

A Battle between Reality and Imagination: The Uncanny and
Symbolisms for the Ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Haunting
of Hill House* Series and Novel



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Abstract

Ghosts are, of course, an integral part of ghost stories and their meanings entwine with the meaning of the story as such. Research has often focused on the appearance of the ghosts and how that feeds into the uncanniness of the story. However, ghosts are important in themselves and in terms of what they stand for and mean. Therefore, this thesis researches the ghosts and the uncanny feelings they provoke, arguing that their presence stands in the place of psychological disturbances in the protagonists. Moreover, I shall argue that they draw the audience inside the protagonists' uncertain and ambiguous perceptions. In this way, all three texts explore the conflict between subjective impressions and the objectively real, and they lead the reader or viewer into a state of fear and confusion regarding what is real or not. All three texts employ the ambiguous figure of the ghost in order to play with the nature of perception, and with our empathetic relationship to the main figure of a story. They aim to induce in the audience the same hesitation as to the truth of perceptions that haunt the protagonists themselves. As part of my methodology here, I draw upon Sigmund Freud's theory of the uncanny to examine the disruption and haunting of perception in all three texts. I place the uncanny and that disruption in relation to how the text affects the audience.

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Introduction

Ghosts are, naturally enough, an integral part of ghost stories, and thus it is obvious that such stories contain the presence of ghosts. However, this presence is not always explicitly presented. Ghosts can be hidden in plain sight or sequestered in the mind; they can be physically shown, but the potential always exists that the ghosts that appear to be objectively there are merely a presence in the mind of a character. This may be because the character believes the ghosts to be real, or it could be a deliberate choice by the writer or director to create confusion and to undermine our perceptions. This doubt occurs in the three stories central to this thesis: Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix series (2018), directed by Mike Flanagan. Previous research on ghost stories has focused predominantly on ghosts and their effects on the reader and characters; fewer researchers have addressed the symbolism of ghosts, the wellbeing of the characters or the importance of the uncanny. Ghosts, which symbolize that which undermines the ordinary and acceptable and disrupts the domestic space of the novel and the mode of realism, are thus considered harmful, and those who admit to seeing ghosts may not be accepted. Ghosts are significant in all three works examined in this thesis and represent something different in each.

In the three texts explored here, the ghosts and the uncanny feelings they provoke stand for psychological disturbances in the protagonists and, moreover, draw the audience inside the protagonists' uncertain and ambiguous perceptions. In this way, each text explores the conflict between subjective impressions and the objective real and leads the reader or viewer into a state of fear and confusion regarding what is real or not. All three texts play with the nature of perception and with our empathetic relationship to the primary

figure of a story and aim to induce in the audience the same hesitation regarding the truth of perceptions that haunts the protagonists themselves.

The Turn of the Screw focuses on the children in the story. However, it is the governess who begins to notice that something is wrong and that something unexplainable is happening regarding the children, Miles and Flora. The governess certainly begins to see (or to imagine that she sees) ghosts; whether the children also see them is unclear, since Flora claims not to see them. However, Miles reveals (ambiguously enough) that he does see them. However, since the children generally do not speak about the ghosts, it is not known if and to what degree they see them. The story is written so that not only the characters but also the readers question whether the ghosts presented really exist or whether the mind of the governess is playing tricks, since the novel is told through her point of view.

When *The Turn of the Screw* was first published, many readers remained neutral regarding the novel. However, the overall question that the majority of readers have after finishing the novel nowadays is: 'Are the ghosts real?'. This idea was sparked by American critic Edmund Wilson. This idea will be handled a little later but first it is important to provide essential information about the story. The main character, the governess, describes the ghosts and her experiences in Bly Manor in a manner that does not clarify whether the events occur only in her mind. For example, while the governess is walking and thinking about a man, she sees someone. This presence could be the product of her mind, or the person may actually be there. This is one of the many moments when the presence of ghosts is debatable, which fuels the question of whether the ghosts really exist.

In an article review from 1990, Robert Ginsberg states that Peter G Beidler believes the ghosts in James' book to be real. The reason for this is found in previous documentation:

Beidler answers that question for James and his contemporary readers by tracing the documentation and investigation of ghostly phenomena throughout the nineteenth century, chiefly in the scientific activity of the Society for Psychical Research.

(Ginsberg, 412)

However, a division arose, sparked in 1938 by American critic Edmund Wilson, between what have come to be called 'Wilsonians' and 'anti-Wilsonians'. Wilson's view was based upon his reading of the governess in James' story and her perception of the ghosts. In an introduction to the novel by Anthony Curtis he sums up the view of Wilson: "The governess is a classic example of neurotic sexual repression, and her passion for her handsome employer" (James, 18). The overall opinion of the Wilsonians focusses on the belief that the ghosts are not real, as indicated: "from the suggestion that the "ghosts" are the product of the governess's hysteria or repressed neurosis" (James, 20). Anti-Wilsonians believe that the focus should not only be on the governess; but on the possibility that the ghosts may be real. In a 2015 article, Andrea Gencheva focusses on the governess and compares her with other gothic heroines, Gencheva states: "*The Turn of the Screw* possesses depth and richness of meaning, which go far beyond anything that can be extracted by the minutest of excavations" (Gencheva, 79). Gencheva compares the novel with the overall concept of the gothic heroine, which provides a more rounded and researched view. This brief overview illustrates how interpretations vary. As the passages above demonstrate, differing views exist on whether the ghosts are real or in the mind of the governess.

The Haunting of Hill House novel, first published in 1959, is a gothic story in which the existence of the ghosts can also be easily questioned, due to the way in which the novel presents its protagonist, Eleanor, a woman with a troubled past. She cared for her sick

mother but lives with severe doubt, believing herself to be to blame for her mother's death. This doubt makes her want to break free and do something radical, which, in her case, entails participating in an experiment that requires a stay at Hill House. However, her troubled mind significantly affects Eleanor's psyche, causing her to be more prone to the energy of the house. The psychological realm in this novel is prominently present since the troubled mind of Eleanor influences the story, as well as the reader and what the reader can believe to be true. Reactions to the novel were mixed, predominantly regarding the protagonist. Julie Ann Baker, after examining Eleanor Vance, wrote:

As the Gothic "is preoccupied with the home" (...) it is no surprise that Eleanor,(...) "just can't seem to get out of the house" as is the case with so many Gothic female protagonists (Delamotte 10). Yet these women do not desire to escape their homes but rather barricade themselves within them to evade their surrounding societies. (Baker 1)

This shows the effect of the house on the protagonist, an effect which takes place within the psyche, since the mind of Eleanor is highly subject to her own previous traumas. Baker adds: "While these three women attempt to reinforce their psychological boundaries of selfhood for the promotion of their safety, this effort results instead in their entrapment in homes that are consuming and inescapable" (Baker 2). These passages clearly reveal Eleanor's troubled mind, which deteriorates quickly. As such, the hauntings experienced in Hill House could be either mere projections by her own mind or 'real' hauntings.

The recent television series, *The Haunting of Hill House* is another gothic story in which ghosts are vital. The series, based on the novel of the same name by Shirley Jackson, first aired in October 2018. The series was immediately popular with audiences, particularly

because of the presence of many hidden ghosts in various scenes. The story revolves around a family wishing to renovate and sell a house over the course of the summer before moving to another house to repeat the process. However, the house has a strange influence, particularly on the mother, causing plans to change; the house attempts to control the family and does not want them to leave alive. In the series, the entire family sees the ghosts, but some are more affected than others. The ghosts symbolize the relationships some family members have with one another, which also influence their perception of the ghosts.

Reactions to *The Haunting of Hill House* series were relatively positive. Corrine Corrodus' review for *The Telegraph* states: "This psychological focus does not mean that the traditional horror one might expect is lost, in fact the series is brilliant because it evokes the slow-build terror associated with classic ghost films" (Corrodus). Here, the series is compared to earlier ghost films and, based on these general features. In a *Washington Post* review, Hank Stuever declares: "Here is the show we didn't even know we wanted(...) Both the past and the present are strewn with broken-necked phantoms (...) and a corpse that sits upright on a stainless-steel mortician's table" (Stuever). This description displays how the ghosts are presented in *The Haunting of Hill House* and demonstrates what can be expected when watching the series, which is helpful for others to form an idea of the series.

All three stories have made a significant impact on how ghost stories are structured and altered our sense of their potential focus. This has allowed other writers to reconsider how they structure their ghost stories and so lent the gothic genre new life. As for the television series, *The Haunting of Hill House*, it is still early to remark about its influence on the genre. However, it has impacted gothic series in cinematography, since this aspect has been praised significantly. This indicates that all three stories have had a considerable effect on the gothic genre.

The uncanny as a concept, which is an important element in the gothic genre, is examined in relation to all three texts, with help of the theory of the uncanny by Sigmund Freud. This theory is used as a basis for examining and defining the uncanny, since Freud's essay has significantly impacted the gothic genre and is still used to define and illustrate the uncanny in the genre. Moreover, the symbolism of the ghosts and how they are depicted is analysed in relation to their effects on the characters.

The first chapter introduces and examines the uncanny theory and serves as a basis for the rest of the thesis, since the theory of the uncanny is important for all three gothic works that I examine. The second chapter researches the uncanny and how the reactions of psychological disturbances in others often are shared ones of fear and unease, in Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. The third chapter examines the troubled mind of the protagonist and the cause of not knowing what is real because in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. The fourth and final chapter researches the complexity of perception and the family's relationship in *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix series directed by Mike Flanagan.

Chapter 1. Fear, Fright and Unease: The Theory on the Uncanny by Freud and Its Influence on the Gothic Genre.

The term 'uncanny' is frequently utilised in literary criticism, particularly in relation to gothic literature. As a concept it engages with the feeling of unease and the fear produced by certain texts and in certain situations. However, a more critical understanding is needed when examining the term in literature. Firstly, it is important to define the gothic novel, the medium in which the uncanny is usually applied. A gothic novel, as defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (ODLT)*, is as follows: "A story of terror and suspense, usually set in a gloomy old castle or monastery" ("Gothic novel"). However, the *Oxford Companion to English Literature (OCEL)*, defines gothic fiction as: "a mode of narrative fiction dealing with supernatural or horrifying events and generally possessed of a claustrophobic air of oppression or evil" ("gothic fiction"). These slightly divergent definitions each have a different focus. The ODLT focusses on 'terror and suspense', while the OCEL focusses on a 'claustrophobic air' and the 'supernatural'. In his book on horror, Fred Botting touches upon the gothic: "In the dark mirror Gothic holds up to psychoanalysis, repetition reduces the image to sameness, and inertial reflection occluding difference" (Botting, 187) This suggests that a deeper understanding of the term 'gothic' is necessary: the gothic is something that is also situated within oneself. The mind plays a significant part in this since, as Botting explains, it holds up a mirror to examine one's mind and delve into the ongoing processes to find the deeper answer to the suspense that one is feeling. Although these definitions of the gothic differ, the overall message about *gothic* is the same: it concerns something eerie, something that cannot be explained or defined clearly and is processed in the brain. Here, the uncanny enters; the concept is defined in the ODLT as: "a kind of disturbing strangeness evoked in some kinds of horror story and related fiction" (ODLT). The uncanny is not

explained easily but is rather something that causes an eerie feeling. Fred Botting addresses the concept of the uncanny: “In premodern times, the uncanny had a religious and social place and retained sacred and untouchable associations”(Botting, 7) He adds, “The uncanny, less a return from the past, becomes an effect of a disturbed present, a present affected by massive upheaval and transformation”(Botting 7). These passages show that what the uncanny meant in different times also plays a role in how it is perceived. What is considered uncanny and how it is handled has changed throughout the years; moreover, Botting’s definition reveals that more aspects are associated with the uncanny: beyond literature or terror, it involves people and their lives. This chapter further examines the uncanny, which serves as a basis for the coming chapters.

