

# Walled Up Alive: The Uncanny and Gender Haunted Spaces in Shirley Jackson's *Haunting of Hill House*

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## ABSTRACT

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Gothic literature is frequented by haunted texts particularly outlining a ruinous spatial relationship between the female and the haunted spaces. Using Shirley Jackson's *Haunting of Hill House* as primary text, this paper studies how haunting spaces, underlying anxieties, and prejudices against women manifest the dark atmosphere that threatens and eventually engulfs the female. Chapter by chapter, the spatial hauntings are coupled with supporting ideas of the uncanny. The article explores how the uncanny exhibits itself in a haunted space and how gender is connected to suppressed fears in women. The conclusion drawn lays emphasis on the recognition of reasons backing gendered hauntings and how women extract fears from their repressed past and embed them within domestic borders. Though the hauntings that happen around women are not untrue, this article argues how women are more likely to suffer from hauntings due to repressed traumas and fears.

**Keywords:** *Gothic Literature, Uncanny, Feminism, Gendered Hauntings*

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This article examines the concealed anxieties in women that attend to the ghostly presence, impinging its existence on a woman through space. A haunted space can alter the manner of a woman's existence. Through the study of *Haunting of Hill House* and the exploration of the female character in the novel, an Avery F. Gordon idea of "what's been concealed is very much alive" (Gordon, 2008, p.16) is substantiated and justified.

It is essential to understand that deep-rooted suppression and despair in women, and the unintentional consequences are brought about by a woman herself through the vulnerability that she carries within. Therefore, the article examines the effect of haunted spaces with gendered hauntings. The primary text is *Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson. The chosen text attends mostly to the possessions of a woman within a domestic space. The reasons and the results of the gendered hauntings have also been explored throughout the article. The critical focus throughout the analysis extends to the female protagonist Eleanor of the selected text. To understand the production of fear in a female caught in a haunted space, the character is explored both before and after the unfortunate hauntings. In his book *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Anthony Vidler discusses how "space is assumed to hide, in its darkest recesses and forgotten margins, all the objects of fear and phobia that have returned with such insistency to haunt the imaginations of those who have tried to stake out spaces to protect their health and happiness" (Vidler, 1992, p.167). The female protagonist in the primary text attempts endlessly to cease the violence of "structured spaces by threatening elements" (Solomon, 2012, p.4), but the underlying fears in women attract the eerie and the uncanny. The plot of the primary text and the analysis of the female character allows the reader to realize how internalized fears that gnaw on a woman are slowly triggered by external ghosts and hauntings, eventually consuming the woman. Furthermore, the key factor of haunted houses furnishes a factor for investigating the relationship between women and haunted spaces.

It might be inept to deny how Gothic fiction is frequented by a traumatized woman who is powerless, constantly negotiated and suppressed, who develops a vexed identity, and finally falls prey to specters and hauntings. Her roles as a mother, daughter, and wife in the gothic worlds limit her geographies to the domestic sphere or haunted houses. It must be recognized how a constant endeavor is practiced in the fiction writers that belong to the gothic; a denial to the woman of her space, a repression of her desires, and a permittance to the paranormal to transgress a woman's space. These paramount and permanent Gothic tropes represent the embodiment of patriarchy, anxieties, and gendered hauntings. Importantly, then, the female protagonist of the primary text in contact with the paranormal helps us realize how Gothic can be understood and interpreted. Through the character analysis along with the ideas of the uncanny, one main idea

is concreted. The conflicted perspective of the word 'ghost'. Andrew Bennett and Nicolas Royle in their book *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* present a modern idea as they state: "Ghosts are paradoxical since they are both fundamental to the human, fundamentally human, and a denial or disturbance of the human, the very being of inhuman" (Bennet & Royle, 2004, p. 133). Accordingly, throughout our primary text, we observe how the ghosts present themselves in the form of a paranormal space and disturb our heroine's sense of the separation from the dead i.e., what has been buried. Eleanor from our primary text walks into the Hill House after burying her neurotic mother. This woman is haunted by the idea of a place and is threatened by the fact that what she was buried in has returned with a spectral existence.

The analysis of the gendered hauntings aims to alter the conventional idea of the women's internal trauma being unconnected to the real external hauntings. The hauntings around the women are not psychological, they are real. Eleanor is sure that the hauntings around her are tangible. In his article "Todorov's THE FANTASTIC" Dave Rick quotes from Tzvetan Todorov's book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1975):

The fantastic, we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from 'reality' as it exists in the common opinion. [...] If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous. (Rick, 2014, n.p.)

