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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

A Comparative Analysis of Shirley Jackson's Novel
The Haunting of Hill House (1959) and Robert
Wise's Film *The Haunting* (1963)

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2024-2025

Abstract

Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* has been established as a foundational work of American Gothic *haunted house* tales since its publication in 1959, acclaimed by its unconventional protagonist and strange, eerie setting, the "not sane" Eleanor Vance and Hill House. Its success led to the release of a number of cinematic adaptations over the years. The first of these happened just four years after its publication: *The Haunting*, directed by Robert Wise. This dissertation highlights the similarities and differences drawn between the novel and its 1963 cinematic adaptation, answering the question of how the film translates Jackson's original and innovative message into cinematic language and to what extent it remains faithful to it. For this, the director's choices and the techniques he used are analyzed side by side with the original text as well as the changes and modifications in the story.

Key Words: Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, Robert Wise, *The Haunting*, gothic fiction, cinematic adaptation.

Resumen

Desde su publicación en 1959, *The Haunting of Hill House*, de Shirley Jackson, se ha consolidado como una obra fundacional de los relatos góticos americanos de casas encantadas, aclamada por su protagonista poco convencional y su extraña e inquietante ubicación, representadas por unas anómalas Eleanor Vance y Hill House. Su éxito propició el estreno de varias adaptaciones cinematográficas a lo largo de los años. La primera de ellas tuvo lugar apenas cuatro años después de su publicación: *The Haunting*, de Robert Wise. Este Trabajo de Fin de Grado subraya las similitudes y diferencias entre la novela y esta adaptación cinematográfica, respondiendo a la pregunta de en qué medida la película traduce el mensaje original e innovador de Jackson al lenguaje cinematográfico, y hasta qué punto se mantiene fiel a él. Para ello, se analizan las decisiones del director y las técnicas que utilizó junto al texto original, así como sus cambios y modificaciones con respecto a la historia.

Palabras Clave: Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, Robert Wise, *The Haunting*, ficción gótica, adaptación cinematográfica.

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INTRODUCTION

During an age in which the entertainment industry as a whole is discernibly shaped by all-consuming nostalgia, it is likely that consumers return to the classics. Normally, a novel and its cinematic adaptation are never considered on the same level in terms of quality and artistry. This does not apply to Shirley Jackson's 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House* and its 1963 adaptation by director Robert Wise, *The Haunting*. My aim with this dissertation is to determine, ultimately, which elements are parallel and which are divergent in both pieces. Not only that, but the way these elements are treated by the director needs to be studied as well, analyzing which ones Wise faithfully adapts and which ones he sacrifices in favor of his medium, and also what potential modifications he may have effected. In the end, the aim is to see if it can be concluded that Wise built the movie to perform effectively on its own since both pieces are considered masterpieces of horror in their respective fields.

Born in California in 1916, Shirley Jackson is well-known all across the world by readers and literateurs for her magnificent horror narrations. The San Franciscan was considered a master at Gothic fiction, mixing horror, suspense, and a deep look into her characters' psychological and social issues. As most of her protagonists are women, she does depict in her works the strangeness and abnormality of her female characters, many times from a feminist point of view. Despite not being so well known as some of her other pieces, *The Haunting of Hill House* has established itself as a foundational work regarding the modern American haunted house tales. For contemporary horror master Stephen King, it is one of the scariest and best-written horror pieces authored in the twentieth century (310).

The novel, which explores the poor mental health of Eleanor Vance, the protagonist, and her strange connection to Hill House, is often classified in parallel to other female Gothic fiction authors, especially from the South, despite Jackson not being a Southerner (Savoy 827). This type of Gothic literature, pioneered by Edgar Allan Poe and William Faulkner, is unique to American regional literature and derives from the South's links to slavery and racism and the consequences of such violent events.

In the case of Jackson, she is considered a Southern Gothic author as she depicts her characters' lack of belonging and sense of place and a fear of the outside world prompted by oppression and isolation. All these elements are found in Eleanor's portrayal.

Not only that, but Jackson also redefines the concept of "haunted house," prompted by her reversal of the idea of "home," which serves as both a space of comfort, representative of the domestic and the family, and the catalyst for the paranormal haunting of Hill House. This circumstance makes Eleanor descend into madness and prevents her from belonging anywhere but the house. The dichotomies between "inside/outside" and "home/lost" are the result of Jackson's exchange of meanings and locations in her novel, giving this haunted house tale a new twist (Rubenstein 309).

Correspondingly, Robert Wise's *The Haunting* is also considered one of the best horror movies ever made by both viewers and scholars, cementing Wise's image as a master in Gothic cinema. In 2015, similar to the comments King made about the novel, notorious director Martin Scorsese put *The Haunting* atop his list of the scariest movies ever made.

For the two works to be considered classic masterpieces in both literature and cinema, their mastery and innovation have to be unmistakable. Once again, it is very uncommon that an adaptation of a successful and well-regarded novel enjoys critical acclaim both when put in comparison to the original work and on its own accord.

As it has been mentioned above, *The Haunting* is considered a sublime and frightening horror movie, but does it communicate the same emotions and ideas that *The Haunting of Hill House* does? If so, what are the concessions and compromises the director needs to make to translate the story from a literary language to a visual one whilst still showing the protagonist's inner conflicts and supernatural sensibilities?

To answer these matters, a comparative analysis of the two pieces of fiction will be made, focusing on the examination and comparison of certain elements and the choices behind their realization. Although there are plenty of studies dedicated to the novel, and not so many to the film, there is a distinct lack of comparative analyses of the two. All things

considered, important texts have been found discussing the production design of *The Haunting*, specifically one by Sara Martín Alegre.

Principally, the paper will be centered on the analysis of the two protagonists of the story and their reciprocal relationship: the location of the story, the eponymous Hill House, and the main character, Eleanor. The choices made by the director of *The Haunting* regarding the script, locations, frames, castings, editing, and filming will be examined to determine if the film remains alongside the original material. This will not be done in terms of deciding if it is a perfect copy of the novel, but to understand if the ideas Jackson wanted to transmit with *The Haunting of Hill House* coincide with the ones *The Haunting* conveys.

Firstly, Jackson's novel will be analyzed in isolation on the topics mentioned above. Correspondingly, the same analysis will be done on Wise's film in comparative terms. To conclude, both pieces will be compared in terms of similarities and contrasts.