Sigmund Freud contributed enormously to our understanding of the uncanny; his research on the topic became highly influential and has been used by many. First, the concept of ‘psychoanalysis’ needs to be defined as he is a founder of it and is connected to the concept of the uncanny. It is defined as by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

A therapeutic method, originated by Sigmund Freud, for treating mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the patient's mind and bringing repressed fears and conflicts into the conscious mind, using techniques such as dream interpretation and free association. (“Psychoanalysis”)

The definition provided demonstrate Freud’s importance for the uncanny as the uncanny is engaged with the mind and certain processes in it that could trigger it. In his essay ‘The Uncanny’ (*Das Unheimliche*, 1919), he explains and investigates another branch of research, namely, the concept of the uncanny, which was initially utilised almost exclusively in literature. Freud’s theory and research have greatly influenced the study of gothic literature.

Although there were earlier studies in this field, his essay helped to clarify the feeling of the uncanny and therefore better to apply it. His theory was important to writers who applied the theory to their gothic stories to create an eerie, uneasy feeling, the typical goal of the gothic genre. However, the uncanny is utilised not only in literature but also in films, where a feeling of unease must be created. This chapter demonstrates that Freud's theory of the uncanny continues to hold significance for the gothic genre.

Firstly, the theory as posed by Sigmund Freud is thoroughly examined. The next part explores how the theory of the uncanny is now implemented and contextualises *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James and *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix series and original novel by Shirley Jackson.

The theory of the uncanny must be examined before considering its current importance. It may at first seem odd that a psychoanalyst such as Freud would be involved in a theory focussed on something not directly connected with the mind. However, the subject of the uncanny may have more to do with the mind than it initially seems. Freud himself addresses this in his text on the uncanny: "It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling" (Freud 219). The uncanny engages with feelings which are regulated and generated in the mind and body; therefore, it lies within Freud's field of expertise. He further states: "One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as "uncanny" certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening" (Freud 219). Here, the importance of feelings is reiterated; they set in motion other emotions and actions. Particularly with the uncanny, feelings involve this unease. In this light, it seems logical for a psychoanalyst to be involved with the uncanny.

In this chapter, Freud explains what he understands as the definition of the uncanny. His key idea is that: "The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 220). In this definition, it seems that Freud believes the uncanny to be related to old, familiar feelings; he sees it as a sign of a psychological return to childhood anxieties, and thus something that causes feelings of distress and fear, which is his key idea. These feelings return one to what is already known. The specifics of the 'old and long familiar' are not outlined by Freud, but they perhaps remind one of long forgotten feelings or surroundings from infancy and childhood. Furthermore, distress and fear are instigated by the uncanny. Therefore, feelings of distress arise from experiencing the uncanny, which ultimately leads to the familiar. Freud examines various dictionaries in other languages to determine whether coherence in the definition of the uncanny exists; however, all dictionaries share the opinion that the uncanny involves fright. This aligns with the first part of the definition to which Freud adheres.

Freud further investigates the things or persons who instigate the feeling of the uncanny. He provides an example of a writer, E. T. A. Hoffman, who wrote a short story about 'the Sand-Man'. In the story, a man recalls childhood memories, in which he was frightened by the image of the so-called Sand-Man, memories that have haunted him throughout his life. This is a terrible story about the so-called Sand-Man who removes children's eyes. When examining it in depth, it appears to be of value for the understanding of the feeling of the uncanny as the fear of losing one's eyes is terrifying. Freud looks back at his experience in psychoanalysis and says: "We know from psycho-analytic experience, however, that the fear of damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible one in children" (Freud 231). This emphasises the effect of the Sand-Man and more importantly how and from where the uncanny can grow. Freud reiterates the importance of focussing not on the

imagination but on the feeling of the uncanny: “We know now that we are not supposed to be looking on at the products of a madman’s imagination, (...) and yet this knowledge does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree” (Freud 230). Freud attempts to explain that some may believe that seeing and feeling the presence of the so-called Sand-Man comes from the mind of a madman. People who see or experience things that cannot be explained or felt by others or are clearly invented, are labelled as *mad*, as these ideas come forth from somewhere others cannot resonate with and therefore do not understand where others come from. However, Freud also states that researchers must look beyond and focus on the feeling of the uncanny that one experiences. This example of a man haunted by his memories aligns with Freud’s definition of the uncanny. As stated above, Freud believes that the uncanny leads back to the old and familiar. In this case, the fright that this man still experiences can be traced to his childhood, which is old and familiar to him. This is confirmed by Freud: “This short summary leaves no doubt, I think that the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man” (Freud 230). This further indicates why Freud did not previously specify the ‘old and familiar’—it means something different to each individual. Everyone has a place connected to the feeling of the uncanny, and because this differs for everyone, it must be examined in every case.

Another phenomenon that Freud focusses on in relation to the uncanny is doubling. He explains that writers utilise this tool to fully construct their stories: “These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the “double” which appears in every shape and in every degree of development” (Freud 234). The theme of the double is frequently utilised in gothic literature, which supports Freud’s theory. Andrew Smith addresses this in his book *Gothic Literature*; he argues, “The Gothic’s use of doubling is a clear indication of the internalisation of “evil” (Smith 94). In the gothic genre, evil is pervasive and, perhaps, inescapable. Smith

addresses this point: he believes the doubling is a form of evil. Furthermore, Freud explains that the double instigates a feeling of the uncanny: repeatedly seeing an image can evoke feelings of fear and the thereby connected concept of the uncanny. However, Freud is aware that some may not directly see the connection between doubling and the uncanny: “The factor of repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling” (Freud 236). To convince others of the connection, he states,

This phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense [of] helplessness experienced in some dream states. (Freud 237)

Here, Freud connects his knowledge of psychoanalysis with the uncanny. As the field of psychoanalysis and dreams have been researched thoroughly, it may be easier for other scientists or critics to see the connection between this phenomenon and the uncanny. Connecting psychoanalysis to the study of the aesthetic may clarify how the uncanny is related to the workings of the mind; it may also result in others wanting to research the connection between the uncanny and the human psyche or to examine other concepts in literature and how they relate to the human psyche.

Freud states that the uncanny is not limited to what can be seen in literature; it also exists in real life. He states, “We can also speak of a living person as uncanny, and we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him” (Freud 243). Freud has a general application: “An uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality”(Freud 244). Freud here pinpoints when the feeling of the uncanny is likely to be instigated; he explains that imagination plays a significant role in the uncanny, which is likely to appear when one can no longer think or see logically—one must be

disturbed and unable to distinguish between what is real and what is not. This falls into the field of psychoanalysis; as such, Freud researched it. Therefore, it is also likely that everything Freud suggests in his book has already been researched, which further demonstrates that the uncanny more closely involves psychoanalysis than what appears at first glance; the uncanny does not limit itself to literature. However, in explaining his thoughts about the uncanny, Freud clarifies that the uncanny is usually connected to literature:

The uncanny as it is depicted in literature, . . . is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life. (Freud 249)

Fiction can create scenarios impossible in everyday life; therefore, the uncanny can be explored in new ways and to greater lengths in fiction, where concepts and relationships can be enlarged and examined more deeply. On stories with a poetic nature, Freud states,

The creative writer can also choose a setting which . . . does yet differ from the real world by admitting superior spiritual beings such as daemonic spirits or ghosts of the dead. So long as they remain within their setting of poetic reality, such figures lose any uncanniness which they might possess. (Freud 250)

Figures in literature who are seen as instigating feelings of uncanniness could represent spiritual beings, according to Freud, which means that many figures exist who could be uncanny or instigators of uncanniness. Freud indicates that the nature of writing also greatly influences the final establishment of the uncanny. The uncanny revolves around not only the characters themselves but also the nature of the writing, which can further influence the concept of the uncanny. Freud states that in poetic reality, characters can lose their uncanniness, perhaps due to life being glamorised in poetic literature. In this improved,

glamorised life is no place for uncanniness, since this would lose the effect of the poetic reality. This aligns with Freud's explanation of poetic reality and the uncanny: "We adapt our judgement to the imaginary reality imposed on us by the writer, (...) In this case too we avoid all trace of the uncanny" (Freud 250). The reader is subject to the reality sketched by the writer for the reader to believe. Furthermore, the uncanny is not a factor here; it is lost in the poetic atmosphere.

Freud provides another instance where the uncanny is determined by literature: "The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts as well all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life" (Freud 250). In this scenario, reality is significant, and therefore, the uncanny can occur in this genre of poetic literature. The writer explores all possibilities in which the uncanny could occur in real life and attempts to portray them in a realistic manner. As discussed above, the uncanny can also exist in real life; it could be produced by repressed feelings when those feelings are mixed with an environment similar to where and when the original feelings arose.

Freud's theory of the uncanny impacts not only the gothic genre additional genres as well. Furthermore, no clear definition of the uncanny exists; it involves many aspects, which makes it difficult to precisely define. The uncanny can therefore be seen as an elusive concept, which as a result can mean and originate from different memories for everyone. As Freud notes, the uncanny comes from an old and familiar feeling. Since this differs for everyone, the uncanny becomes something that cannot be singly defined. The uncanny can also occur in real life, as it is created not only in literature, but also involves the human psyche, making it a multipurpose concept. In the next section, the concept of the uncanny is explored within the gothic genre in relation to Freud's theory.

