the general blessedness of his life, which was manifest, really indisputable' (3). The various significances of the home, then, come into view within the first pages: for Glory, it is a return to something from her past, and for her father it is a substantiation or proof of everything he sees as blessed in a religious sense.

Robinson carefully traces the ways in which Glory's thoughts and feelings about the house shift. At the beginning of the novel, Glory asks herself, 'Why should this staunch and upright house seem to her so abandoned? So heartbroken?' (4), questions that might easily be projections about her own fragile state of mind, or indeed her dying father's. Though Glory is obviously 'heartbroken,' it is worth taking seriously the idea that the house might be too; the stickiness of feeling that Ahmed argues for, and the ordinariness of affect that circulates within private spaces, can account for the ways in which the Boughton house is itself a charged site of feeling. On her return to Gilead, Glory is also aware of how the town itself has both changed and remained static. 'The town seemed different to her, now that she had returned there to live,' she thinks, principally because she is used to it being a 'scene of nostalgic memory' (7). Thus, it is not that Gilead is different, but her relation (or orientation) to it has shifted. Indeed, the affective structures of nostalgia typically keep the past fixed: Glory thinks, 'The past was a very fine thing, in its place.' Memory studies, however, has drawn our attention to how the past is, by its nature, brought bursting into the present through remembrance. If the past is kept in its place (and is thus 'fine'), then surely forgetting has occurred. Sure enough, Glory's return to Gilead 'turned memory portentous. To have it overrun its bounds this way and become present and possibly future, too' is a 'thing to be regretted' (8). This spilling over of memory (especially memory that has become estranged, something I will investigate below) is caught up in the webs of ordinary affect that saturate

the Boughton home. Frequently, Glory moves in moments of remembrance and thoughtfulness: she recollects Jack's laugh and contemplates 'What a strange thing to remember. It came with being home (14); she notes that 'I will have to remember not to be angry' (29) with Jack; and that when he does appear, 'he was so much like the brother of her memory,' that is, disappointing (32). These continual reflections on memory (even memories of the future like 'I will have to remember') ground Glory in the meanings of the past and present.

The affects and feelings which are sticky with memory, and become stuck to and around Glory, are connected to the Boughton home and its *unhomeliness*. Here I borrow from Freud's oft-cited definition of the 'uncanny' in his essay of 1919. The uncanny is a translation of the German word 'unheimlich' which means, among other things, 'unhomely.' Though the approximation in English is not exact, Freud is very much interested in this essay with the word's origins and definitions. Freud quotes pages of dictionary excerpts, in which we learn that heimlich can mean that which is 'belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate' (222), but also that which is 'Concealed, kept from sight' (223). Freud glosses this rich semantic gathering thus: 'among its different shades of meaning the word "*heimlich*" exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, "*unheimlich*." What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*' (224). The entwined nature of what is heimlich and unheimlich (or homely and unhomely) is central to Freud's conception of the uncanny. Though Freud is interested in the 'qualities of feeling' (we might say affects) related to 'what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror' (219), the uncanny is principally 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (220). In short, Freud writes: 'the uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (241). Thus, the uncanny is that which, because of repression, has

become estranged. The uncanny is so familiar—so homely (a word which this chapter is obviously interested in)—that it is simultaneously unfamiliar and unhomely. *Home* is concerned with how the feelings associated with the uncanny (not simply fear and horror, but a range of quieter affects) circulate in and through the Boughton home.