1. THE NOVEL – *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE*

The Haunting of Hill House recounts the story of a group of four unlikely individuals coming together to spend a research stay at Hill House, a manor known for its looming and ominous atmosphere and strange history. The team, led by Dr. Montague—a parapsychologist longing to unravel the mysteries of Hill House’s darkness—consists of two women aligned in paranormal sensibilities, artist Theodora and unstable caretaker Eleanor. Joining them is Luke Sanderson, nephew of the house’s proprietor, and Mrs. and Mr. Dudley, the couple taking care of the house, although they only work on the home during daylight. In there, they will face not only the many trials and tricks Hill House has prepared for them but also come face to face with the darkness of their minds.

1.1 Hill House

In her novel, Jackson uses both typical and unconventional Gothic tropes to present the readers with the malignant and spiteful Hill House. From the first paragraph, the house is described as if it were a living, sentient creature, aware of its own solitude and corruption: “Hill House, not sane, stood by itself [...] holding darkness within” (Jackson 3).

Many are the things that draw Hill House near to most of the other popular haunted houses. However, unlike what happens in the novel that is considered to have started Gothic fiction, Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, the evil in Hill House does not always materialize as a ghost, but as a sick, tarnished atmosphere that the people who come into contact with it perceive, but do not totally understand.

Jackson ensures that the readers understand that what is happening at Hill House is a sickness, as she describes the manor many times as “diseased” (Jackson 33). The atmosphere of wickedness that seems to permeate every nook of the manor seems to even affect the

neighboring town of Hillsdale and its residents, who are more than aware of Hill House and its unusual circumstances.

In reality, little is known about the house's dark history by both the readers and the protagonists of the novel until it is well advanced. Hill House was built by Hugh Craine as a paradigm of architectural innovation. Unfortunately, before the manor could house his family, Lady Craine died as her chariot impacted an oak tree by the manor's entrance. This was only the beginning of Hill House's residents' tragic ends.

One of the questions Dr. Montague asks himself at the novel's beginning is whether the house was always stained by evil forces, being responsible for Lady Craine's death, or if it became riddled with the disease by the aforementioned happening. Whatever may be the case, this vagueness of Jackson's description of Hill House's true nature only leads to one fact: there is something about Hill House that drives the people in it to madness and even death.

Much of the horror expressed in the novel is related to the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, which literary translates to the unfamiliar, the un-homely. The house is not a home (Malewitz). Hill House, as all newcomers note from the beginning, is not only evil but also weirdly designed. As the novel progresses, we learn that Hugh Craine intentionally created this hostile architecture. Windowless rooms, impossible angles, and confusing accommodations are all part of Hill House's defying and antagonistic architecture, which is, in turn, used by the dark forces in the house to trick, trap, and madden its inhabitants.

One part of the house, in particular, frightens and traps the attention of the members of the research group, who are warned against it by Dr. Montague. The watch tower of Hill House, looming against the perpetually sunless sky, sits as if it were the beacon of the darkness that permeates through the house.

This distorting, psychosis-inducing architecture may be a reminder of another real-life haunted house, the Californian Winchester (Mystery) House, which is also mentioned in passing in the novel as a "showplace" (Jackson 105). This strange Victorian mansion-turned-

attraction was built in 1884, designed by the heiress of Winchester Repeating Arms, Sarah Winchester. It is believed that, after her husband's death, she devoted her wealth to the creation of the mansion after a medium advised her that the building would appease the spirits of all those injured and killed by the Winchester rifles, especially the ghosts of innocent people. The house was under construction for thirty-seven years, and it was completed with unconnected corridors, doors that led to the void, secret rooms, and sets of stairs that ended abruptly (Mendelsohn).

Many researchers have pointed to the similarities between these two houses. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Jackson not only knew of the house but that she also kept a picture of the Winchester House during her own extensive investigation of haunted houses before the writing of the novel (Los Angeles Review of Books). They are similar not only for their conditions of being "haunted," but also about how they were designed as something more than houses, but never homes (Calba 37). In the case of the Winchester House, it was marvelously built so that Sarah Winchester could atone for the sins of her family's business. Just like it, Hugh Craine designed Hill House not to serve as a home for this family, but to become a marvel of architecture. Ultimately, whatever evil is inside the house is using the architecture in its favor. During the first encounters of the protagonists with the entity, it is clear that whatever haunts Hill House is watching carefully the new temporary residents, waiting to trick them into falling for its setups. After their first night, in which they explore the bizarre house, doors are said to open and close on their own accord, as if they were guiding the people inside the house along its labyrinth chambers.

The house, preying in shadows, tries along the first half of the novel to separate the two psychically gifted women from the rest of the team, as if making them easier targets, using tricks like apparitions of animals on the grounds at the same time that incomprehensible knocks and whispers torment Theodora and Eleanor. They also hear giggles, as if the house were taunting and mocking them. These are all typical tropes derived from Gothic novels, the same as the cold spots around the house and the instances of doorknobs rattling. However, the house's illusions go beyond these clichés, as there are instances in the novel in which the

protagonists, mainly Eleanor, put themselves in physical danger unknowingly as a result of the house's unconventional and inexplicable angles.

1.2 Eleanor

Eleanor is undoubtedly the main protagonist of the novel, for she is the person most attuned to Hill House and its dark energy. Ever since the beginning of the story, she has been presented as strange as Hill House is. She is the person most affected by Hill House and its vicious and malicious energy. The house targets her specifically as the most unstable member of the team. Throughout the story, she suffers from illusions of what seems to be people calling her name and touching her hand, as if it were the house calling for her, longing to become her home.

Similarly to many other plot lines and details, Jackson keeps Eleanor's background as vague as possible. At the beginning of *The Haunting of Hill House*, she is thirty-two years old, living with her sister, Carrie, her brother-in-law, and their daughter. Prior to this, she had been the sole caretaker of her ailing mother for eleven years. Readers are told that she is a spiritually gifted person, as she was linked to a childhood paranormal episode that involved her family home being destroyed by "showers of stones that had fallen on their house" (Jackson 7). Although she is never directly named the source of this occurrence, it is heavily implied, as Jackson mentions the "raining" stopped when she, along with her sister Carrie, was removed from the home (Jackson 7). For this reason, Dr. Montague summons her to Hill House, mentioning she has been "[...] intimately involved in poltergeist phenomena" in the past (Jackson 73).