Freud's concept of the uncanny is important for the gothic genre in literature and film; his theory has outlined new ways to consider the uncanny and how it could be implemented in literature or film. As the gothic genre is significantly engaged with the uncanny, it is considerably influenced by the theory of the uncanny. Several scholars have examined Freud's theory of the uncanny and expanded upon it, including Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, whose book further examines the concept. On the uncanny in relation to literature, they say,

Literature itself could be defined as the discourse of the uncanny: literature is the kind of writing that most persistently and most provocatively engages with the uncanny aspects of experience, thought and feeling. (Bennett and Royle, 36)

According to Bennett and Royle, the uncanny and the literary itself are intertwined. Literature cannot be regarded without the concept of the uncanny; it must be seen as the vehicle of the uncanny, because in literature, the uncanny can be created and unpacked. As Freud explains, the uncanny in literature is defined by the writer, who controls how the uncanny is embodied, as well as how and when it is unravelled, if ever. The writer is largely in control of creating the uncanny in scenarios with total freedom regarding which aspects related to the uncanny are utilised. However, unconscious decisions may be made in the process. Moreover, literature can lend the uncanny more form by engaging with its related aspects including, as Bennett and Royle posit, thought and feeling. These aspects can be further developed by the writer, who can create a thorough concept of the uncanny, with fully developed aspects that engage with the uncanny to the fullest extent possible. When this occurs, the uncanny can fully engage with the story. The authors further argue: "From this it may be concluded that the uncanny cannot readily be avoided or denied: (...) the idea of the uncanny may be frightening, but it also continues to be a crucially important and

productive area for literary study” (Bennett and Royle 43). Here, they agree with Freud that the uncanny is an important concept for literature. The uncanny entwines with the literary, particularly in gothic literature, where this entanglement is the text’s subject. The gothic is, as discussed above, engaged with terror and suspense. Therefore, fear is intricately connected with the gothic. Because the uncanny can be established in multiple ways, and numerous factors can engage with it, it has been studied exhaustively. However, it is still evolving.

In Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw*, the uncanny appears in the portrayal of ghosts, which raises the question—Are the ghosts real? —that has been debated for many years. In Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), the author’s formation of the uncanny already differs from James’, which demonstrates that the uncanny can be constructed in ways that variously produce distinct and different, though allied, manifestations of fright and unease. In 2018, a Netflix series directed by Mike Flanagan, *The Haunting of Hill House*, was launched. This series followed the original story of the novel but changed it slightly; moreover, as a work for television, it portrayed the uncanny differently than the novel. The series is seen as innovative in relation to earlier gothic films and series due to its depiction of the ghosts and establishment of the uncanny. The perception of the audience is highly anticipated.

All three stories demonstrate the impact that Freud’s study has had not only on literature but also on film, which has allowed scholars and directors to further utilise and examine his study in the years since.

Chapter 2. Mystery, Unease and Unreliability: The Analysis of the Ghost in *The Turn of the Screw*

Henry James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) remains popular today. For a novel to be appreciated over an extended period of time, the material it presents must be relevant and approachable to a variety of audiences; the writer must construct the story so that others identify with it or so that it leaves the audience with a considerable mystery to solve. The latter is the case with *The Turn of the Screw*. The predominant question readers have after, and sometimes during, reading is 'Are the ghosts real?', which has kept readers guessing for over a century. Ghosts are an integral part of James' novel and are the instigators of unease; thus, the theory of the uncanny is also significant in it; this chapter argues that in this novel, the uncanny demonstrates that while psychological disturbances can be highly personal or subjective, they often evoke in others, as well as oneself, shared reactions of fear and general unease.

The story is carefully constructed and considered; it begins with a frame text, and its secondary story fully fits with this opening. This construction adds to the mystery of the story, as the question raises as to who the people in the room are and why the governess's story is being told. The telling of the story unknown people who are never further introduced also raises the question on if the storyteller can be trusted as it is not known who he is. The frame introduces the governess but reveals little information, which encourages the reader to really focus on what is being told and trying to pick up as much as possible, providing just enough to interest the reader. Geoffrey Harvey argues that *The Turn of the Screw* is a work of metafiction, which is defined by *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* as: "Fiction about fiction; or more especially a kind of fiction that openly comments on its own fictional status" ("Metafiction"). Harvey believes that the frame narrative comments on the

writing of the tale itself. About the frame, he says: "*The Turn of the Screw*, then, should be read as a story about the uncanny, but equally as a story about story telling itself" (Harvey 196). Harvey reiterates the importance of the frame narrative, which is easily forgotten; the frame concerns a man telling a story to others at Christmas, and so it becomes a story about telling a story. Considering James' careful attention to the frame, the primary mystery is presumably also carefully contemplated. Any doubt about whether the ghosts are real stems from James' writing. The way it was written adds to the mystery and leaves readers wondering, a factor highlighted by Sigmund Freud in his theory of the uncanny, which, as described above, unravels the concept of the uncanny and the place it occupies in everyday life, as well as in literature and film. His theory has significantly impacted our understanding of the gothic and further inspired writers and filmmakers to experiment with this concept.

Firstly, the story's characters evoke a feeling of the uncanny. They provide a feeling of unease and mystery, primarily through their actions, which create the atmosphere necessary for the uncanny; the primary characters often say little, even when a question has been asked, and this creates an uneasy feeling and makes the reader question why the characters act in this manner, which adds to the mystery. According to Freud's theory, the uncanny is not a phenomenon as such but merely a feeling which can be purposefully reconstructed. The writer or director of a film or series can create the feeling of the uncanny by the development of the story and characters. The uncanny is usually present in gothic literature or films because gothic fiction, according to its definition in the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, is: "a mode of narrative fiction dealing with supernatural or horrifying events and generally possessed of a claustrophobic air of oppression or evil" ("Gothic fiction"). The gothic is thus engaged with feelings of distress and fear. The feeling of the uncanny can be constructed through several aspects; characters, storyline and backdrop are

each significant in creating the uncanny. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the characters contribute to the feeling of the uncanny via their behaviour, being that not all characters speak much and some do not reveal much information. For example, Mrs Grose who does not always want to give all information, creating an uneasy feeling by what she may be holding back, which creates an eerie atmosphere. Not much is revealed about the characters, which makes them mysterious figures as their backgrounds are largely occluded and obscured. This ignorance of who they truly are or where they come from creates unease and a fear of what has been and, as a result, could come. For example, if someone had a difficult childhood, certain events could provoke strong reactions which raise questions for the reader on what has happened before, but as this is not disclosed, one could only question.

James first focuses on the governess. Her backstory is explained early in the novel through the frame story, which produces a feeling of unease and mystery, since others know her story and believe it worthy of telling. How the story is told enhances this feeling. The governess' story, relayed at Christmas by the fire, is presented as a tale that may be more horrifying and chilling than the others in the room could imagine, which creates a mystery and incites the audience's curiosity. However, this curiosity is paired with unease, since it is unclear what the story entails or how horrifying it is. This demonstrates that suspense and anticipation are created at the beginning of the story. After the frame story is established, the point of view shifts to a first-person narrative by the governess, who tells the rest of the story, which leads to a necessarily subjective account of events. James sees his story as a true work of art and handles it like that in the process of writing it. In his preface to *The Turn of the Screw* he says: "To knead the subject of my young friend's, the supposititious narrator's, mystification thick, and yet strain the expression of it so clear and fine that beauty would result(...)" (James 39). This demonstrates how James would look at his work

and more importantly how he sees his 'narrators'. He sees them as fake but also works with and around it to make it beautiful by constructing the story in a manner that it would work. In a chapter of the book *Point of View as Projector* by Heather Fielding by Kent Puckett, the narrative technique of James' novels is being examined. About the middle part of his stories he says: "(..) the centre of my structure would insist on placing itself *not*, so to speak, in the middle. It mattered little that the reader with the idea or the suspicion of a structured centre is the rarest of friends and of critics(..) (Puckett 126) This also again, demonstrates the approach James has when it comes to narrative technique and point of view. He constructs his story in such a way that may seem off as he does not hold on to 'traditional' structures but also, constructs it with delicacy and with a full subject and characterisation in mind.

For *The Turn of the Screw*, the reader is led to believe the governess, since the perspectives of others are omitted. James heightens the feeling by delaying the progress of the story several times and creating anticipation, which causes some unease, since listeners are unsure of what follows. Freud further explains that the uncanny involves levels of fright. The story's introduction sets the tone for the fright, but the level of fright builds slowly. As Harvey posits, "Whilst the frame narrative provides the credible basis for the story of Peter Quint, at the same time it serves to foreground fictionality as the text's central subject" (Harvey 197). In other words, the frame narrative provides a basis of reality for the ghost whom the governess sees later in the story. However, Harvey believes that the frame narrative aids in presenting a fictional story; because the frame narrative is meant to provide the text with a feeling of reality, this argument is highly debated.

Two additional characters who contribute to the uncanny are the children for whom the governess cares, Miles and Flora. Before meeting them, the governess is told that they are extraordinary and beautiful; Flora is described as: "the most beautiful child I had ever

seen" (James 153). Mrs Grose, the housekeeper of Bly Manor, reassures the governess that the boy, Miles, is just as beautiful as Flora. The emphasis on the children's beauty may seem unusual; for the governess, this creates unease, since she is uncertain of what to expect, other than beautiful children. However, before she meets Miles, she receives a letter explaining that he has been sent home and may not return to school, which implies that he behaved poorly and is no longer welcome. This causes the governess to worry about what has occurred; she wants to know more about the two children and their histories. This lack of information about the children creates mystery and leaves the situation unresolved. However, Mrs Grose behaves mysteriously regarding the children, which creates additional unease and mystery, not only for the governess but also for the readers, who want to know more. Edmund Wilson has a clear opinion on the novel; A.J.A. Waldock explains Wilson's essay "The Ambiguity of Henry James", in which he proposes a so-called theory on *The Turn of the Screw*. Waldock explains this theory: "The theory, in brief, is that the story is not a proper ghost-story at all, but a study in the psychology of a frustrated Anglo-Saxon spinster" (Waldock 332). Wilson does not believe the governess and thinks it is all in her head. According to Wilson, what is written should neither be believed nor taken seriously as a ghost story.

Moreover, the governess begins seeing a man and woman unknown to her at different places around Bly Manor, which increases her unease, since the governess is in a new situation and has not fully adjusted, for example, the ghost of Peter Quint appearing when she takes a walk, or the ghost of Miss Jessel appearing at the water with Flora. The latter sight proves particularly scary for the governess, who fears for the safety of Flora and wanted to rescue her. The encounters with the ghosts are usually moments where looks are predominantly exchanged rather than words. This intensifies the level of fright, since she

does not know whether these persons live at Bly Manor but were not simply introduced to her. The mystery heightens for the governess, particularly because she is unknown and unaccustomed to everything and everyone at Bly Manor. In considering this, the reader may feel that more to the story exists than is told. The governess already feels that something may be amiss, and the presence of the man and woman in particular cause her to question the situation. She later comes to the conclusion that the man and woman are ghosts, which enhances the mysterious atmosphere and raises her level of unease to fright, since she does not know whether others can see the ghosts as well. Her assumption is later confirmed by Mrs Grose who tells the story of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint. The governess feels unsafe as she begins to see the ghosts more frequently around the manor; James clearly constructed the story to withhold full information from both the reader and the governess, thus sparking the uncanny feeling on both sides. This feeling causes both the reader and characters to question whether what is happening is real, as the unease of the events starts to grow heavier.