Eleanor is certain that the hauntings are for real, but she additionally is visited by the specters of her past, her fears, her dead mother's phantoms, and her anxieties. The idea of both the uncanny and the marvelous are applicable to the text of *Haunting of Hill House*.

Most of the ideas regarding the uncanny take their knowledge from The Uncanny by Sigmund Freud. The text possesses a wholesome knowledge of the uncanny and its effects. Freud says that uncanny

undoubtedly belongs to all that is terrible—to all that arouses dread and creeping horror; it is equally certain, too, that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with whatever excites dread. Yet we may expect that it implies some intrinsic quality which justifies the use of a special name. One is curious to know what this peculiar quality is which allows us to distinguish as uncanny certain things within the boundaries of what is fearful. (1919, p, 1)

Jackson describes the uncanny as not being present in a room like a painting but as the effect of the painting. The female protagonist could never put her finger on one factor of the hauntings that bother her, but she nonetheless gropes in the dark for answers. There was an effect, an interference in Eleanor's life that dishevels her and her siblings to the core. The detailed discussion of the uncanny being frightening but of crucial importance, Jackson's work helps support the basic ideas of the analyses.

Christine Wilson, in her essay "Haunted Habitability: Wilderness and American Haunted House Narrative" in Esther Peeren's book *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, puts forth how Poe's "The fall of the Usher" is creepy, and Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* is haunted, but Jackson's *Hill House* is alive (Peeren, 2010, p. 200). She discusses how in major haunted house narratives, the haunted house itself turns out as alive and a major character. She, further, discusses how all haunted narratives revolve around the idea of making the house livable. Similar, to the female protagonist from the primary text, we deduce that Eleanor fights an individual battle with the space she initially deemed as home. She argues that "At the most basic level, haunted house stories explore the relationship between subjects and their home space" (Peeren, p. 200). In this article, the relationship between the female character and the home space is analyzed from different aspects, simultaneously.

*Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*, a book by Jo Collins also elaborates in its introduction on how the uncanny works. In relation to modernity, Jo Collin's contribution adds "while it seems likely that all cultures manifest spirit or ghost beliefs, this itself is not sufficient to characterize the uncanny" (Collins, 2008, p. 2). He further argues how the uncanny arises from an empty, vacant character in the paranormal and never fills the character with anything but "a fundamental *indecision*, an obscurity, and uncertainty' (Collins, p. 2). The introduction to *Uncanny Modernity* puts forth the idea of how the uncanny, instead of being merely abnormal or unfamiliar, justifies the idea of alienation, dislocation, and a disheveled sense of self. Across the analysis of the primary text, we come through one primary result of the hauntings i.e., a sense of alienation and abandonment surrounds the female protagonist finally resulting in a devastated conscious and subconscious.

Storytelling and fiction writing can be powerful weapons through which one can change the course of how people should think. Ultimately, it is the characters that craft stories and aims and necessitate unidentified ideas. One such protagonist from a fictional world gets seized by vengeful horror and submits to the conventional notion of literary gothic, the unfortunate effect of the haunted house on a woman, solely. In Shirley Jackson's *Haunting of Hill House*, Eleanor clearly craves being home. The hauntings inside Hill House and the eerie in the text

manifest due to the absence of a loving home. The chapter discusses how vulnerable women can open doorways to the paranormal in relation to the uncanny. The chapter further discusses how repression from the outside world makes Eleanor vulnerable to falling victim to Hill House. Through this gothic novel, Eleanor, like all the hopeless gothic heroines is walled up alive in the dreary walls of Hill House while later, like any other gothic villain, Hill House stands untouched, more dominant, and more suppressive. We, finally, see how women and the hauntings resonate on one level, and domesticity is turned into an idea of tyranny and destruction.

### **Eleanor comes home**

An interpretation of *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson reveals the dynamics and tension that are entangled, fluxional and gendered, even though the characters in the question of the plot narrative are unable to fully realize this. The novel is based on a narrative where the forces that work about the house are in the process of helping Eleanor come home. But why does Eleanor alone need help to come home? In the Meriam Webster dictionary, *home* is defined as 'a familiar or usual setting' but that is not the case for Eleanor. Home is not a place where she performs activities that other girls of the same age do. Home to Eleanor is Hill House. Shirley Jackson writes,

Her years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair. Without ever wanting to become reserved and shy, she had spent so long alone, with no one to love, that it was difficult for her to talk, even casually, to another person without self-consciousness and an awkward inability to find words. (2006, p. 3)

Tracing Eleanor's repression and despair back to her home, Eleanor clearly needs a home since the beginning. The haunting and the eerie in the text solely springs out through the dynamics of a missing home. A space Eleanor subconsciously searches with her vexed identity bringing her to many experiences like close feminine friendship, a terror of separation, a complex of disregard, and so on.