1.2.1 *Family Relations*

From the moment Jackson presents Eleanor, it is clear that the feelings she has regarding her family, whether past or present, are negative. From the death of her father, which started her paranormal sensibilities, to the hate she feels towards her sister Carrie, her husband-in-law, and her young niece, these are clear indications that Eleanor does not have a home she belongs to. Particularly, she is regarded with contempt by Carrie and her husband, who use manipulative tricks and controlling comments in order to keep her monitored. Jackson displays an example of this when Carrie and her husband forbid Eleanor from using the family car despite having paid for half of it herself, trying to persuade her that they are doing it for her own good. Carrie's patronizing and hurtful comments towards her sister evidence of their damaged relationship. She even mocks and questions the reasons why Eleanor is going to Hill House: "[...] even if *Eleanor* is prepared to run off to the ends of the earth at the invitation of any man, there is *still* no reason why she should be permitted to take my car with her" (Jackson 11).

It is clear that the antagonism she feels towards her own family started when she was made to become the sole caretaker of her sick mother. Again, it is implied that something is not right with their relationship, but readers are not privy to the details. However, it is understood that Eleanor's lack of a sense of place and belonging in the world, of a family that takes care of her, was heightened by the years of control, isolation, and oppression she dedicated exclusively to attending her mother, which in turn disconnected her from the rest of the world and exacerbated her very unstable and vulnerable state of mind.

1.2.2 *Mental Health*

Jackson uses a third-person limited omniscient narrator, focusing almost exclusively on Eleanor's perspective, displaying her inner, unfiltered thoughts to tell the story. Because of her weakened mental condition, the third-person narrator becomes "a radically unreliable

narrative point of view” (qtd. in Hattenhauer 155). For Aston, Jackson is “[...] both author and (nameless, omniscient) narrator, [refusing] to let her reader or her protagonist settle comfortably [...]” (269). This, in turn, results in the reader always questioning the reality of Hill House, just as Eleanor does. There is nothing certain and conventional in the novel, as the author uses Eleanor’s mental health issues to challenge the reader’s prior conjectures about the story: “Jackson explicitly defies predictability with her own authorial control over Eleanor” (Aston 269).

All the years of neglect and control by her family, first her mother and then more recently her sister’s family, have evidently made Eleanor develop in a very unstable manner. Her childlike, vulnerable, and immature behavior is apparent at the beginning of the novel, as she feels rebellious and surprised at herself for having disobeyed her sister’s instructions.

The journey, which she treats more like an adventure, is her first time dabbling in freedom again from her “captors.” She spends it fantasizing about all the lives she could have lived and all the choices she is free to make now that nobody knows where she is. She lacks a sense of place, a home, and for that spends the whole journey to Hill House fantasizing and making scenarios in her head about abandoning her old life behind and renewing her newly found sense of freedom. These fantasies can be of course tied to the suicidal ideation that, more or less explicitly, she experiences during the whole novel and that gets materialized in the last chapter. When Eleanor first arrives at Hill House, Jackson indicates the character’s vulnerability through her interior monologue: “I am like a small creature swallowed whole by a monster, she thought, and the monster feels my tiny little movements inside” (Jackson 24). This self-perception of herself as a “creature” being “swallowed” by a “monster” can be perceived as an indicator of some degree of subconscious knowledge about her fate in Hill House. Also, it is a clear display of a self-image filled with vulnerability and helplessness, which is the way that she presents herself to the rest of the world and is perhaps the reason why Jackson chooses her as the house’s prey among all the characters.

In her reality, the monster consuming her is both the outside world she is made to clumsily navigate and Hill House. But it is in this new scenario where she feels that she is relinquishing control to the house. After having spent so much of her life at the service of her

mother, it is now Hill House the entity corrupting her. It is impossible not to see the irony in the fact that this release from her chains comes precipitated by the tricks and illusions Hill House plays on her already maladjusted psyche is impossible, just like her mother and Carrie used to manipulate her to keep her in their control.

Throughout the novel, she is constantly asking herself if the others are mocking her and whether their feelings and intentions towards her are genuine. She is aware there is something not quite right with her, for example, when she admits to herself not feeling any kind of guilt after her mother passes away. This is a burden Jackson instills in Eleanor throughout the novel. The house, which already tends to target women, finds in Eleanor's broken mind the perfect prey.

Apart from her traumatic relationship with her mother, which is in general not discussed in great detail by Jackson, her relationship with Theodora is another indicator of strange behavior and mental health issues. Theodora is, like Eleanor, a psychically connected woman. Dr. Montague introduces her by saying that she "[possesses] some telepathic ability" (Jackson 73). Furthermore, both their conditions as paranormally inclined people and their current situation in Hill House brings them together, and they start to develop a close friendship, perhaps exacerbated by Theo calling them "cousins" (Jackson 54). In her search for a home, Eleanor turns to Theodora, as they are two very different women bonded by this strange experience. Eleanor's feelings towards her are, just like she is, very complex and at times contradictory.

Theodora, who comes into Hill House after an argument with her roommate, considered by many literary critics her lesbian lover, acts as a mirror to Eleanor, both in attitude and in nature (Cole 49). At times, Eleanor is very jealous of her beautiful appearance and strong disposition, even going as far as to lie to seem more like her, like when she mentions she lives alone. It is clear Eleanor seeks Theodora, but at the same time, is scared of being as free as she is. She refuses Theodora's amicable touch on more than one occasion but still is strangely attached to her by their shared circumstances, to the point of wanting to live with her once the study is finished, an idea that Theodora firmly rejects (Jackson 208).

It can be theorized that Eleanor sees in her a mother, as Theodora always tries to calm her and take care of her, calling her nicknames and helping her through the paranormal episodes in the house. Still, for Eleanor, their relationship sparks many doubts and dark thoughts, as her relationship with her mother used to. After Theodora refuses to feed Eleanor's delusions of life together after Hill House, their connection starts to vanish slowly, until Theodora, with the rest of the group, finally turns her back on Eleanor.

One of the ghastlier looks into Eleanor's mind comes from this decline in their relationship: "I would like to hit her with a stick, Eleanor thought, looking down on Theodora's head beside her chair; I would like to batter her with rocks. [...] I hate her, Eleanor thought, she sickens me; she is all washed and clean and wearing my red sweater. I would like to watch her dying" (Jackson 159).

1.2.3 *Eleanor and Her New Home*

The parallels between Eleanor and Hill House are very notable from the beginning, as Jackson describes both protagonists with a symbiotic relationship in mind. Similar to the house, there is something wrong within Eleanor, something "not sane" (Jackson 1). Like Hill House, Jackson describes her first as sick, even though her sickness is mental, and lonely, even more so as she isolates herself from the other participants. However, in her loneliness, there is also comfort. Part of the reason why Eleanor and the readers may feel there is something wrong within her is the lack of guilt she feels after her mother's death. We do not know if there is something innately evil in Eleanor, or if she was *built* this way by her circumstances as her mother's caregiver that turned her the way she is.