Secondly, when the governess first encounters one of the ghosts, she is unsure whether it is a ghost and wonders who this figure is. This unknown feeling is a pivotal point that creates the uncanny; the concept of the unknown is significant in the gothic genre. This uncertainty causes distress, which generates fright, according to Freud's theory, who states, 'One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as "uncanny" certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening' (Freud 219). Freud emphasizes the importance of feelings and similarities related to the uncanny. At first glance, it is unclear what Freud refers to with 'the common core'; however, when examining his words closely and placing them in context, the meaning becomes logical. He mentions a 'barrier'—'the common core'—which would allow one to distinguish the uncanny as

something specific. The common core that Freud refers to concerns feelings and memories. It is something far more complicated that is nested in the mind. Freud believes that a certain universal feeling may exist that one experiences that can be marked as the uncanny feeling. A common barrier may exist within which the feelings are the same for a significant amount of people regarding what is uncanny; however, this exact feeling is difficult to pinpoint because everyone thinks and feels differently in every situation. This story presents a situation in which feelings of fright or distress—which mark the uncanny—are significant because they concern a worrisome situation, such as being haunted; here, a majority of the characters in the novel feel distressed or frightened. This shows that multiple people experience the uncanny; however, the exact feelings are not clearly defined for all characters, which thus makes it difficult to state a fixed level or specific feeling for when one would use the concept of the uncanny to describe the current situation.

The above-mentioned quote by Freud about the ‘common core’ also notes that the uncanny works in a way where there are shared feelings about the subjective experiences of fear and unease. The common barrier must be in place for multiple people to experience the uncanny, which thus questions the story of the governess, since this is portrayed as her subjective experiences. This is a pivotal point in the novel, since the possibility arises that the ghosts are not real but the uncanny, which runs throughout the whole novel, suggests there may be something that can be shared in this ‘subjective’ experiences of the governess. This fuels the confusion about whether the ghosts are real or whether to believe the governess.

The governess first experiences the apparition of a ghost during her first weeks at Bly Manor. In this instance, she wanders outside in the afternoon after the children are in bed. She wants to meet someone to share this moment who can acknowledge her presence. She is shocked to actually see someone standing there, looking at her: “[It] was the sense that

my imagination had, in a flash, turned real. He did stand there!” (James 164). This instance demonstrates the entrance of the theory of haunting and the uncanny. Because the governess sees the ghost after she imagines someone, some argue that she imagines the person standing there. She wants someone to be there, and now someone is there. Some further argue that the desire to see someone could stimulate the mind to create someone. In other words, if someone focusses hard and long enough in wanting something, it could actually appear. It is not entirely clear who the ‘he’ is to which the governess is referring. As the governess was attracted to her employer, some argue she was thinking about him when walking and thus saw him appear before her. However, when examining this moment further, it could be an option that the governess was thinking about her employer but as it is not explicitly stated one cannot be definite one that.

Scholar Kiyoon Jang criticizes the attitude of the governess regarding the ghosts and states, “Rather than being possessed by and speaking as the ghosts, the governess embodies the disembodied ghosts through her writing and physicality” (Jang 17). One could indeed argue that the governess is not possessed by the ghosts and attempts to see the ghosts as physical beings. However, there are no signs that she actively tries to do this. Her writing is meant to express her feelings about the situation for others to read. Jang also states,

Indeed, the governess can be said to have a kind of “authority” since it is she who writes the story of what happens at Bly: what we see/read in the novella is, fundamentally, her manuscript. Yet, her “authority” is not her own. It is delegated to her by her absent superiors: the master, the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, and Henry James. (Jang 14)

Jang has a point regarding the governess' authority over the story: since this story is written by the governess, she could alter certain situations to her benefit and modify them to her liking. However, Jang rightly states that the writer's authority is not possessed only by the governess but is in fact regulated by others. The man reading the frame story is another figure who has authority over the story and could alter it, and most importantly, so does Henry James. James plays a significant role in terms of the writer's authority; he navigates closely what and how is been said by the governess. Therefore, since she does not own the writerly authority but shares it with others, in particular Henry James, the governess may appear as a unreliable narrator but is in fact subjected to the superior authoritative figure of the text: Henry James. As seen before, James himself said: "To knead the subject of my young friend's, the supposititious narrator's, mystification thick and yet strain the expression of it so clear and fine that beauty would result (...) (James 39). This clearly demonstrates how James looked at his characters. He saw them as 'narrators' but also not as he himself calls them supposititious. On the other hand, he made a story for them to make them seem as if they really are the sole narrators which opens the possibility to see the governess as a sole narrator that is subjected to her creator as he made her story and accompanying agency as a narrator.

Little is disclosed regarding the man's appearance except that his face is not as the governess had imagined it. Since this differs from the picture in her mind, the likeness of the figure who had formed in her mind diminishes. From this moment, the governess releases the idea that had been in her mind and now begins to wonder who this man is and why he is standing there, looking at her. Perhaps she is in danger: "An unknown man in a lonely place is a permitted object of fear to a young woman privately bred" (James 164). The governess may have thought that the man was a sexual predator; her words later reveal that an

unknown man in a lonely place alone with a woman might have objectionable meaning. Even in the present day, this scenario could end badly. Even though he is standing at a distance, situations can easily change and take a turn for the worst. It is therefore not a strange thought for the governess to have. She writes that the distressed feelings return to her as she thinks about the encounter; she also recounts that the man continued to look at her: "Yes, it was intense to me that during this transit he never took his eyes from me, . . . He turned away; that was all I knew" (James 165). This illustrates the intense contact between the governess and this man. As they stood, the man continually stared. No words were exchanged, only looks.

Adding to the uncanniness of this situation is how little is known of the man's appearance. Moreover, his facial expressions are not mentioned, which increases the uneasy feeling of this scene. James' silence regarding the ghost heightens the uncanniness and builds not only upon the level of fright and unease but also the anticipation, which urges the reader to continue. At this point in the story, it is unclear to the governess whether this man is a ghost, which leaves the reader questioning this issue as well. James' construction is further explained by Freud's theory of the uncanny: "We adapt our judgement to the imaginary reality imposed on us by the writer" (Freud 250). How the story is judged is subject to how the writer constructs and utilises literary style. In this instance, James constructed this passage in such a way that the reader accompanies the governess and feels her unease. This ties back to the shared feelings that the uncanny instigates. Since the reader feels the same shared feelings of fear and unease at this instance, one could assume that the ghosts are real and the experiences of the governess not psychological disturbances in her mind, which would then conflict with the possibility that the ghosts may not be real.

Thirdly, another instance where a ghost is seen is more violent, in contrast with the

other instances. It involves Miles, the governess and one of the two ghosts at Bly Manor, and it is later disclosed that this is the ghost of Peter Quint, the lover of the governess' predecessor Miss Jessel. Miles is scared because this ghost tries to possess him. The ghost does not appear eerily creepy or disfigured, which makes it more difficult to determine that this ghost may not be as friendly and innocent as it appears. Here, the analysis of how James wanted to create his ghosts is relevant. The ghosts in this novel do not resemble the types of ghosts or demonic spirits usually described in the more modern gothic genre. For example, the ghosts in the *Paranormal Activity* films (2006–2021) are not seen; nothing is known about their appearance; it is only known that they can possess others. Moreover, the ghosts in the *Insidious* franchise (2010–2018) are eerily dressed and usually feature a disfigured or mutilated face. This displays how ghosts are usually pictured in modern days. In earlier years, a few years after the novel was published, ghosts looked fairly similar to living human beings. For instance, in *The Shining* (1980) and in the adapted film version of *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents* (1961), the ghosts are depicted as normal looking living human beings. Some look more eerily such as in the *Shining* where a woman with gaping wounds and a rapidly aging skin is seen. This shows how ghosts were depicted in film in earlier days and in modern days where a clear distinction can be seen to how the gothic genre changed in his representation of ghosts. The depiction of ghosts in earlier days in film is similar to how the ghosts are described in this novel. However, because this is a novel, visualization must be formed in the mind. With written descriptions, appearance can be clarified; again, the importance of the writer is reiterated. Writers can create new worlds or creatures with their words and what they emphasise. James' ghosts look like human beings, and their appearance does not differ from those around them, which makes it more difficult for characters and readers to identify them as ghosts.

As Freud proposes in a discussion of literature and the application of real-life features in writing: “The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts as well all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life” (Freud 250). In *The Turn of the Screw*, the situation is indeed altered, as James depicts Victorian England with realistic situations. The ghosts are depicted as human, in that they resemble normal human beings and are dressed as we are. They are ghosts and therefore still differ from human beings, but they stand out less than, for example, people who dress up as ghosts at Halloween, which makes it harder to divide fiction from reality. This depiction as Freud further posits, allows the uncanny to be present and act as a mirror for readers to believe that the uncanny can manifest in everyday life. This enhances the uncanny, which is no longer limited. James further develops the uncanniness through the governess’ uncertainty regarding whether the ghosts are real, which therefore heightens suspense and unease. These outcomes depict the effects of the uncanny that James’ usage of ‘normal’ ghosts exerts on both the story and on readers.

When the governess and Miles meet the ghosts, James’ construction of his ghosts has a significant effect. Miles is troubled, likely because he has been haunted by the ghosts for a long time. There is a possibility that Miles is troubled for different reasons, such as being expelled from school, but as this is not explicitly stated but he seeing ghosts is, it is more likely that he is troubled by seeing ghosts. However, although Miles points out the ghost at the final encounter, it is not entirely definite that Miles really sees the ghost, since this is also told from the governess’ point of view. Furthermore, Miles himself is troubled, which also questions his accounts. The governess states, “‘It’s *there*—the coward horror, there for the last time!’” At this, after a second in which his head made the movement of a baffled dog’s on a scent and then gave a frantic little shake for air and light” (James 261). The

ghosts' effect on Miles is illustrated; however, if it really is the effect of the ghosts or maybe that of governess is not clear. The reader knows that Miles was expelled from school; knowing that the ghosts possessed him several times implies that they forced him to perform actions which may have caused his expulsion. Moreover, the ghosts' exact deeds are unknown, as is the incident that caused Miles to be expelled. James himself said that this was deliberate: "He did not specify details of the ghosts' evil deeds because he wanted readers to supply their own vision of terror" (Kuiper). This also suggests that James wanted to deliberately create unease and fright and, therefore, the uncanny in his novel. Again, not knowing what the ghosts have done increases the uncanny. This uncertainty creates unease and fright about what *may* have happened—this is the uncanny feeling that Freud describes, which again demonstrates shared feelings of fear and therefore poses doubt in the reader regarding whether the ghosts are real or not.