In Jackson's *Haunting of the Hill House*, we find that repressed and incomprehensible fears in women can open doorways, connect them, or make them more vulnerable to haunted spaces. We find this aspect of the uncanny in repetition, automatism, animism, and telepathy in her novel.

A ghost story compared to any other genre in literature depends solely on the setting. A mention or an allusion of a specter, a ghost, or a spirit sends our imagination wildly gathering images of eerie mansions, hotels, castles with curled naked trees, and the unnerving silent hours of the night. Haunted novels and ghost

stories have affected the collective consciousness of the readers. Hill House as a physical space is merely not just a setting but also a character. The hauntings in Hill House imbue the mere bricked architectural structure with a malevolent evil presence with the power to control the thoughts of a human being. The possession of the haunted house over Eleanor has important gendered implications working in varying ways throughout the novel.

No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone. (Jackson, 2006, p. 1)

The opening lines of the novel begin with an explanation of the house. At the beginning of the novel, four people are invited into the notoriety of the Hill House. As the novel proceeds, we gather how the hauntings happening in the house specifically affect Eleanor, who is the most vulnerable character in the novel. When Eleanor loses her sanity towards the end, the novel concludes where it started, “whatever walked there, walked alone”.

“The haunting is personally designed for the haunted” argues Tricia Lootens (1991, p. 167). Eleanor is haunted by her past which further makes her vulnerable to the hauntings in the house. The gendered perspective on the hauntings can be taken from the making of the characters by Jackson. Other characters such as Luke and Dr. Montague hear the knocks, see the apparitions, and are equally involved in the apparent paranormal activity about the house yet the house grasps the weakest, a female. Theodora, similarly, is affected by the hauntings but an observation of Theodora not coming out as feminine and sensitive as Eleanor can be positively made. Nobody across the group of researchers inside the house can point their fingers at the reasons for the hauntings but Dr. Montague puts across a point about the house being evil itself, and that is the closest a reader ever gets to an explanation of the hauntings. Self-conscious, weak, and suppressed, Eleanor is a perfect target for the Hill House.

Since the beginning, Eleanor dwindles between leaving and staying but then portrays a gesture of strength upon leaving her domineering sister behind and escaping with her car. Eleanor, during a dramatic interior monologue, thinks that she might as well go along to Hill House, where she is expected and where she will be given shelter. Eleanor, though subconsciously, thinks of the word shelter as if she had been mistreated in a place where she was not sheltered. As the house

gradually consumes Eleanor's identity, she too unavoidably becomes the house she is occupying. The blurring of their identity eventually becomes invisible by the end as she slowly begins to forget the outside world. Eleanor thinks, "gathered comfortably into the hills, protected and warm; Hill House is lucky" (Jackson, p. 231). She considers Hill House lucky because it is Hill House that initially gives her the comfort and warmth that she craved but never received elsewhere, specifically from her mother and sister.

In his article, Richard Pascal argues that the solemn announcement at the beginning of the novel "whatever walks there, walks alone" lies in conformity with the conventional gothic convention in terms of 'whatever' as the identity remains unidentifiable to the reader. Even its quantity, as to whether it is plural or singular, remains ambiguous. He further argues that 'whatever' acts as an oxymoron, for the house, had ruined families in the past together, still, each person walks alone, attempting to fulfill their own unsettling fantasies, and agonized by their own fears and repressions; an unfamily (Pascal, 2014, p. 465). When Eleanor finally surrenders herself to the house, she, as is expected of a mother figure, can hear everything about the house. She makes a desire to express her omniscient hearing as a way of being one with the house. Like a mother, alert, and all ears, she blends in with the house.

### **Blurring identities**

Women, after becoming mothers have heightened senses, are alert, and pay attention to sensory details that are otherwise inaccessible to them before motherhood. It is a transitional phase for a woman. Similarly, Eleanor metamorphosizes into a level beyond what she is before. The blur between the identities of the house and Eleanor also gives her an illusion that all that is happening is of her own accord. She finally begins to feel her beautiful, heavy hair around her round face. At one point she thinks about how free she is and is doing everything of her own will. While just before driving into the tree, in her last moments, the insanity allows her to peek momentarily into reality and she asks herself why she is doing this. Why does not anybody stop her? And that is where Nellie (Eleanor's nick name) is herself for the last time, the Hill House returns her to the awareness of her sad reality before engulfing her completely.