Glory articulates an uncanny feeling about the home throughout the novel. Early on, she ruminates about how 'she has sometimes seen a man on the street and thought, No, that isn't Jack' but that 'something about him' (39) reminded Glory of her brother. The uncanny feeling of seeing someone who looks just like a family member is compounded by Jack's own strangeness in the home on his return: he says, 'I need a little while to get used to this place' (48), 'I am a stranger in a strange land' (96), and, while sitting in the car, says this is 'My home away from home' (118). Jack is always estranged from the family home, even when in it. But the affects that stick to the house and Jack also circulate around objects—there was, indoors, an 'uncanny persistence of half-forgotten objects' (54), some of which are relegated to the attic: 'the limbo of things that had been displaced from current use but were not in the strict sense useless' (97)—and Glory herself. Glory thinks, 'He makes me feel like a stranger in my own house. But this isn't my house' (46). Collapsing the sense of the house as doubly estranged (by Jack, and by her own return to it), Glory figures the uncanny affects of home as conflicted and even contradictory.

Yet Robinson makes clear that the emotions which emerge from relations to Jack are also rooted in his childhood and the way in which he was born into an uncomfortable and sad home-space. As Glory reflects, 'he always did act as though the house was not quite his, nor the family, for that matter' (53). However, while Jack (and Robinson) tease out the theological implications of predestination and sin,[ii] the novel seems to suggest that the home itself is a source of much discomfort for him. Though the other Boughtons do not seem to understand Jack's relationship to the place—his father says resignedly, 'I just never knew

another child who didn't feel at home in the house where he was born' (120)—Jack is, by the end of the novel, more honest about that affective structure. He tells Glory, 'I've thought about this place so many times. When I was a kid I used to wish I lived here. I used to wish I could just walk in the door like the rest of you did' (287). The sadness of this sentiment (Glory cries for much of the conversation) is underlined by the fact that Jack was never so far away from the house as everyone thought. Indeed, the uncanniness here emerges because Jack is so close to, and entwined in, the Boughton home, all the while feeling its otherness. As a child Jack would disappear, and he wondered if the family would even notice his absence; he admits he was only ever in the barn next to the house: 'I was usually closer to home than [their father] thought I was' (288). This issue of proximity—away from home, but close to it—means that Jack's experience of home was always one of estrangement. Instead, he makes makeshift dwellings, like the space in the barn loft: 'It seemed almost domestic,' Glory thinks as she peers into it, 'and yet there was a potency of loneliness about it' (297). That loneliness also chimes loudly (is a present and pressing affect) within the home: 'There was a ringing loneliness in the house with Jack always away somewhere' (247). In substantiating emotion and feeling, Robinson gives texture to the negative affects that prop up the walls of this quiet Iowan home.

The sadness that Jack feels, and that sticks to him, also has political and agitative affects. This section will show how the feelings domesticated in *Home* also reach outwards into the whole family, and the larger nation. While Glory is quiet, 'a state abided rather than enjoyed' (Sykes 113), Jack is frequently silent or absent. His emotional state, however, while not fully explored by the narrator—whose focalization seems to only ever linger on Glory—is frequently sad. He does not cry like Glory, but does, late in the novel, admit to his sister that 'I think I tell you my sad stories to see if they really are sad. And sure enough, the tears start, and I can relax about it' (288). It is as though Glory's processing of emotion, her

inhabitation of the affects that come from Jack's stories and memories, is a substitute for her brother's. Jack has been through so much that he cannot even tell if these events are sad or not. In her essay 'Givenness,' Robinson argues that 'human emotion is conditioned profoundly by culture and society and one's individual history of interaction with them both, in other words, by being human' (*The Givenness* 76). Jack's particular life experiences in mid-twentieth-century America shape the realms of emotion he has access to, or can articulate. The personal memories, too, which seem to haunt and structure Jack's life, are part of a larger aesthetic that Robinson explores in her other novels. In *Gilead*, Laura Tanner argues, 'the narrative simultaneously returns the reader to the textured details of memory that continue to escape the text's symbolic hold. Memory … not only proceeds from emotion and sensory perception but remains inextricable from them' (229). For Tanner, the memories investigated by Robinson's novels are bound up with feelings and affects, and cannot always be fully grasped by the narrative style. This may even account for the ways in which Jack's memories are held back, never fully revealed to us by the narrator.