Furthermore, the governess does not see the ghost of Peter Quint in the last encounter with him, until the last moment, which could also be traced to processes in the mind: if the ghost had been fabricated in Miles' mind, one could argue that the ghosts were more likely also fabricated in the governess' mind, and it thus follows that the governess cannot see the ghost for herself. As with the first sighting, the governess attempts to see what she is told to see. The end of the book comes suddenly: the reader is following the governess and therefore sees what happens and witnesses the ghosts' final act, if it is indeed caused by the ghosts and not the governess, along with the governess: "I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped" (James 262). Miles dies after his encounter with Quint's ghost. However, the exact cause of death is never revealed; it could be the ghost's final act or even a deed by the governess herself, who could have literally squeezed the life out of him.

Guy Davidson discusses property and modernism in relation to *The Turn of the Screw*, arguing that James is “expressing his anxieties around the status of property through feminine identification or feminine writing” (Davidson 471). Davidson notes that feminine writing is used to deliberately not give the sense of property or textual instability to men as this is usually done. Furthermore, Davidson sees the governess as an unreliable narrator, who, aided by the text’s structure, fails to reveal what truly happened during her stay at Bly Manor. Davidson states: “But is his [Miles’] death due to fright at the sight of Quint, or because the governess, in her “passion,” has crushed the life out of him? In one of many instances of narrative uncertainty, the text does not make it clear” (Davidson 457). It all depends on to whom the words”” Peter Quint—you devil’ “(James 262) are addressed. Because Davidson believes the governess is unreliable, he argues that she may have omitted how Miles actually died for multiple reasons; for example, she may have been involved. He blames the governess’ narrative for this uncertainty in Miles’ death.

The scholar Raúl Valiño Siota further examines the governess and her reliability in his essay “The Role of the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*”. Siota begins by explaining the two camps on the reliability of the governess: “On the one hand, the so-called *apparitionists* have defended a reading in which the governess’s state of mind has little or no weight at all” (Siota 207). Siota continues: “On the other hand, the so-called *non-apparitionists* have defended another reading in which the governess’s mental state seems to be the only meaningful aspect of the whole work” (Siota 208). Siota here points out that the only meaningful aspect of the novel would be the mental state of the governess, this can be seen as plausible as humans want to give meaning to something that can be understood. The mental state of one is to be examined and, in the end, understood. However, the notion of ghosts is more difficult to understand as this is more complicated to examine as there is little

to no explainable concrete, factual evidence for ghosts.

This point of view of Siota focusses on the mental state of the governess and attempts to explain why the story is written as it is. This quote shows that the character of the governess is a key figure in the novel. The unreliability and authority of the governess is highly debated and divides scholars. However, the entire novel was thoughtfully constructed by James; by questioning the governess, one also questions James. James' depiction of the presumably unreliable narrator of the governess makes the reader question the governess regarding whether the ghosts are imagined or real. The novel asks the reader to critically examine their perceptions of the ghosts and the experiences of the apparition seen by the governess, while also attempting to draw the reader to believe the governess, since the uncanny has a shared and objective way of working. Because James has illustrated that his novella was carefully structured, this indicates that he did not want to fully disclose everything that happened at Bly Manor and leaves the reader to decide what to believe.

What happened and how Miles died remain unclear; perhaps the governess imagined the ghost and killed Miles, believing it had possessed the boy and wanting revenge. Maybe Miles died naturally, and the rest is imagined. Perhaps their minds fabricated the image of the ghost, but the haunting is real; this is the question that has kept readers discussing the novel for decades.

Readers could gain the impression that Quint's ghost occasionally possesses Miles and makes him behave badly. However, the ghost of Miss Jessel does not appear as often as does Quint's, which therefore draws increased attention to his ghost. The ghosts do not appear to be particularly terrifying but are eerie; they are not a pretty sight. However, it is not their appearances alone that create an uncanny feeling; rather, it is also their behaviour, which can be marked as weird and even uncanny, due to how the ghosts move and the fact

that they do not speak. For example, the governess' first encounter with Quint is uncanny; the ghost started to move but never broke eye contact, which allows a feeling of unease to overtake the curiosity regarding the figure's identity. The uncanny is carefully structured by James and leaves both the characters and the reader with chills. Certain parts of the story are omitted, which creates mystery, and sudden apparitions appear, which creates fear. This, combined with carefully structured words, sentences and mysterious characters, creates the uncanny story of *The Turn of the Screw*, a novella in which it is not clear if what one reads is to be believed. The governess' perceptions of the ghosts create a feeling of the uncanny but also confusion, since not everything can be believed. The psychological disturbances that the governess experiences affect those around her. Her disturbances, which are demonstrated by the uncanny, show that a common fear and unease exist around others as well, but since they predominantly arise from the disturbances of the governess, it is still a question of what is true and what is not.

Chapter 3. Ghosts, Spirits and the Unknown:

The Psychological Hauntings in *The Haunting of Hill House*

The Haunting of Hill House, by Shirley Jackson (1959), is a gothic novel engaged with ghostly material. It becomes evident from the onset that this novel will confuse and entertain readers throughout. The story begins by introducing the main characters; however, a bit later, the information about the characters is questioned, as new details arise that do not align with previously shared information. For example, at the beginning of the novel, it is not disclosed whether the characters Eleanor and Theodora are sisters. Their character traits are explained and compared. However, soon after, it is revealed that they are not in fact sisters. They do not know each other, and they live strikingly different lives. Eleanor is said to have a sister, Carrie. But it is also possible that Eleanor and Theodora are related, since they learn that their lives are in some ways alike. The various possibilities at the outset draw the reader in, creating mystery.

This chapter argues that in *The Haunting of Hill House*, the protagonist is haunted by ghosts projected by her own troubled mind, which prevents her from clearly distinguishing between what is real and what is not, making the story a highly psychological ghost story.

The Haunting of Hill House is engaged with gothic matters, amongst them the presence of ghosts. It is immediately disclosed that Hill House is presumed to be haunted. This is why Dr Montague, a scholar seeking evidence for supposed hauntings and psychic phenomena, is drawn to it: he wants to investigate whether the house is haunted. For this, he seeks subjects to live with him in Hill House for an unspecified time. The presumed haunting becomes the focus of the novel; the presence of ghosts adds to the mystery. As the novel engages with ghosts and mystery, feelings of distress and fear arise. These feelings are clearly expressed by the main character, Eleanor, also called Nell. The novel is told from her

perspective, and readers see and experience the story through her thoughts. Because feelings of fear and distress exist in combination with the presence of ghosts, the theory of the uncanny comes into play and is expressed in various ways throughout the novel.

Firstly, the setting and the characters lend themselves perfectly to the gothic genre and create an intimate sphere with a focus on the characters. In the gothic genre, settings are essential for the tone and atmosphere of a story. Manuel Aguirre addresses the topic of spaces in gothic literature: “(...) the tangibility of place is a central preoccupation of Gothic and has remained important to the horror genre even after Gothic was superseded by the more psychology-oriented horror fiction (...)” (Aguirre 1). This shows that the setting is important as the space where the story predominantly occurs, and it therefore must create a certain feeling. If the novel is engaged with a mystery, the characters must also be a little mysterious to add the right tone. In *Hill House*, supposedly haunted inexplicable events occur, and one cannot stay for longer than a few days. The house stands as a classic example of a gothic setting. *Hill House* is described as grotesque and confusing. It has so many rooms and doorways that one could easily get lost inside. This adds to the mystery of the supposed hauntings. When the main character, Eleanor, first sees *Hill House*, it is stated, “Over the trees, occasionally, between them and the hills, she caught glimpses of what be the roofs, perhaps a tower, of *Hill House*” (Jackson 23). This initial description of *Hill House* implies that it must be a large building close to the hills, which adds to the sense of mystery. A large building in a remote area creates confusion and mystery; a building built in such a remote place is strange as to whom would want to build a house so remote.

No human eye can isolate the unhappy coincidence of line and place which suggests evil in the face of a house [...] turned *Hill House* into a place of despair, more

frightening because the face of Hill House seemed awake, with a watchfulness from the blank windows and a touch of glee in the eyebrow of a cornice. (Jackson 24)

This explains the threat of Hill House which Eleanor faces when she first sees the house in its entirety. In addition, Hill House is cast as an animate, rather than an inanimate, object. Eleanor describes the face of Hill House as having eyebrows and windows as eyes. This description of the house as an animate object, paired with the disclosure that it is supposedly haunted, sets the tone for a mystery and creates feelings of unease, as it becomes evident that the house has something eerie and strange about it. In Eleanor's description, the house is awake and ready to haunt its next inhabitants.

Later in the story, it becomes evident to the characters that all of the rooms and passages seem off. Dr Montague explains, "Have you not wondered at our extreme difficulty in finding our way around? An ordinary house would not have had the four of us in such confusion for so long, and yet time after time we choose the wrong doors, the room we want eludes us" (Jackson 77). Here, the emphasis is placed on how strange the house is; it can confuse four adults attempting to find their way around. This adds to the unease, since the feeling resembles that of being lost in a maze, unable to find the exit.

Dr Montague here also considers the house as animate; he speaks of the rooms eluding them, as if the house can actually act on its own. That the house is personified in this way adds to the uneasy, eerie feelings, as one becomes curious about how the house can act with intentions and motives.

Secondly, the house is not the only element which adds to the novel's gothic aspects. Some characters, namely the main character, also add to this feeling. The story is told from the perspective of Eleanor, and thus her feelings and thoughts are displayed. However, early in the story, it becomes evident that she and Theodora had not been invited to Hill House by

accident. Stones fell on Eleanor's house for three days, and it is thought that Eleanor had something to do with it. Theodora, without looking, could name all of the cards being held in another room without looking, which could imply that she is psychic. It also becomes evident that Eleanor has a troubled past, and she reveals that she has been lying about her apartment. She sleeps on her sister's couch and has no place of her own. Eleanor's traumas still trouble her, making her more vulnerable than other characters. In an article by Tony M. Vinci examining how trauma is displayed in *The Haunting of Hill House*, he states: "As a rejection of the social world that refuses to engage her trauma, Nell acts out, channeling both her own traumatic past and the melancholic pain of those ghosts now packaged in the narratives of Hill House's history" (Vinci 68). This passage shows the severity of Eleanor's trauma and the fact that she has not received support from others to cope with it. Her 'acting out' is not deliberate; rather, it is the outcome of the traumas which are locked inside her and cannot be released. Thus, because she is troubled, she is more vulnerable, not only to the influence of the living but also to that of the dead. Eleanor is the only character in the novel who resonates well with the house. At first, she does not feel anything and wants to leave, but the longer she stays, the more her traumas come out and the more she feels the hauntings of the house on a deeper level. This results in her hearing and feeling things that no one else around her can, due to her troubled mind which, at Hill House, is releasing itself, causing her to see and hear things projected by her own mind, making it more difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is not.