Foreshadowing is as much a part of the story as not understanding what is happening. From the beginning of her journey, Eleanor is very aware that no matter what she does, and the decisions she may fantasize about taking, "Hill House always waited for her at the end of her day" (Jackson 21). Eleanor, being drawn to Hill House as she is, presumably decided not to heed the signs and warnings that are coming her way. Ignoring her fear and the threat that

the house poses for the group, and particularly for her, she goes deeper into the paranoia that the house slowly feeds into her, which makes her start to distrust the others, distancing herself from them. An example of this slow spell of terror and paranoia can be interpreted in the scene when she and Theodora are sharing a moment in the latter's bedroom as Theodora paints Eleanor's toenails a bright red color. Unaccustomed to such indulgences during her difficult upbringing, she starts to hysterically reject the banal pedicure session, which makes her start feeling like a fool for reacting in such a way, not knowing what to make of her emotions. After Theodora teasingly asks her if she is ready to abandon the house, Eleanor tells her that there is no use anymore: the polish, red as blood, has already dried. The choices she has made cannot be unmade (Jackson 117).

Even in moments of solace and comfort in the presence of a friend, something she has lacked her whole life with her family, Jackson paints the picture of a woman who feels like she does not belong completely, triggered even by the most ordinary occurrences. She may want to leave Hill House behind, but just like the nail polish, it is too late to abandon now: Hill House has already seeped into her mind. The house serves as the ultimate disconnection of Eleanor from the rest of the world. However, it also serves as a place in which she can ease into her newfound freedom and be closer to other realities, including Theodora's.

The color red also acquires new meaning when remembering Eleanor is assigned the blue room at the beginning of her stay at Hill House, called that by the color used to decorate it. In this case, the color represents Eleanor's inner sadness and solitude, while it also can be associated with a cold and unfamiliar atmosphere. Furthermore, Jackson uses the colors to contrast Eleanor and the house. While blue is her color at first, red, both signifying warmth and evil, starts to seep through her cracks, like the "wicked" nail polish on her feet.

Another symbol of her relationship with the house is the phrase that she repeats every time she is nervous throughout the novel and that she mutters the moment she crosses into Hill House: "Journeys end in lovers meeting" (Jackson 36). The quote, from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, can be interpreted both signifying her journey to Hill House has ended the moment she steps into the house, and that her life is ending as she has finally encountered

her *lover*, Hill House. Just as if the house were waiting for her, a woman without a family makes the house devoid of affection into her home. Just as Hill House lacks a family that fills it with the warmth and love typical of a home, Eleanor wanders the world with nothing to bind her anywhere. Along her journey to Hill House, she fantasizes about disappearing into the woods, not to be found again.

In Hill House, she is able to disburden herself of the issues and doubts that plague her existence, dislodging herself from the woman she used to be prior to her coming to Hill House and connecting with the darkest part of her psyche: “I am a new person, very far from home” (Jackson 27). The journey up to Hill House—leaving her family and former self behind—starts her process of liberation, and the arrival at the house becomes, for her, the beginning of the end of this adventure.

As the story advances towards its climax and Eleanor finds herself antagonized by the rest of the team, she becomes both mentally trapped in her own mind and physically trapped in Hill House. She knows that she cannot leave the place that is slowly becoming her home, the place in which she has finally found herself.

Hill House keeps calling for her, manifesting to her this connection they share, perhaps for her condition as the most sensitive and psychically sensitive member of the group. One of the most hair-raising episodes in the novel, and the climax of the beginning of Eleanor’s rapid and unescapable descent into madness, is when Hill House finally contacts Eleanor by repeating the sentence “HELP ELEANOR COME HOME” on the house’s walls, first in chalk and then in blood (Jackson 146). This makes it obvious that Hill House is not only aware of Eleanor’s presence, but it also wants Eleanor to finally make her home in Hill House. It marks the beginning of her deep distrust of the rest of the group and the moment she starts to believe she belongs to the house. It can be interpreted as a plea directly to Eleanor, asking her to help the Hill House by reuniting, to give herself to the house.

However, it can also be read as if Hill House is declaring its intentions: the house, with its tricks, is helping Eleanor come home. Another example of this is when, by the end of Chapter 5, Eleanor believes she is hearing what seems to be the cries of a child in the room

next to the blue room (Jackson 163). Trying to calm herself, she reaches in her dazed state for Theodora's hands, with whom she is sharing the room after the frightening events mentioned above, only to find that Theodora's hand is in reality far out of her reach. Again, this is a clear symbol of Eleanor's detachment from the rest of the world, becoming a victim of the house's interest in keeping her among its walls.

In another instance of Jackson's foreshadowing, Eleanor mutters to the group: "I don't think we could leave now if we wanted to" (Jackson 75). She finds herself surprised at the words coming from her mouth, so much so that she decides to laugh the comment off with an excuse. It could perhaps be an indicator of her harmony with the house, even if she does not yet realize that Hill House is using her as a vessel to somehow materialize its dark energy. However, if we regard it from the perspective of Eleanor's spiraling mental health and feeble connection to reality, it can also be understood as a manifestation of her own madness.

As her journey comes to an end, she feels happy and at home in her insanity, facilitated by the house's effect. In the last chapter, an episode of sheer insanity occurs. Eleanor, waking up in the middle of the night in a dazed state, feels compelled to go to the library. There she perceives the stench of decay of her mother's corpse. When she starts calling for her, a disembodied voice tells her to "come along" (Jackson 228). Eleanor reacts with laughter. She begins to knock on the bedroom doors of her housemates, even if she is aware they will not open their doors for her, as they are aware of the effect the house has on Eleanor's psyche (Jackson 229). She is behaving as if she were possessed by the house, imitating the "paranormal" events that made the group investigate the house in the first place.

Eleanor gives herself to total insanity, dancing while running away from the others while they search for her, both because of her belief that her mother is there somewhere and the fact she feels at home in the house.

Her journey across the house comes to an end when she starts climbing the stairway up the watchtower, thinking "time is ended now" (Jackson 232). The apparitions Eleanor sees and hears, especially that of her mother, can be interpreted both as manifestations of her

ill mind and as tricks played by Hill House to try to get her to stay. Furthermore, she goes to the watchtower with the intention of committing suicide, becoming another ghost in Hill House.