Brian Boylan in his essay states two things that take over Eleanor's sanity, which further support the gendered aspect of the hauntings in the Hill House (Boylan, 2006, p. 23). One of them is the significance of naming and the other is the repression caused by the death of her mother. He puts forth that both factors are closely knitted and affect the woman who is singularly fighting against a patriarchal society and later ends up in a paranormal situation. Eleanor, initially, expresses her discomfort as Theodora constantly mentions the house's name and Eleanor thinks,

mentioning it, again and again, would attract attention and would summon evil. 'It's as though she were saying it deliberately, Eleanor thought, calling the house to tell it where we are; is it bravado?' (Jackson, p. 123). Similarly, when the four guests find the words *help Eleanor come home* scribbled on the wall, Eleanor is frightened to the core and she thinks: "It knows my name, doesn't it? It knows my name" (Jackson, p. 146). Naming according to Eleanor is a violation as the name and the named are connected and she does not want any connection with the Hill House, but she can see it developing over the passing days.

She muses: "Those letters spelled out my name, and none of you knows what that feels like--it's so familiar... It's my own name, and it belongs to me, and something is using it and writing it and calling me with it and my own name..." (Jackson, p. 164). This time Eleanor's discomfort does not come from Theodora summoning the house by calling its name, it is the Hill House that shows interest in Eleanor and summons her, inviting her to become one with it. The second factor that Brian Boylan discusses in his paper is Eleanor's relationship with her mother, perhaps the weakest link. As Judie Newman writes, 'the source of both the pleasures and the terrors of the text springs from the dynamics of the mother-daughter relation' (Newman, 1990, p. 123). It is made clear to the reader from the beginning how Eleanor hates her sister now that her bedridden mother is dead (Boylan, p. 23). Hill House manipulates Eleanor into tapping into her repressed feelings of guilt, her anger over being left out of the normal world, and her sense of shame over her dead mother. Eleanor is slowly and gradually enticed into a feeling of saving her mother for the last time, to redo the past that haunts her present, by the Hill House. Hill House also acts like a mother or a sister to Eleanor, in place of a mother who never cared for her or a sister who never was a friend to her. Initially, Eleanor tries to fill the gaps in her lost relationship by getting warm with Theodora. She even confesses to Theodora that she would like for both of them to be together.

I'm coming with you' Eleanor confesses to which Theodora inquires, 'Coming where with me?' and Eleanor replies, 'I never had anyone to care about... I want to be someplace where I belong'. This conversation takes on from a lighter note to a stressful situation where Theodora finally retorts, 'Do you always go where you're not wanted' and Eleanor replies, 'I never have been wanted anywhere. (Jackson, p. 208-209)

This conversation harbors feelings of resentment in Eleanor's heart for Theodora. By the end of the novel, the Hill House coerces Eleanor into believing that the only place where she is most wanted is Hill House. Her growing friendship with Theodora is a threat to the Hill House, so the House creates images in front of its victim which makes her believe in the House's loyalty towards her.



Luke Sanderson, another character in the novel, though himself a liar and a thief, doesn't go to Hill House because he's interested in the paranormal or because he cares for the mansion. He's only there because his aunt needed a place to stash him for a few weeks (the petty cash in her pocketbook was running a bit thin). Luke also refers to the house as "A mother house . . . a housemother, a headmistress, a housemistress" (Jackson, p. 211). For Eleanor, the house is surrounded by motherly signs of warmth and softness. On the final night of Eleanor at the house, Eleanor can hear her mother's soft voice calling her, here the house's strategy of naming and false motherhood is enmeshed together to drive this theme home. The house wants Eleanor only for itself as a mother wants a child for herself. However, the house also wants Eleanor, her child, dead. Similarly, the traps the house lays around Eleanor are subject to her feeble role in the patriarchal society as a female. Brian Boylan in his essay argues that the house also appears to be dominating like a husband is in a patriarchal environment (Boylan, p. 24). Eleanor akin to the perfect ideation of the passive wife, gives her name to the house, while the house grows increasingly dominating and suppresses her consciousness. Brian Boylan further argues that 'Hill House uses Eleanor's cultural position as cared-for and caregiver, as daughter and mother, to entrap her. Wife, daughter, mother: Hill House uses these traditional female roles to absorb Eleanor and engulf her already tethered identity (Boylan, p. 24).