Both Eleanor and Theodora experience strange, inexplicable events or have inexplicable abilities. Since the reader wishes to understand what happened and why, this adds to the mystery of the characters. Moreover, in one encounter with the temporary inhabitants of Hill House, the intimate nature of the event makes it unclear whether ghosts

are responsible. When the temporarily inhabitants of the house have all met and are ready to sleep, their sleep is disrupted by unexplainable events. Eleanor is assigned to the blue room and shares a bathroom with Theodora, who sleeps in the green room. Their shared bathroom is connected on both ends to their bedrooms, allowing entry to each other's rooms. This construction of connected rooms adds to both the mystery of the house and the mystery accompanied with the stay of the temporary inhabitants. Mrs Dudley, the housekeeper of the house, assigns the rooms to Eleanor and Theodora, but it is not explained why.

This uncertainty and withholding of information are also apparent in *The Turn of the Screw*, as discussed above. In that novel, the withholding of information is deliberate, intended to create mystery and foster a feeling of the uncanny. As we have seen, according to Freud, the uncanny is: "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 220). This fright can be traced to what is already known; it can be a feeling, long held, which is now confirmed or ignited. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, this is experienced by Eleanor. She constantly struggles with her feelings and thoughts at various moments. One such moment is when she first sees Hill House: "She shivered and thought, the words coming freely into her mind, Hill House is vile, it is deceased; get away from here at once" (Jackson 23). This illustrates that Eleanor is not in control of her thoughts. This mental instability makes her more susceptible to the supposed hauntings of Hill House. To withstand haunting, one must be strong and stable to either endure or fight back. Eleanor, being a little weaker, is more likely to fall victim to the hauntings of Hill House, which are projected by her own mind.

In an essay which examines Jackson's novel by focussing primarily on the construction of the narrative, Hillarie Ashton states, "The horror in the novel lies largely in

the space between Eleanor's mind and the external world, and the people in it, rather than in the direct appearance of horrific things" (Ashton 269). Jackson keeps the hauntings close and personal by focusing on personal experiences, making the hauntings closer to home, so to speak. The personal nature of the hauntings makes them more terrifying than would be the description of shocking images. The hauntings may seem small, but since they respond to the lives of the characters and interact with their traumas and guilt, they become more terrifying. This is seen in the character of Eleanor, the protagonist, whose unresolved traumas make her more vulnerable to the hauntings.

An occurrence, or haunting, on the first night, which may seem small but induces significant reactions from the characters, demonstrates how Jackson displays the intimate hauntings:

"You can't get in," Eleanor said wildly, and again there was a silence, as though the house listened with attention to her words. [...] A thin little giggle came, in a breath of air through the room, a little mad rising laugh, the smallest whisper of a laugh, and Eleanor heard it all up and down her back. (Jackson 96–97)

This haunting, incited by the house on the temporary inhabitants, occurs when Eleanor and Theodora are asleep, and Dr Montague and Luke are outside. As later becomes evident, Dr Montague and Luke have been lured outside. They see and hear an animal which is inside the house and then makes its way out, without any door being open. How the animal has entered is itself a mystery, Luke and Dr Montague follow to see where it is headed. During this time, Eleanor and Theodora are haunted by an unknown, unspecified being. They hear a loud banging on the doors, and later, something tries to unlock the door to the room the two women are in. This incites fear in both women, but Eleanor is more frightened and is desperate to stop it. At first, Eleanor thinks it is her ill mother knocking on

her door; at this point it is unclear whether Eleanor remembers that her mother is dead, until the knocking grows louder. This relates to Freud's conclusion that the uncanny leads back to the familiar. The knocking is familiar, since Eleanor heard it multiple times while caring for her mother, and thus Eleanor immediately thinks back to that time. This evokes a fear that history will repeat itself and be even worse than before. This event, or haunting, crawls under the skin of Eleanor, and, in combination with her troubled mind, which is slowly revealed to the reader, it touches the reader, who knows how deeply Eleanor must feel at this moment. Fear, in this text, as in all such works, perhaps, is contagious, passing from the character to the reader. The combination of intimate hauntings and the reader's access to Eleanor's troubled mind triggers fear and unsettling feelings for the reader as well. Moreover, as the knocking sounds familiar to Eleanor, this haunting may be projected by her mind, making her experience something from her past. This haunting and Eleanor's reaction to it clearly show that Jackson wanted to incite fear and the sense of the uncanny not by overtly presenting ghosts with eerie appearances but by focusing on a deeper, more intimate level, creating the uncanny gothic novel known by many. The effect of this is that because of the feeling of the uncanny, the reader feels what Eleanor feels, making them more prone to believe her, but as her troubled mind has a great effect on her, it remains unclear whether the events are really happening.

Thirdly, it is also clear that the ghosts in Shirley Jackson's novel are not to be seen, which allows the characters to form images of them in their minds, allowing more room for deception by the mind. The events in *Hill House* are almost all focused on inciting fear and scaring the residents with actions rather than appearances; the ghosts in *Hill House* do not reveal their appearances. Therefore, it is more difficult to explain the hauntings, since those responsible are not seen. Seeing someone or something it makes it easier to assign actions

to an agent, since a face can be associated with an actual being; there is someone to look in the eye and confront with the deeds. In *The Haunting of Hill House*, no such thing exists. Because the appearance of the ghost or ghosts is hidden, a more intimate sphere is created, since the shocking actions incited by the ghosts are of a more personal nature. Because their appearances remain hidden, their actions must foster the feeling of the uncanny. This feeling is what is most important for this instance; the uncanny frightens the occupants and makes them question what is occurring in Hill House. As Andrew Smith explains, “Freud claims that feelings of uncanniness are generated by the intimated presence of “spirits and ghosts”” (Smith 89). Smith reiterates a crucial point of Freud’s, one that is certainly true of *The Haunting of Hill House*, in which the uncanny is felt because of the ghosts’ undefined presence. The sense of not knowing what exists creates unease, which can transform into fright and a feeling of the uncanny. Not knowing what or who is present—or what will occur or when in one’s residence—can easily incite fright.

There are moments when nothing unusual happens and the residents can seemingly enjoy the nature of Hill House or play chess; however, they know that something may occur at any moment. Eleanor expresses this sentiment: “It’s not us doing the waiting,” Eleanor said. “It’s the house. I think it’s biding its time. [...] “I wonder how long it can wait.” Eleanor shivered” (Jackson 112). Eleanor still describes the house as an animate being and fears what the house will do them. It is not ghosts or spirits who will hurt them but rather the house itself; Eleanor sees the house as the evil spirit. It is living and can undertake action, just like a living being. This waiting for something to happen, combined with the feeling of being watched, creates unease and even frightens some, such as Eleanor. This level of fright is enough for Eleanor to experience the uncanny: fear of what will occur and not knowing what to do when it does. In an essay exploring the line between reality and fantasy in

Jackson's text, Michael T. Wilson states, "The defining element of the novel thus appears to be the line between sanity and madness; to perceive absolute reality, unfiltered by dreams" (Wilson 114). Eleanor, more than anyone else, struggles with separating reality from fantasy, since her troubled mind is susceptible to the events of Hill House. Waiting for something to happen can also be part of fantasy, imagining things and letting events play tricks on one's thoughts. The unknown enhances the effect of not knowing what is real and what is not.

At this point in the story, the temporary inhabitants have endured a number of troubling events, including when, in the eyes of Eleanor, the house writes: 'Help Eleanor come home' on the walls: "It is me, she thought. It is my name standing out there so clearly; I should not be on the walls of this house" (Jackson 107). Eleanor is frightened to see her name written on the walls of the house she fears. This message shakes Eleanor's sanity, since she does not know why her name is on the wall or what the message means. She no longer knows what to think and begins questioning herself and her stay at the house. This passage tellingly reveals how Jackson portrays fear and fright in an individual. In addition, it shows how the characters cope with the situation and haunting of Hill House. This particular haunting has a psychological effect on Eleanor; she begins to question what she has done wrong and whether her name is on the wall because she is considered weak. Wilson states: "Jackson keeps the idea of dream vs. reality in motion throughout the novel, focused in the ineffable moments that the House presents to its visitors" (Wilson 116). When Eleanor's name appears on the wall, it is not clear whether Eleanor or one of the other residents is responsible, or if it really is the work of a ghost. The uncertainty lies in not knowing if something can be explained logically. It is also possible that it is all in Eleanor's imagination. Jackson is clearly playing with the line between reality and dreams whenever the hauntings

manifest. This focus on reality and dreams demonstrates that the psychological aspect is crucial throughout the novel.

In conclusion, the ghosts at Hill House never show themselves, and so their identities remain a mystery. In a sequence involving Mrs Montague and Arthur, the assistant of Mrs Montague, it is said that a nun's body presumably still lies within the walls. However, this is never confirmed; no account exists of a nun ever having lived at Hill House. The ghosts' identities are not the only mystery left unresolved. Why Hill House seems to want Eleanor as its own is another unanswered question; it may be because of Eleanor's mental state. Before coming to Hill House, Eleanor is troubled. She lives with guilt because her mother died while Eleanor was sleeping instead of giving her mother medicine. She senses and sees things differently at Hill House and becomes somewhat obsessed with knowing whether others are talking about her and what they are saying. These issues make her an easy target for Hill House. Because Eleanor is so troubled and sees and hears things which others do not, it is not possible to determine whether the hauntings of Hill House are real; all that is clear is that Eleanor's mind is deeply troubled. This determines the route of *The Haunting of Hill House* and makes it a psychological gothic story, since the psychological power of Hill House takes over Eleanor's mind. Her mind is the central point in the novel, since it affects how the hauntings are experienced, not only by her but also by the reader. Her troubled mind is what may make the reader question what is real and what is not. The ghosts and apparitions are not always seen by everyone around her, which suggests that they may be in her mind. This emphasizes the psychological aspect of the novel, since everything that occurs is related to the mind of Eleanor; the novel is written from her point of view. It becomes clear that Eleanor is troubled and that many of the ghosts and events she experiences are actually

projected by her mind, which causes her to struggle to distinguish what is real and what is not. This makes *The Haunting of Hill House* novel a highly psychological ghost story.