Just as she is climbing the watchtower, she thinks to herself: “I have broken the spell of Hill House and somehow come inside. I am home.” (Jackson 232). Before reaching the top, she is stopped by the rest of the group, who warn her that the decades-old stairs are close to collapsing. She desperately tries to open the trapdoor to the tower, but she is unable and comes down. The next morning, she recounts the “humiliating, disastrous” events of the night before (Jackson 237). The others, after this last episode, ostracize her and tell her she needs to leave Hill House, something that she does not want to do: “Eleanor laughed. ‘But I can’t leave,’ she said, wondering where to find words to explain” (Jackson 238).

She explains to them what she felt when possessed by the house: “‘I wasn’t afraid,’ she said at last. ‘I really wasn’t afraid. I’m fine now. I was—happy.’” She looked earnestly at the doctor: “‘*Happy*,’ she said. ‘I don’t know what to say,’ she said, afraid again that she was going to cry. ‘I don’t want to go away from here’” (Jackson 241). Knowing she has no real place to go back to, Eleanor decides to kill herself, crashing her car into an oak tree by the house’s entrance, mimicking Lady Crain’s death years before.

During this moment, she says to herself: “I am really doing it, I am doing this all by myself, now, at last; this is me, I am really really really doing it by myself” (Jackson 245). During her final moments, regaining full lucidity, she asks herself why she is doing what she is doing and why nobody is stopping her. This can be interpreted as evidence of the novel’s ambiguity regarding the real motives behind the events at Hill House, whether they stem from Eleanor’s drive into madness or from a real haunting.

Finally, she has “come home,” and unable to face the moment of leaving her *lover* behind, she decides to end her life, becoming one with the house, as she knows there is nothing for her beyond the premises of Hill House, nothing like what she has experienced in the house. Like this, the novel ends as it began: “...silence lay steadily against the wood and

stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone,” signaling that Eleanor is now part of the entity walking alone in Hill House (Jackson 246).

As Shirley Jackson herself wrote in her notes, “Eleanor is House,” and she is “all distorted like house” (qtd. in Hattenhauer 159). Daryl Hattenhauer, author of *Shirley Jackson’s American Gothic*, adds that “[...] by the end of the novel the identification of Eleanor and the house are clear. [...] the house’s foundation and construction allegorize Eleanor’s psychological foundation” (159). For Ali, that they are a mirror of each other is manifest, through which Eleanor “[can] see herself in depth and feel her true identity” (509).

Whether the relationship between the house and Eleanor is produced by her deteriorating mind and desperation to find her place in the world, or by a real paranormal haunting, she sees in Hill House the reflection of her worsening psyche and disconnection with the world that surrounds her. Whatever the real reason is, something that Jackson never unequivocally reveals, at Hill House the frail thread that kept Eleanor connected to her sanity is completely severed.

2. THE FILM – *THE HAUNTING*

In 1963, a 112-minute adaptation of Jackson's novel, *The Haunting*, was premiered. It was directed by the acclaimed American director Robert Wise, who by that moment had already achieved widespread fame with *West Side Story* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, among many others. Jonathan Rigby, an American film historian, reported in his book *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* that he was first drawn to adapting the story after being fascinated by a Time magazine interview with the author (121).

The movie roughly follows the same original premise: a group of individuals, led by the paranormal investigator Dr. Markway, are set to stay in Hill House in order to determine if the house is haunted and, if it is, for what reason. The team is composed of Luke Sannerson, heir of the state, Theodora, a psychic individual, and Eleanor, who experienced paranormal activity during her childhood.

A series of changes were made to accommodate the visual medium. Names and locations are changed, with the most striking one perhaps being the title change from *The Haunting of Hill House* to a more economic *The Haunting*. The script was adapted by Wise's collaborator, Nelson Gidding, over a six-month period. He thought, upon reading the book, that the story was best understood when focusing on Eleanor's deranged psyche rather than as a haunting house tale, making the events seem simple hallucinations. He did not succeed when discussing his vision with Jackson (Martín Alegre). Despite this, it is clear that the film concentrates extraordinarily on the psychological aspect rather than on the paranormal one.

2.1 Hill House

In the film, the exterior scenes of the house were shot in the High Victorian mansion Ettington Park, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, while the interior scenes were shot in the MGM-British Studios (Rigby 121). The film opens with a frame of Hill House obscured by shadows,

and a voice-over, used throughout the film to transmit the character's thoughts, describing it as an "evil old house" (Wise 0:00:17). The initial narrator is Dr. Markway, a paranormal researcher interested in haunted houses, especially Hill House, considering the high number of deaths that have occurred in it. As Mr. Dudley, the house caretaker, puts it, in Hill House, "[there is] no one you'd wanna see" (Wise 0:15:22).

Hugh Craine built the house "in the most remote part of New England" for his wife and daughter Abigail to live in (Wise 00:02:28). Unfortunately, his wife died on the premises on account of a carriage accident. This is not the only strange death to have occurred in the house before the events of the movie, as Markway explains that Craine's second wife and daughter Abigail also died in the house, the former by a fall down the stairs and the latter by old age. Dr. Markway explains Hill House as an "evil house from the beginning [...] born bad" (Wise 0:02:37). Despite the horrific events that have happened in the house, Dr. Markway arranges for a group of individuals to stay in it to determine if there is something paranormal happening in Hill House.

The major strange phenomena the house exhibits, apart from the many deaths that occurred in it, are typical haunted house occurrences: doors opening and closing for no apparent reason, cold spots and winds in the middle of the house, scratches on walls and doors, and strange loud sounds happening in the middle of the night like laughs and screams.

From the beginning of the film, Hill House is shown to have a hostile architecture. The Neo-gothic style of the building shines through its high-reaching heights and pointed towers. Furthermore, a great sense of claustrophobia can be felt as the film progresses, thanks to the house's Victorian decoration. The house's overloaded ornaments, such as mirrors, curtains, and tapestries, combined with the darkness of some of the frames, the engulfing presence of shadows, and the failure to let any sort of chronological information be perceived through the houses' windows, making it seem as if the group were physically trapped in Hill House with no connection with the reality beyond it. Additionally, one of the first things Dr. Markway mentions is that the "angles [are] slightly off" (Wise 0:27:56). The confusing architecture and distribution of the house add to the labyrinthine feeling of unnatural chaos that the characters are subjected to when in the Hill House.