Christine Junker, in her article about the tyranny of haunted houses, speaks about how "haunted house texts make a compelling critique of the fundamental idea of "home" and "domesticity," albeit unintentionally because their haunted house narratives express the nihilism of the desire to be housed at all costs, especially for women" (Junker, 2019, p. 23). According to Tricia Lootens, the Haunting of the Hill House represents "the ways in which people, especially women, are destroyed by the nuclear family, sexual repression, and romantic notions of feminine self-sacrifice" (Lootens, p. 168). The gendered aspect of the hauntings only haunting the female, the most troubled and vulnerable, relate to the repression and the fear posed to the woman by the world. The woman then becomes open to any sort of negativity or phantoms around her. The woman and the hauntings resonate on one level, instantly recognizing the another. Eleanor's life is a cruel depiction of a gender that is always in need of a higher authority to be recognized. Eleanor is in search of a home before going into the Hill House. And when finally, in her insanity, she thinks she is home, she dies after leaving it, something akin to a society that would rather have a woman die than leave her home.

Tricia Lootens makes an applaudable point, asking, "Can a woman really sacrifice herself if she never really had, or perhaps even wanted, a self? Does Eleanor know she has a choice? Is her death suicide---or murder?" (Lootens, p. 188). The

point proves how the gender, female, never has a choice other than believing what she is told, than what is whispered to her from the very beginning, making her think that the only truth that has ever existed, exists in the whispers only. Yet, the gravest tragedy that strikes Eleanor is the thought of her control over her actions, much like the modern gender-biased society makes a woman believe. The society offers a female a mirage in the name of choice, much like the ones Hill House offers Eleanor, but, defines the gender in such ways that the true choice is completely non-viable.

## Uncanny and the Hill House

The connection of Home with the uncanny is another factor that manifests itself in the novel throughout. Uncanny is related to the disturbances of our core feelings or thinking. Andrew Bennet and Nicolas Royle in their book *Literature, Criticism and Theory* describe uncanny as something “that has to do with a sense of strangeness, mystery, and eeriness. More particularly it concerns a sense of unfamiliarity which appears at the very heart of familiar, or else a sense of familiarity which appears at the very heart of the unfamiliarity.” (Bennet & Royle, 2004). Hill House, is initially, uncanny to Eleanor but it is, indeed, as familiar as the cruel outside world from which she has sought respite. The outside world and the Hill House, both have secretly possessed Eleanor. The uncanny in *Haunting of Hill House* makes this uncertain for Eleanor, though those uncertain things are familiar and habitual to the normal life of Eleanor outside the Hill House. It is as if Hill House knows the normal life pattern of Eleanor outside itself and is repeating them by fabricating, therefore, a feeling of uncanny and familiarity altogether.

Uncanny in *Haunting of Hill House* takes a few forms like a strange repetition of occurrences, feelings, and situations. On the night of the first haunting, Eleanor hears a knocking across the hallway, and she is immediately reminded of her mother and feels the need to justify it to herself: “It is a noise down the hall, far down at the end, near the nursery door, and terribly cold, not my mother knocking on the wall” (Jackson, p. 127). The repetitive knocking raises a feeling of uncanny in Eleanor as she feels a familiarity at the heart of unfamiliarity. Eleanor later reveals the significance of the knocks in her life. She thinks it to be her fault that her mother dies. She hallucinates that her mother had “knocked on the wall and called me and I never woke up. I ought to have brought her the medicine; I always did before. But this time she called me, and I never woke up” (Jackson, p. 212). The constant knocks on the door from a mother figure that Eleanor hated, are familiar to the knocks from a house Eleanor never loved in her sanity. Similarly, Eleanor has repetitive thoughts as she had them before coming to Hill House. She overthinks everything that occurs to her. Her thoughts are slowly overtaken by Hill House, at first uncanny, but later become completely familiar as Eleanor loses her sanity.

A non-living thing given attributes of life and considered a living organism is referred to as animism. The Hill House is an epitome of Animism for it is a living haunted entity that takes power over the consciousness of the people living inside it. Though throughout the novel, we are unsure of what haunts Hill House, it seems that Hill House itself is a spectator. The first time Eleanor looks at Hill House she thinks, “. . . 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, p. 34). Eleanor feels that the house watches it as she stands at the doorstep for the first time. “. . . a house arrogant and hating, never off guard can only be evil” (Jackson, p. 34).