Chapter 4. Ghosts, Fright and Cinematography: The Uncanny and Ghost Analysis in *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix Series by Mike Flanagan

The Haunting of Hill House (2018) Netflix series by Mike Flanagan has been popular from the start. The series is based on the novel, *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson. However, the series story is different from the novel. In her book *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon quotes Charles Newman when she remarks that ‘The move from the literary to the filmic or televisual has even been called a move to “a wilfully inferior form of cognition” (Newman qtd. In Hutcheon 3). As *The Haunting of Hill House* is a work that was literature but now changes to a filmic production, this seems true. However, one could argue about this, as for others, this adaptation is not seen as “a wilfully inferior form of cognition” as they see it as a different take on the original work that still has some resemblances but can also be seen as different and new. This chapter will argue that the complexity of perception demonstrated in the series further embodies the complexity of the family’s relationships, leaving the viewer in conflict about who to believe.

In the series, the Crain family must withstand the energy of Hill House; in the novel, the temporary residents of Hill House are not related but grow to be friends. The series changed from the novel in elements such as the haunting in the novel where Theodora’s room was demolished with blood. To elaborate, blood was smeared on the wall above her bed as well as her door and her clothes. However, the director kept some of the novel’s aspects in the series but changed them to fit his story. The writing on the wall haunting still happens in the series; however, it is hidden under wallpaper instead of being immediately visible on the wall. Because the series is directly based on the novel, the two are frequently compared. Hutcheon touches on this in her book: “an adaptation’s double nature does not

mean, however, that proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should be the criterion of judgment or the focus of analysis" (Hutcheon 6). Hutcheon wants to point out that although the work is based on another work, this does not mean that the work needs to be judged on if and in what measures it is true to the original work. An adaptation could be presented and sometimes even be a new work, it is not a point on which all focus must lie. Moreover, because the novel and series are also fairly different, the series here is handled separately.

As stated previously, the series involves a troubled family and follows the five siblings as they face the trauma from their youth at Hill House. The series revolves around key moments, such as Nellie's death. Nellie's death brings the siblings back together, and from there, viewers see how each of them have handled their lives after that night. They work together to resist the energy of Hill House, which requires some effort, and tensions arise as they try to resist its lure. Flashbacks tell the story of their time at Hill House and reveal the hauntings that they witnessed, which is an aspect that many viewers find eerily frightening. However, if one pays close attention, additional ghosts can be seen in the background. The ghosts are a vital part of the series, and their appearances lend the story the uncanny, frightening feeling.

Firstly, the ghosts' appearances are detailed and prominent, so they are seen fairly often, leaving the viewer with a fair impression of how the ghosts look like. To elaborate, several times when ghosts are seen, they are alone on the screen. Other characters in the shot may be blurred slightly so that the ghost becomes the focus of the shot. Flanagan did this on purpose to redirect the focus to the ghosts. This technique is seen in various scenes throughout the series. To hold viewers' attention over the course of the 10 episodes, Flanagan focusses on creating tension by portraying eerie-looking ghosts crawling in the background. Generally, in these cases the characters have not yet seen the ghost, which

enhances the feeling of unease and the uncanny in viewers. The viewers know more than the characters do, which enhances the feeling of uncanny as the viewer will fear for what will happen to the characters if they do not see the ghosts on time. Freud's theory of the uncanny, which is thoroughly explained in Chapter 1, is of considerable importance here as the uncanny can also be displayed in images—the same features that apply to the uncanny in literature apply to the visual gothic. With series and films, the director creates a story that consists of aspects of the uncanny, such as the presence of demonic spirits and the unknown, which create the feeling of the uncanny. This series demonstrates the formation of a gruesome mystery as Flanagan changed the original story, adding the terrifying-looking ghosts and mysteries to create a visual gothic story.

In an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter* written by Mike Bloom, Flanagan explains his deviations from the original: "I'm just naturally drawn to family drama, and I think in horror, in particular, the way people behave in their families is different than the way they behave out in the world" (Bloom). Family relations interest Flanagan because he believes they have a different dynamic, especially in gothic scenarios, which can strain relations and cause people to behave differently than they normally would. When a family is being haunted, one member can begin to suspect others in the family or behave hostilely to others because of the haunting. Being haunted for a considerable period and having family members who may not believe or support the one being haunted also explains why families in horror scenarios behave differently than when the members are not with their families. The ghosts work as a symbol to show family strains and difficulties in communication in families. Relationships already under strain cause additional difficulties in a gothic setting, considering how hauntings affect a person mentally. This is seen in the Crain family. As

stated previously, the ghosts play a significant role, and the role of family is also important as their reaction is a significant factor in how the hauntings affect each member.

In one instance, Nell, the youngest sister, tells her siblings of being visited by an eerie-looking ghost with a broken neck. Nell, being a child, calls this ghost “The Bent-Neck Lady”. The first time Nell mentions the Bent-Neck Lady, it becomes evident that she has been haunted by this ghost for a while. She confides in her twin brother, Luke, older brother Steven and her parents. Her words in the first episode reveal that this has happened before, and her siblings know about her haunting. In a flashback to a moment when the siblings were younger and were still in Hill House, we see and hear that a Nell was crying. Her brother Steven walks in the room and asks her why she is crying, and she says that it is because of the Bent-Neck Lady. Her father, who is standing in the doorway, says, “Her again?” This indicates that Nellie has been acquainted with the Bent-Neck Lady for some time and that she has confided it to her father.

The first time the audience is visually introduced to one of the hauntings that Nell endured as a child is when she falls asleep on the couch with her mother because she was scared to sleep in her own bed, terrified that she would see the Bent-Neck Lady again. This ghost haunts Nell that night, hanging over her with her strands of hair almost touching Nell’s face (15:15). The cinematography in this scene anticipates the uneasiness and increases the feeling of the uncanny because of what is revealed. To elaborate, sometimes the viewer already sees the ghosts pending in the background and fears for what is going to happen, other times the viewer only sees a fragment of a scene, leaving the viewer to question what else is there to be seen. Rogan Jacobsen and Loreto Kirribilli wrote an article in which they explain film techniques utilised to create certain effects. In this scene, the camera first views Nell from above and reveals her frightened face; Jacobsen and Kirribilli state: “The high

angle shot can also be used to place the viewer in the position of looking down on something or someone, . . . creating the illusion of weakness, or to show that the character is frightened or powerless” (Jacobsen 27). This high angle is frequently employed throughout the series to emphasise the character’s reaction to the situation.

Nell’s terrified face is seen, struggling to breathe because of what the viewer assumes is the Bent-Neck Lady. Then the camera zooms out, displaying Nell laying on the couch and a ghost hovering over her. At this point, it is not clear if this ghost is the Bent-Neck Lady, as the viewers do not yet know what this ghost looks like. They only know that this ghost has a ‘bent’ neck; what this entails becomes evident later. Revealing only the terrified face of the character before exposing why the character is terrified produces stress and fear in the viewer because one expects that something terrible is happening to Nell but cannot yet see it. In a *Huffington Post* interview with Aubrey Page, Page remarks, “Flanagan imbues even the eeriest of concepts with familial warmth, then deepens them with a sly attention to detail” (Page). By adding detail, the eerie, uncanny feeling is reintroduced but is now on a deeper level. It places the viewer on the wrong track, causing the shock of the revelation to be even greater—at the end of Episode 5, the Bent-Neck Lady is revealed to be Nell herself, and Nell has been seeing herself as she looks when she dies in the grasp of Hill House. The instances where Nell sees her ghost are then played in a sequence from 1:07:23 to 1:08:12. This shocks the audience to their core and raises mixed feelings of terror and pity for Nell. The uncanny feeling in the scene with Nell lying on the couch and being face-to-face with a ghost is felt by Nell and the viewers as both parties are terrified—one because of what is seen in front of her and the other because of what is impending and suggested. The perception of Nell of the bent-neck lady is wrong as she perceives the ghost as something that is not familiar to her, later it is revealed that the ghost resemblances herself.

Retrospectively, with this detail in mind, Nell's perception is proven to not always be truthful. This makes the viewer question which of Nell's memories and perceptions are reliable and which are not. The ghost's full appearance is revealed at the end, and here, the uncanny is felt at its height as the impending danger regarding Nell is revealed.

In the instance above, the impact of the twist that shocks the audience is significant because Flanagan both withholds information and applies a variety of film techniques. This is important to notice as the filming has an effect on how the hauntings will be perceived by the viewer. Focussing on the detailed picture and then exhibiting the whole picture reveals information that substantially impacts the story and accentuates the experience of the uncanny. Cinematography is critical in *The Haunting of Hill House* as it is employed to create an uneasy, creepy atmosphere where impending danger lurks at every corner. Different camera angles, shots and camera movements create this environment. The most frequently utilised shots are the close-up and the point-of-view shot, where the camera assumes the point of view from the character in question. Tilting or tracking the camera, where the camera moves up and down or forward, backward and sideways to track the action are also employed often.

According to Jacobsen and Kirribilli, when tilting is utilised "the camera tilts up or down while the tripod remains still. This can create a sense of unease in the viewer and is often used to create suspense or mystery" (Jacobsen and Kirribilli 30). Such camera movement fits perfectly to this series, as it aims to create suspense. Therefore, this movement is frequently employed, such as in Episode 6, where several long shots are utilised. The camera angles also influence the perceptions of the family Crain, as sometimes only fragments are shown to the siblings, they are prone to perceive certain situation wrong. This complexity in perception also shows how the family relationships are. To elaborate, as

certain family members are mad at one another they perceive situations different than their sibling as they see it from another standpoint. On his twitter Flanagan addresses the camera work and says that it was difficult to get some shots: "the draft for ep (sic) 6 was a really tough read with camera pivots left/tracks right down left aisle, keeping Steven in MS profile" breaking up the dialog" (@Flanagan). He adds, "The sets needed to include hiding places for crew & equipment, specific lighting rigs, and even a handmade elevator that would lower into place from the ceiling to bring a cameraman to the first floor for shot 4" (@Flanagan). The difficulty in shooting Episode 6 required considerable coordination but was necessary to ensure that they could deliver the desired eerie, uncanny atmosphere that this horror series needed.

Secondly, the ghosts are 'hidden' in plain sight, increasing the anticipation. *The Haunting of Hill House* also features ghosts who do not have an eerie appearance. They do not look terrifying and therefore do not scare the characters or the audience. Although their appearances may not be terrifying, the fact that they are walking amongst us just as everyone else is. They are moving with the living and blend in with the crowd. However, it is only at the end of the series when both the family and the audience learn that some figures were actually ghosts. This shocks Steven, who learns first that some of the people who were renovating the house were ghosts and thus were not really there. Initially, Steven does not believe this as he saw one of them closely. His difficulty in believing that some were actually ghosts is because of their appearances. He and his siblings experienced that the ghosts in Hill House look eerie. However, the perception between the siblings changed at certain times. For example, when the family left in a hurry out of Hill House, Steven said he did not notice any ghosts, however, his siblings did. This difference in perception is also shown in their relationship. Steven does not feel very connected with his siblings which, is also shown in

how they perceive the ghosts of Hill House. These ghosts do not look eerie but in fact resemble normal human beings. They wear normal clothes, and they move around normally.