Key memories in *Home*, however, that protrude through the family's quietness, are related to race. For Susan Petit, the Gilead 'books are clearly concerned with the evils arising from American slavery and the failure of Reconstruction.' While they are set in rural Iowa, Gilead 'reflects American history and attitudes' more broadly, 'including a desire to forget or rewrite disturbing events in the past.' However, Petit explores the 'phenomenon' of baseball 'as a vehicle of both inclusion and exclusion,' especially as those ideas intersect with race (119). An essay by Yumi Pak, contrarily, finds *Gilead* and *Home* problematic in their depictions of race. In short, Pak argues that 'Blackness lurks and frays at the edges of both the novel and the eponymous town, at the edges of memory and history, remaining simultaneously invisible and hypervisible in both Ames's and Glory's representations of past and present. In other words, 'Black bodies perform in spectacular fashion' but 'only attain

articulation through the words, memories, mediations and interventions of white characters' (213). Pak therefore levels a critique at both the world of the Gilead novels—the structural, and repressed, racism that is central to the town and nation's very being—and to Robinson's own representational strategies. In Pak's reasoning, blackness comes to underline and enable white (male) genealogies, at the expense of black ones. The white Boughton line is propped up by a blackness that is forever deferred from the novels. Pak also argues that Robinson's refusal to include Christian apologies for slavery (instead of, or alongside, the Christian abolitionism that the Boughtons/Ames relate to) is a kind of historical rewriting or amnesia. Racial tension, for Pak, sustains the Gilead novels in ways that are explicit and implicit.

My argument, while not contradictory of Pak's, nonetheless complements and questions it. Jack's return to the Boughton home does not just spark certain affects and memories that have perhaps lain dormant, or unprovoked, but also raises the spectre of race relations and the larger national questions of Civil Rights. Key moments in American (and southern) history—from the riots in Montgomery to the murder of Emmett Till—puncture the 'quiet,' but already agitated domestic spaces of Gilead. Indeed, the feelings of sadness that Jack arises in himself and his family, are charged by anger and frustration when he watches television reports or reads newspaper articles about current race-relations. As the separated husband of a black woman, and father of a mixed-race son, the feelings evoked by these events are understandable and pertinent. The first of these moments relates to a news report that Jack sees on the new television which he and Glory buy for the house. 'Is that Montgomery?' Glory asks him, as they watch 'silently fulminating authorities and the Negro crowds' (100). Recalling images that have (now) stained themselves into national cultural memory, the siblings see 'white police with riot sticks … pushing and dragging black demonstrators. There were dogs' (101). Their father, keenly (and dubiously) ignorant of racial conflict in the U.S., says to them that 'In six months nobody will remember a thing

about it.' Jack replies, 'Some people will probably remember it,' (101) referring both to those people of color deeply affected by racist politics and state violence in addition, reflexively, to the novel's readers. Robert refutes this again, noting how the McCarthy trials were not that long ago, and that it had faded from public memory. When Jack and Glory then see images of police 'pushing the black crowd with dogs, turning fire hoses on them' (102), Jack's exclamation of 'Jesus Christ' angers and upsets his father. To Jack, and to readers, the 'images of African American bodies violated by the instruments of segregation and white supremacy—water, rope, dogs, fire, batons—were and are *immediately* powerful and morally legible' (Romine 150).

Robinson clearly directs us to recognize and recall the events that are happening contemporaneously to the novel's action. The cultural memory-work that *Home* engages is an attempt to situate what sometimes feels like an ahistorical trilogy into a particular moment of the American past. Indeed, we might ask why Robinson picks this aspect of the past to explore in the twenty-first century. As a contemporary reader, located in an era of #BlackLivesMatter, protests in Ferguson, the Flint water crisis, police brutality, and many other racial tensions, I am very much aware of the ways that this twentieth-century moment is not too dissimilar from our own. Yet, Robert's opinion, in a sense, is consigned to a dying America, as it is embodied by his weary frame. Jack understands that these racial conflicts are desperately important in this moment. But even if Jack may represent the future of American race-relations, or at least an awareness of white privilege and antiblack racism, as Pak argues, blackness itself is consigned to the past, or is 'off-screen' for much of the Gilead books. 'Blackness,' Pak writes, 'carries the onus of history, of collective memory' (231), rather than actually being embodied in the novels. After the events in Montgomery emerge in *Home*, there are further references to moments of black history that Jack and his father understand oppositionally. Jack's reference to the 'colored woman [who] wants to go to the