Automatism, a feature of the uncanny refers to mechanical acts done by a human being that are not human, for instance, sleepwalking, trance state, and madness. Towards the end, Eleanor exhibits a behavior that unveils automatism. As Jackson writes: “Laughing, Eleanor followed, running soundlessly down the hall to the nursery doorway; the cold spot was gone and she laughed at the two grinning faces looking down . . .” (p. 228).

Eleanor has entirely transcended into the madness of Hill House by now and is hugging herself and laughing silently. Animism in Hill House can also be referred to as Hugh Crain and other characters, who similarly gave their lives in a state of delirium. The first telepathic connection between Hill House and Eleanor begins in chapter 5 of the book.

Eleanor thought, It is my second morning in the Hill House and I am unbelievably happy. Journeys end in lovers meeting; I have spent an all but sleepless night, I have told lies and have made a fool of myself, and the very air tastes like wine. (Jackson, p. 136)

The mention of ‘wine’ explains the early but tipsy state of Eleanor’s mind, who finds peace in Hill House even though a night before Theodora and Eleanor encounter thunderous knocks on their door. Furthermore, the carpet under Eleanor’s feet starts feeling softer by the day and the house seems much like a summer house to Eleanor. The house, towards the end, begins talking to Eleanor and only she can hear it. Eleanor’s telepathic connection with the house proves to be the final nail in the coffin of her being possessed by Hill House.

In sum, the uncanny in *Haunting of Hill House* can be described as the thoughts and feelings completely relatable to when the unhomely became homely for Eleanor and when the unfamiliar became strangely familiar. Hill House, as initially described by Eleanor “was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope” (Jackson, p. 35). Hill House should never have been made in the first place, though the reason for the

maliciousness of the house remains unknown, still, the house should have remained closed, hidden, and uninhabited.

It would be unfair to think haunted house stories are similar in all generations. Shirley Jackson brings into our view a house full of fatal, vile energy without any specific apparition or a character like Dracula or Frankenstein which makes it all the more Gothic in its nature. The unknown aspect, the unfinished tale, and the Hill House still standing for “eighty more years” send a shiver down the spine of a reader. Most importantly, we observe how Hill House, like ghosts, reflects an evil person, Hugh Crain, and the cursed time that birthed this house. A woman, in our society, is destined forever to make the house a home. Who knows how many Hill Houses might have won over different Eleanors, in various times and spaces, tricking them with illusions and finally, driving them into disastrous ends, making them think but for a moment: “Why am I doing this? Why don’t they stop me?” (Jackson, p. 246).

Thus, it may be deduced that there lies an amplified substantiation of an attempt to comprehend the distinct reasons that manifest themselves around gendered haunting. The most readily apparent reasons for a relationship between the haunting and the female gender, are initiated by hidden and underlying suppression by a society of a woman and further a sense of alienation in a woman instilled by the paranormal. The still present problems of feminine suppression in society and the gothic novel, both complicate and cripple the chances of a woman winning over evil, within or without. The emphasis on the termination and degradation of a woman’s own right to choose to work, marry or step into the domestic sphere of life, is repetitive and common in today’s world. Throughout the article, the life of the female protagonist repetitively plants minor irritations in the mind of the reader, making them wonder where did this woman go wrong? What pushed this woman to surrender her life to a downward spiral of evil? Why did the evil not subside and why did not humanity or for that matter, the feminine strength overcome the darkness? Why were these hauntings allowed to slither through ages and generations, permitted to stand erect, unbothered, and alive for many moons while the woman perished fighting?

This paper, throughout the analysis, illustrates how a hapless heroine in a haunted house narrative holds a powerful force in the world of gothic literature because she portrays a separation from the understanding of the past, present, and the haunting. Through the analysis, a new significance of these gaps is realized: a novel and unique perspective is brought forth, a perspective that we failed to comprehend before. The acts by women that go unremembered, the malicious, haunting the female only, the ghosts from the past, the weight of the society, and the fear of obscurity, sometimes sit too heavily upon the female identity overall. This literary narrative or fiction itself becomes not so much a remedy but a

misdiagnose of the malady. The Hill House stands eviler and stronger while the story urges us to use the process of examination to realize how gendered hauntings are propagated within our culture, claiming the women only with their dead and hostile grasp. There exists a dire obligation to, now, entitle women with more robust characters in the gothic and to attribute the future to less traumatized female characters. In other words, the gothic needs to realize that the strength of a woman to overcome the hauntings is tangible. Rewriting the traditional gothic in the favor of women can, in a way, be universalized, normalized, and acknowledged predominantly.

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