Among the many elements adding to this perception, stairs are perhaps the most relevant component of them all. The house has two important sets of staircases, the central one and the library's metallic spiral staircase. In both of them, deaths occur, one by "accident" (though Dr. Markway suspects the house itself is at fault) and the other by hanging.

Moreover, the use of staircases as both literal and metaphorical representatives of the hostility of Hill House might remind of Piranesi's *Imaginary Prisons*, a series of works dating from the eighteenth century in which the Italian architect designs unreal architecture by depicting many unconnected staircases that appear to be endless.

Primarily, the audience can feel the dark atmosphere that Hill House offers even before the house is explicitly introduced: the film was shot in black and white. This choice was imposed by the distributor, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, on contract, perhaps as a response to the immense success of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, released in 1960 and also in black-and-white. However, both Wise and cinematographer Davis Boulton understood it worked better for the type of movie they were making (Martín Alegre).

With a modest estimated budget of 1,4 million dollars, the film relies heavily on a range of camera tricks and special effects to show *The Haunting of Hill House* ("The Haunting"). Throughout the film, there is a great sense of distortion, as if the reality of Hill House becomes deformed the more time the group of researchers spends in the home.

Wise achieved the physically distorted and inaccurate perspectives of the house largely using both traditional and experimental filming techniques and special effects. Many uncredited online sources claim the camera used to shoot the film was a 30mm wide-angle Panavision, against the traditional 40mm cameras that were used at the time (Gensler). This lens was not suitable for convenient shooting, and, although the validity of this claim is disputable, it can be the reason for the altered images in the film.

Additionally, more traditional techniques were used, like the low angle, which is used both outside and inside the house to show the labyrinthine enormity of Hill House. This angle contrasts the protagonists with the house as an entity, positioning it as an all-seeing being

controlling what is happening: “The low-angle perspective of exterior shots of Hill House emphasizes the structure’s power over its occupants” (Hodges Holt 162). In the same vein, during exterior scenes, the low angles enhance the dark, evil atmosphere by showing the dark clouded skies on top of Hill House.

The first time this low angle is used for interior scenes of the house is at the beginning of the film, in the scene where Crain and his young daughter are mourning Mrs. Craine after her fatal accident. The use of this angle provides solemnity and also makes the audience feel as if they were also in the house. Upside-down and Dutch shots (also called tilted shots), consisting of a camera angle in which the horizontal axis does not coincide with the bottom of the frame, are also used in order to disorient and confuse the viewer.

Showing the house, and especially the stairs, from an inverted perspective adds to the sense of distortion and alteration of the reality of Hill House. Tilted shots are used most notably when showing the library spiral staircase, which makes it seem as if it were too high or even endless (Wise 0:05:48).

These techniques, in addition to the fast cuts and zooms, prevent the viewers from understanding the real architecture of Hill House. Moreover, editing tricks and effects are used to confuse the audience. On one particular occasion, the group of temporary Hill House residents is seen abandoning a room from the right, only to enter another room in the next scene from the left.

2.2 Eleanor

Eleanor Lance is the human protagonist of *The Haunting*. During her stay at Hill House, she becomes the person most affected by the house’s dark energy, to the point where her sanity is put to the test. The actress chosen by Wise to play the role was Julie Harris. In the film, her fair, skinny complexion, downturned eyes, and blonde hair pinned in a tight bun seem most appropriate when portraying the unassuming and oppressed Eleanor.

Eleanor's background and family trouble before traveling up to Hill House is mostly similar to the one in the novel, again explaining Eleanor's secluded, withdrawn behavior, having been living by her sick mother's side all her young years. She is visibly both a physically and emotionally frail-looking woman. Wise chose Harris among many other actresses, as he thought she would be best at delivering a mentally feeble, weak woman on the verge of madness (Mariott 1959). She is depicted as a woman desperate for an adventure, having been neglected of any sort of liberation for a long time: "I'm going [...] I'm finally taking a step," she thinks to herself (Wise 0:12:58).

Wise incorporates some visual cues in order to show Eleanor's declining psyche and entrapment in her own mind. For instance, at the very beginning of the movie, we can see Eleanor blinking rapidly when feeling anxious, something her toddler niece Dora uses to make fun of her, repeating "Auntie Nell is blinking!" (Wise 0:09:53). She can be seen doing this repeatedly during the movie.

Moreover, Wise makes the audience privy to Eleanor's inner turmoil through a voice-over. While she is taking the journey up to Hill House, she thinks of herself as being "a new person," surprised she dared to take the car regardless of her sister Carrie and her husband Bud negative (Wise 0:13:25). She daydreams of living on her own, without the watchful eye of her remaining family, without being accountable to anyone other than herself.

Inside the house, Eleanor is shown via high angles, such as overhead shots, meaning the camera is located just above her. The use of this kind of angle contrasts directly with the low angles used to show the exterior and interior of Hill House. When the focal point is on Eleanor, the camera is pointing down, highlighting her meekness. On the contrary, when the house is focalized, the camera looks up, emphasizing its magnitude. In the case of Eleanor, it also serves as a way for the audience to put themselves in her position, and also as Wise's way of showing her immersion, both psychological and physical, in the house.

2.2.1 *Eleanor's Feminine Type*

Eleanor's relationship with the others in the group is perhaps one of the biggest changes. While in the film she is visibly more forward, feisty, and quivering than her awkward counterpart in the novel, she does not connect with the rest of the group as well as she does at the beginning of the novel. She always remains a total outsider, especially regarding her friendship with the only other woman in the group, Theodora. While Eleanor's femininity is also discussed in the original novel, Wise delves deeper into this issue by presenting the character of Theodora, played by Claire Bloom, in a new light. In the film, Theodora is portrayed as a direct and marked contrast to Eleanor's character, more than a friend. She is the total opposite of Eleanor, something that is clear from the way she dresses and behaves. Theodora's all-black outfits, paired with her black hair and attractive and sure-of-herself attitude, add to her contrast to Eleanor's plain and bland appearance.

Her demeanor also changes, for example when Theodora labels their relationship in the film. Wise, opposed to Jackson, has Theodora mocking Eleanor after Dr. Markway asks her to sleep with the girl, saying, with scorn, that they are "like sisters!" (Wise 1:03:12). The aloofness in Theodora's remarks symbolizes the distance between the two women's femininity, as they could not be more different in both physical appearance and personality.

Wise's choice to turn Theodora from a kind but resolute woman into a serious, almost mean, and more explicitly lesbian can be confounding at times. She is still another mirror for Eleanor to contemplate the realities of other women, but in the film, she becomes a symbol of Eleanor's isolation and alienation in a much more marked way than in the novel, as Theodora makes fun of Eleanor at moments in which she would connect with her in the novel.