University of Alabama' is met with disapproval by his father: black people 'need to improve themselves' (162), he says. Referring of course to Vivian Malone Jones's successful enrolment into the university after President Kennedy federalized National Guard troops to allow for the institution's desegregation, this moment of *Home* further unsettles and destabilizes the quietness of the Iowan home. It is as though figures from black history puncture the seemingly detached world of the rural Midwest.

Another figure of black memory that arises into the Boughton home is Emmett Till. The murder of Till in 1955 is well-known and continues to linger in cultural memory. As many scholars have pointed out, remembrance of Till appears in many texts to address the history of lynching and racism in the South particularly.[iii] Till is a kind of locus for memories of racist violence. Referring to Till, Robert says 'Wasn't he the negro fellow that—attacked the white woman?' While of course Till did not attack anyone—it is not even certain that he 'wolf-whistled' at a white woman in Mississippi (the purported 'reason' for his murder)—Robert's racist misunderstanding of black struggle and persecution across the South is telling. Though he is old and dying, his sense that he 'had another memory' (163) of the Till trial feeds into a larger national amnesia about violence done to the black body. Myisha Priest argues that Till's body has been so contested—debated, remediated, photographed, exhumed, re-buried—that it 'functions, not as a site for remembering him but a battleground, a red record of disjunctures and discontinuities' (4). Robinson's invocation of Till, in this litany of historical events that are at the edges of *Home*'s narrative (but central to its politics), contributes to this contestation.

Shortly after the conversation about Till, and once Jack has played some hymns on the piano to assuage the tension that has stuck to the family, his father asks to see Jack's hand. Pointing to where a splinter had recently punctured the skin, his father says 'There will be a mark there' (165). Talking symbolically about the mark or trace that Jack has imprinted

upon the Boughton family, in addition to the mark of black history that is a splinter in the American corpus, Robert is aware of how feelings linger. Yet, as Pak again argues, Jack has a mixed-race child and a black wife, whose presence, at least until the end of the book, is entirely consigned to memory and storytelling. Blackness—like the very real African Americans who were once run out of Gilead, following the burning down of their church—is cast outside the world of the novel almost entirely. Critiques like Pak's suggest that Robinson *utilizes* blackness, and memories of it, as a backdrop to the Boughton story. The murder of Till, for example, only registers textually when Della, at the book's end, tells Glory that they should not stay too long in Gilead: 'we have to get back down to Missouri before dark. Especially the way things are now' (334). The threat of racial violence and terror is so present for the African American characters, but Glory (and the narrator) do not overtly comment or respond to this. The 'continuous haunting presence' and 'absence of Black bodies in Gilead' (Pak 234) are not entirely addressed by Robinson or her narrator. Whether the sadness and affective landscapes that Jack sustains in the family home have political ends is open for debate. As such, the final moments of *Home*, after Jack has left, and Glory meets Della for the first time, can be read in various ways that point to the complex role of race and memory in the novel, looking both to the past and the future.