Flanagan, in the interview with *Huffington Post* by Aubrey Page, says the following:

I'm a firm believer that what you don't see is always scarier than what you do(..) We couldn't sustain that for 10 hours, so it was a given that we'd show our ghosts. I just wanted them to mean something. They're only scary if they're organic to the characters. If you don't care about the people, the ghosts don't mean a thing. (Page)

Flanagan's choice to portray the ghosts was a bold move, as in several horror films, the ghosts are not displayed, or their appearances are not revealed until the final moment to retain their mystery. For example, in the film *Oculus* (2013), the ghost or entity is not portrayed but does hurt the characters. The viewer continues looking to discover what the entity looks like, which is not revealed, adding to the uncanny effect.

The eerie-looking ghosts of Hill House create a feeling of the uncanny because of their frightening appearances, but this second type of ghost creates that same feeling because of their normal appearances, which make them a threat because it becomes difficult to distinguish the living from the dead. Furthermore, this challenges the characters and viewers to know who is real and who is not, as well as raises the question of reality in everything that has been seen.

Toward the end of the series in episode 8, the dad, Hugh, tells Steven that not everything he saw was true. In fact, Hugh tells Steven that almost all of the people who renovated the house were ghosts, as the house does not want to be fixed because it wants the family to stay. The house allows the appearance of being renovated because it wants the family to stay for longer.

One example of a ghost worker regards a clock that needs to be repaired. In episode 8, a man is seen working on the great clock in the hall (5:55); however, it later becomes clear that the clock was not repaired but only checked to ensure that it was working properly. Regardless, the man 'repairing' the clock was actually a ghost. Moreover, the reason Steven does not notice that the man is a ghost is because of his normal appearance. The majority of the ghosts in Hill House look eerily creepy, and therefore, their ghostliness is apparent because that is the image people expect ghosts to have. The majority of the ghosts either wear clothes that are torn or dirty or their faces are severely damaged. Ghosts represent the death, but as death is seen as something many worry about or see as something they do not want; ghosts can be associated with a damaged or decrepit appearance as they can be seen as damaged beings. This is because they are not alive and as this is seen as the norm and whole, everything other is damaged.

Some ghosts even look alike human beings but when looking closer they have black eyes or really long, slim and bony limbs. This is to point out that they are ghosts and will probably want to do harm in contrast to the ghosts that look slightly less like ghosts. The repair man looks like a normal human, with normal clothes and a normal-looking face. He has a moustache, glasses and a watch. Furthermore, he does not sneak up on people to scare them; he merely works on the clock and behaves naturally. This is different to the other ghosts seen in Hill House. Although he does not look like one, he is a ghost created by the house so that the residents of Hill House will believe that people are working on the house. Not all ghosts look eerie but the reasons how and why the ghost is there are eerie enough. The house acts as a malicious spirit which will do anything to accomplish its goal: securing the entire family in its grasp. There remains the question of how Hugh knows that the man is a ghost, which adds to the mystery of Hill House. One possible explanation is their

perception. Hugh perceived the man as a ghost as he notices that the clock was not repaired. On the other hand, to Steven the man seems just a normal man. As Steven perceives the ghosts in a different way than his father does, it can be said that they have different realities. These realities clash, even when Steven becomes an adult. As a result, the relationship between Steven and his father has become strained.

Thirdly, a plethora of ghosts can be seen in *The Haunting of Hill House*; many can only be seen when examining the series closely. Numerous viewers have analysed the series frame by frame and have discovered something eerier than the sole appearances of the ghosts: in various frames, ghosts can be spotted in the background. These ghosts are not overtly revealed, so one must look closely at specific times to spot them. They appear in the background so that they do not remove attention from the events in the scene. However, some background ghosts add to the uncanny feeling of the story; Flanagan explains that the ghosts in the background are part of the backstory of Hill House, which explains why certain ghosts appear at certain places in the house. In an interview with Den of Geek by Matt Edwards, he also says, "I think a lot of films will try to take their horror onto the aesthetic in a way that doesn't feel relatable, that says this is a different world, this is some kind of heightened reality. And for us, we want to ground it" (Edwards). This may explain why some of the ghosts look normal: allowing them to appear normal grounds the story, as it seems unexaggerated or hits close to home. David Griffin, a reviewer for IGN, suggests that: "There's a complex theme throughout the story concerning the house's complicity in all of the kids' failings as adults. This is where the real-world scares begin to manifest themselves into the plot" (Griffin). This is true if one considers the siblings' lives. Luke is a drug addict; Steven wrote a book and researches the paranormal because he believes that ghosts do not exist. All are troubled and trying to cope with what they experienced and saw in Hill House.

Freud states the following in his theory of the uncanny: “an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (Freud 249). This aligns with the past that the siblings endured. However, the past of the siblings was literally haunted. It is not just childhood memories that are in play here but real deep feelings of terror. In Hill House, they each had moments where they were terrified and experienced the feeling of the uncanny. Now that they return and confront this house where they experienced these terrifying moments, that feeling reoccurs. As children, they tried to repress these moments and feelings, which led them to be troubled and unable to cope with what happened when they were younger. The hauntings that they experienced as children seriously impacted their lives.

One of the hauntings they experienced as children occurs in Episode 5, when Nell is accused of writing on the wall. This references Jackson’s original novel where “Help Eleanor come home” is written on the wall. In the series, something similar happens, and it also involves Nell. On the wall beneath the wallpaper, the words “come home Nell” can be read (23:22). The mother accuses Nell of writing this on the wall, which the audience knows is not true. The perception of the ghosts by Nell and her mother differs in this instance which shows their strained bond as the mother’s mental state begins to deteriorate at this point. Nell is sent to her room, and Theo, who stood next to her when their mother accused Nell, goes to Nell. However, when Theo is standing in the doorway, hands can be seen on the left under the piano. This communicates that the house is full of ghosts even in the daytime and that they will hide in places that are accessible for everyone.

One of the most striking ghostly moments is in the first episode, which involves Steven and his story while introducing the Crain story and their relation to Hill House. In this

episode, viewers experience the day that Nell dies, mainly from Steven's perspective. He is sceptical about what his siblings claim to have seen in Hill House and wrote a book about the family's experiences there, which angers his siblings. Steven is seen sleeping at the house of a woman who claims that her room is haunted with the ghost of her deceased husband. He does not believe this and finds logical evidence for some of the noises and therefore declares the room not haunted. At the end of the episode, Steven enters his apartment after he catches Luke stealing from him and sees Nell standing there. She looks at him but does not speak. Steven asks her what she wants, and as she opens her mouth to reply, Steven's phone rings: his dad tells him that Nell is dead. While Steven is on the phone, the sequences presents him in focus; in the blurred, unfocused background, Nell's figure can be seen. When Steven turns, Nell is standing right in front of him, opening her mouth while her eyes turn white, her teeth rot and her skin cracks and looks old. Steven is frightened by this sight and falls to the ground in terror. Nell's figure disappears. This moment sets the tone for what viewers can expect from the series and especially from the ghosts. Nell's ghost starts as a normal-looking Nellie but transforms into something inhuman as Steven watches. This ghost, like the man working on the clock, looks normal, but when it shows its true form, it reveals that things are not as they appear in *The Haunting of Hill House*.

The most important aspect in *The Haunting of Hill House* is the ghosts; they lend the series its uncanny feeling. A variety of ghosts are seen: some look completely normal, and some look normal but then transform into eerie-looking beings. However, the majority of the ghosts look eerily creepy and scare not only the characters, but also the viewers. The cinematography is stunning throughout with techniques that enhance the tension and allow the audience to experience the feeling of the uncanny as well. It is the hidden background ghosts that can be detected by the viewer which increase the level of the uncanny, which

again shows Flanagan's ability in imposing fear on his viewers. It is not only the appearances of the ghosts that cause the uncanny feeling, but it is also the ghosts that show how the family bonds are composed. This is done by the perception the characters have of the ghosts and of certain events in their lives. However, there is a complexity here as it is not always clear what they see, and it becomes clear that they sometimes misinterpret what they are seeing. This complexity in perception demonstrates the complexity in the family's relationships as they all struggle and have different perceptions. This leaves viewers questioning who and what to believe.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by analysing the variety of ghosts and their accompanied symbolism as well as the uncanny in Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* and Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix series, this thesis has shown that ghost, as well as the accompanied feeling of the uncanny, in ghost stories are not just there to scare the reader or characters. They symbolize and bring out problems on a deeper level. They invade the common spaces of the characters as they stand for childhood traumas, which are linked to or result in psychological problems, and which disturb family dynamics. The theory of the uncanny by Sigmund Freud describes a particular kind of fear that people can experience in certain situations such as reliving childhood fears. This particular kind of fear can be induced by a myriad of factors such as, again, childhood fears or crises in perception. It is typical for gothic works to have a certain level of fear and this is what Freud further explains in his essay. He explains how fear is created in the mind and how fear can be implemented in literature. His theory was used as a basis for the analysis of the three gothic works that were examined in depth here. In all three works, the uncanny is present and plays a significant role as the fear the characters feel is also to be felt by the reader or viewer as a consequence of how the work is constructed. To elaborate, all three works are structured in a distinct manner and have a different focus. However, they all manage to make the reader share the feelings of the characters. This empathy or imaginative sympathy also causes confusion as not all characters perceive situations and events correctly, as their mind is affected by trauma or fear. By analysing what the ghosts symbolize or bring out in the characters, each focus of the works is examined which results in our seeing the multiple ways that ghosts can be depicted and used to address deeper and multiple problems.

In *The Turn of the Screw* the uncanny brings out psychological disturbances which often appear to be as subjective experiences. However, the uncanny shows that there are shared feelings felt through these seemingly subjective experiences. The ghosts can be seen as psychological disturbances which address the mental wellbeing of the characters which can lead to confusion to the reader as to whether what is being said can be trusted and believed.

In Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, the ghosts and hauntings and projected by the troubled mind of the protagonists leaving the reader to question on what is real or not, revealing the highly psychological nature of the novel.

In Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Hill House* Netflix series, the ghosts expose the different family bonds between the family members. The complexity of perception is also in play which further demonstrates the complexity of the family bonds which makes it difficult for the viewer to know who a reliable narrator or character is.

In all three works, the place of the ghost is to unveil multiple layers of meaning, doing so by throwing into question the character's perceptions, and mental wellbeing leaving the audience with the choice on whether to believe anything that is being portrayed as reality.

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