The change in Eleanor and Theodora's connection stems from Wise's choice of having Eleanor develop romantic feelings for Dr. Markway, which, in a way, challenges the end of the film. Grace Markway, the doctor's wife, played by Lois Maxwell, can also be interpreted as a contrast to Eleanor. When she arrives at the house in search of her husband, Eleanor feels threatened by her newfound existence as she is infatuated with Dr. Markway,

something that is not part of the original story. While Grace resembles Eleanor physically much more than Theodora does, she is still more attractive and confident than Eleanor. While Markway is the object of Eleanor's desires, so is Grace, as she is everything Eleanor is not and wants to be: a woman fulfilled through marriage. Eleanor sees Grace as a threat, believing that if she abandons Hill House, Grace will attract the attention of the house and of Dr. Markway as she did once.

Grace's addition in the car crash scene and the fact that the steering wheel appears to move on its own indicate Wise's intention to give Eleanor's death a significance that was not there in the novel. Whereas in *The Haunting of Hill House* Eleanor accepts her death almost readily, in the film it is clear that Eleanor fights with herself during her last moments, and she chooses to crash the car, deliberately killing herself. In the film, while she knows she does not want to leave Hill House, this choice is almost taken out of her hands by her circumstances, first when she is made to leave by the others, then when the wheel starts moving, and then when her fortuitous clash with Grace happens.

2.2.2 Eleanor and Her New Home

Eleanor's arrival at the house remains the same as in the novel. When she sees the house for the first time, a close-up of her blinking is shown, signaling her distress, as she believes the house is "staring" at her, a personification that also happens when Jackson first describes Hill House (Wise 0:17:06). Close-up camera shots of Eleanor inside the house are abundant in the movie, mostly showing her flinching and trembling.

Her instinct urges her to get away, but she "has nowhere else to go," and the house is "waiting for [her]" (Wise 0:17:35 – 0:18:18). Ever since she walks inside, Wise has made their connection very clear. After climbing the stairs up to her room, she is scared by her reflection in a mirror. This, apart from highlighting the frightening atmosphere of the house, is a clear symbol that the house reflects Eleanor's inner turmoil and guilty conscience, and the fact that coming into contact with it makes her inquire into her disturbed psyche. During

and early scene in which she believes to be hearing ghosts, she physically recoils inside the house in fear while being obscured by shadows (Wise 0:25:50). This imagery is symbolic of Eleanor falling deeper into what she believes to be the house's malignant illusions, and also a clear manifestation of her inner conflict.

Another important scene happens in the library, where Eleanor has a recollection of her mother's sick odor, preventing her from going inside. This hallucination can be interpreted as both being caused by the house or by Eleanor's own guilty conscience regarding her mother's possible murder at her hands. Either way, it separates Eleanor from the rest of the group, who then end up ostracizing her as the film progresses.

After the events clearly target her, Markway calls Eleanor "the main attraction" (Wise 1:02:18). However, she makes it clear to the rest of the group that, despite these occurrences, she does not want to leave the house.

After a night in which the whole group experiences witness an unknown force trying to forcibly enter the room they are in, Eleanor breaks from the group amidst the chaos, believing the house is calling for her. She starts to feel as if "the house is coming down around" her (Wise 1:33:15). In a daze, she enters the library and climbs the shaky spiral staircase, only to be stopped by Dr. Markway after she almost throws herself out from the top of it.

After this episode, the group decides Eleanor should leave the house, despite her pleas to remain in the house. While the group is opening the gates to the state so that the car can leave, Eleanor starts it, assuring herself that Hill House "belongs" to her (Wise 1:47:30). The steering wheel starts to move on its own, something she attributes to the house telling her it does not want her gone. She stops fighting for the car's control, finally giving herself to what is happening. Finally, the car hits the oak tree outside the house, the same tree that provoked Hugh Crain's wife's accident. She is declared dead by Dr. Markway, who also affirms Hill House is haunted, saying, "It didn't want her to leave" (Wise 1:50:12). Equally, Theodora mentions that it is also what she wanted, as she has "no place else to go [...] the house belongs to her now too, maybe she is happy" (Wise 1:50:27).

2.2.3 *Eleanor's Liberation*

Perhaps the biggest difference between the original material and the film is Wise's addition of the infatuation Eleanor feels for Dr. Markway, something that is totally alien to the original material. While in the novel the doctor is described as being "round and rosy and bearded," in the film he is portrayed by Richard Johnson as a suited, groomed, attractive man, a choice Wise surely made with the intention of propitiating Eleanor's romantic feelings for the first man to care for her in a long time, even though it was only for the sake of his experiment (Jackson 60). Wise presents Eleanor as a sexually repressed woman. The scene in which she is ascending the spiral staircase only to be brought back down by him after a difficult ascent symbolically evokes their first sexual encounter.

Despite having to conform to the convention of the time, in which sexuality was heavily restricted in cinema, the portrayal of Theodora as less ambiguously lesbian than in the original novel and the veiled exploration of Eleanor's sexual repression cement the existence of the underlying sexual turn Wise imposed on the film, making it thus more attractive to the audiences of the time and in consonance with the vexed issue of women's sexual liberation, something that surely the female viewers at the time wanted to see represented on the big screen.

This explains why the character of Mrs. Markway is more important in the film than she is in the novel. Her appearance at Hill House in search of her husband becomes, for Eleanor, a hindrance to the implied love affair between her and Dr. Markway, symbolically consummated during their chase on the spiral staircase. When all the characters compel Eleanor to leave Hill House after nearly falling to her death from the top of the staircase—startled as she has an hallucination of Grace taunting her—, she refuses to do so in fear Mrs. Markway replaces her as Dr. Markway's love interest.

Moreover, another example of the not-so-ambiguous sexual undertones of the film can be seen in Eleanor's final scene, when driving away in a car she loses control of, a symbol of her own body. Her face at that moment is clearly expressive of sexual gratification (Wise 1:48:10). Then she sees the spectral-like apparition of Grace and the shock she receives

causes the accident that puts an end to her life. This new sexual undertone, paired with the fact that the film does suggest on occasion that Eleanor had killed her mother, adds a new layer to the story, in which Eleanor's sexual oppression comes to the forefront in its interpretation.