Home ends with what seems like a memory from the future. After Glory meets Della and her son Jack, she imagines a prospective moment in time when this mixed-race boy will return to the Boughton home. Shifting to the present tense, Glory imagines Jack being kind to her: 'He is Jack's son, and Southerners are especially polite to older women.' Glory thinks that 'He will be curious about the place' (338), and that she will think 'He is young. He cannot know that my whole life has come down to this moment. That he has answered his father's prayers' (339). Proleptically, Glory is remembering a moment of calm and resolution, a final homecoming that will neatly tie together family bonds, and conclude a kind

of Boughton cycle. Each child returns to this house, but perhaps they also always must leave. Except for Glory. Pak writes, 'Glory is unable to invite Robert inside; this seems to indicate a fundamental divide between Jack and his son, one so wide that it persists into the future' (226). However, the possibility of a mixed-race future (the potential idealism invested in Jack's son who might just return to Gilead) could be read another way. As Petit argues, the 'future is now in the hands of the women, Lila and Della, who presumably will need to raise their sons on their own, and Glory, who as a teacher may be able to do what Ames should have done, which is to show others how to live up to the town's original commitment to racial freedom and even equality' (134). For Petit, the genealogies of womanhood (which Pak would suggest are side-lined for white male lineages), offer something like a redemptive vision of what is to come.

Glory tells her brother before he leaves that 'If you ever need to come home, I'll be here. Call first, just to be sure. No, you won't have to do that. I'll be here' (330). Glory is resigned to this house, to its physical, spiritual and emotional walls, but the promise of a future is possible. Glory does not think that Jack will come back to Gilead, let alone this house, but she is optimistic about the idea nonetheless. The final lines, 'The Lord is wonderful' (339) refer to the imagined homecoming of the younger Jack, but how far the characters, and readers, can put faith in this sentiment is to be debated. Indeed, to return to the political stakes of affect, feeling, or emotion—that is, the way they move in and through bodies and places—we must question whether Glory or Jack's feelings ultimately foster concrete or productive ends. While Glory's 'future memory' and Jack's investment in racial politics are well-meaning and clearly benevolent, can feelings alone do anything? Locked into their private worlds, privileges, and social milieu, can *feeling* sad really accomplish social change? Wishful thinking is fine for these white characters, but it cannot help any black Americans in a tangible way. While I do not want to push aside these questions—

letting them stand as ongoing queries is this essay's intention—it is also worth thinking about how *Home*'s 'domesticated' politics are remarkable in and of themselves. Sadness dominates *Home*, and it is an emotion or affect with strong and sturdy bonds. What might be thought of as an 'ordinary' or 'basic' feeling is, in Robinson's hands, one of the most profound and political ways to reflect on family and nation. In casting a melancholy gaze upon the past, Robinson's Gilead trilogy reframes and remediates the United States' complex and troubling past, with regards to race. While the Boughtons cannot do anything active, their passivity is important to represent and understand. Though its political scope may leave readers wanting, *Home* nonetheless opens up an Iowan home to forces and feelings about race, family and nation that cannot be contained or ignored. The home-spaces of Robinson's novel require us to dwell on twentieth-century America as it is ruptured and troubled from within. *Home* quietly and emotively disturbs domestic and public spaces in very open-ended ways.

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[i] By cultural memory, I mean the ways in which the past is recollected through cultural forms and texts, whether they be books, films, monuments or other means. I thus follow scholars such as Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (2009; 2011) and many others, who focus on cultural memory's inherent complexity, fluidity, and (re)mediation rather than fixity. As Marita Sturken argues, cultural memory is that which is 'shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with historical meaning' (3). Recent works in an African-American context extend this work of cultural memory—not always in this lexicon, however—into particularly racialized histories, texts, locales and traditions. See, for instance: Tillet (2012) and Juanita Brown (2015).

[ii] Many Robinson articles have discussed the theological implications and underpinnings of her novels—her non-fiction is important here too—but a useful consideration of belief and predestination, especially as they intersect with the religious implications of home, can be

found in Amy Hungerford's *Postmodern Belief* (2010). See chapter five, 'The Literary Practice of Belief,' in particular.

[iii] See: Pollack and Metress (2008); Romine (2008); Davis (2011); Mark (2008); and Apel (2004).