Considering these new implications of Eleanor as an adulterous and murderous woman, it is easy to understand that the house is a representation of her repressed guilty conscience, symbolized through the film with the abundance of mirrors in the house, the hallucinations she has regarding her mother, and the fact that Eleanor at times seems to think the house is monitoring her. On one occasion, she says that "the haunting is all in [her] mind" (Wise 1:15:01). Despite the others at Hill House also experiencing inexplicable things, this is a clear reference to the fact that Wise roots the event of the film in Eleanor's damaged psyche and oppression rather than on the supernatural, at least not as much as Jackson does, as she maintains a better-constructed ambiguity.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In less than two hours, Wise manages to craft a significantly different but very convincing adaptation of *The Haunting of Hill House* while also retaining the essence of the original work, knowing exactly what to maintain, what to cut, and what to add. While it is true that the nature of the cinematographic medium prevents the story from being as detailed and building its pace as gradually as the novel does, Wise maintains to the utmost degree possible the important events of the plot to fully understand the relationship between Eleanor and the house, such as the narration of Eleanor's inner tumultuous dialogue. For instance, some parts of the text are untouched by the original material, such as Eleanor's "I am a small creature swallowed whole by a monster" (Wise 0:21:31). In the film, Wise plans the shot in a way in which it seems that the house really is eating Eleanor, showing her in a low-angle shot against a clothed ceiling resembling a mouth with bared teeth, ready to eat her" (Wise 0:21:31). The paranormal climax starts much quicker in the film than in the movie, but it begins with the same event as in Jackson's novel: "Help Eleanor Come Home" (Wise 0:53:26). Wise seems to understand that these moments of the novel are essential to explain what Eleanor believes to be clear demonstrations of the house's intentions towards her, whether it really is preying on her or if she is succumbing to her madness.

Wise is much more explicit with the reasoning behind Hill House's evilness, perhaps to make it easier for the viewers to grasp the severity of Hill House's reality in a short time. While Jackson focuses on the evil nature of the unknown, Wise has Dr. Markway justify the house's eerie state with its recent history of deaths: "The dead are not quiet in Hill House," implying that the ghosts are the reason for Hill House's haunting (Wise 0:06:47).

In the same vein, Wise decides to maintain the final words in *The Haunting of Hill House*, with one nuance. The last words in the novel are: "...whatever walked [in Hill House], walked alone" (Jackson 3). However, the film ends with: "And we who walk here, walk alone," making it seem that the reason for *The Haunting of Hill House* is human as much as it is preternatural.

Beyond the two deaths that occur after the house is completed, Hugh Crain's first and second wives, Wise develops the story of two new characters: one of them is Abigail, the Crains' daughter, who chooses to stay her whole life living in Hill House's nursery, and a woman hired to be her caretaker, simply known as the companion. Abigail dies an old woman as a result of her companion's negligence, and because of this, the caretaker hangs herself from the spiral staircase. It is clear that the companion and Eleanor mirror each other. Additionally, the reflection of both characters seems to implicitly indicate that Eleanor is in fact responsible for her mother's death and that the heavy consciousness she seems to be subjected to during the film stems from this event. Both are caretakers, and both had the people they were taking care of die. In the case of Eleanor, if she had any hand in the death of her mother, it is never explicitly mentioned in the film, but she indeed exhibits a degree of guilt. Both women are attracted to the spiral staircase, which replaces in the film the watchtower ladder, with the companion hanging herself from it out of a guilty conscience.

The director implemented some visual elements and scenes that are alien or poorly regarded, in the novel. His decision to turn the watchtower's ladder into a beautifully imposing spiral staircase can be easily explained when considering the sexual subtext of the film, as Eleanor tries to reach the climax with Markway closely chasing her. Another element that also appears in the novel, albeit with much less importance, is the enormous marble statue of Saint Francis of Assisi that the group finds while exploring the house. The statue, which supposedly depicts St. Francis curing some lepers, vaguely resembles the people who have died in the house (the Crain family and the companion) while also resembling the four characters inhabiting the house. In the film, this resemblance is much more highlighted. With this visual element that ties the characters to the house as if they were part of it, Wise establishes a much more explicit connection for the audience. With only one scene, the director mirrors Hill House's past victims to the current one.

Another aspect of the novel Wise changes in his film, related to Eleanor and Theodora's relationship, is the "sleepover" they share. While Eleanor repeats the word "wicked" when talking about her brand-new red nail polish, the scene has two very different meanings in the novel and the film. While in Jackson's novel, the scene is full of anxiety and

fear, the film shows an almost relaxed Eleanor, joking with Theodora and drinking while proclaiming her happiness about being in the house. This is an example of Eleanor's disinhibition and liberation through the film, propitiated by her blooming desire for the attractive Dr. Markway.

Again, it seems that these choices were made by Wise and Gidding to alleviate the stronghold of the paranormal in the story. Grace's involvement in Eleanor's death when running away in the car gives a more mundane perspective to it, perhaps to make it easier for the audience to sympathize with her decision to stay in Hill House. Moreover, if we take into account the sexual subtext of the film, we can consider that during this scene Eleanor finally is giving herself to sexual liberation, only to be interrupted by Grace, which makes her come back into reality and crash the car. The relationship of Eleanor and Dr. Markay can also be a reminder of Eleanor's phrase in the novel: "Journeys end in lovers meeting." In the case of the film, the *lover* is not Hill House but the doctor, and it can also be considered that Eleanor meets her end, indirectly, because of their adulterous relationship.

The addition of the almost adulterous implied relationship between Eleanor and Dr. Markway must be interpreted as a product of the time. Released in 1963, while the Hays Code still regulated what could and could not be shown in a movie, the ambiguity towards the theme of sex in the film was a clear attraction to the audiences of the time (Rosenfield). The completion of Eleanor's journey being symbolized in what appears to be sexual gratification surely must be interpreted as catering towards an audience unaccustomed to seeing such themes on the big screen, thus adding to the sexual morbidity factor. Moreover, the addition of sexual nuances within Eleanor's liberation can also be seen as a product of the film being created through what is clearly the director's *male gaze*, as opposed to Jackson's *female gaze* that makes us observe the novel from a feminist perspective of an oppressed woman being haunted at *her* home.

CONCLUSION

The great success of both the novel and its adaptation stems from the innovative techniques both Jackson and Wise use in their respective projects. In the case of *The Haunting of Hill House*, one could argue that the idea of the house as the malevolent element itself, and not the place in which the events merely happen, was not quite as explored at the time in comparison to more traditional haunted house tales, in which the antagonists were the undead, not the location. In addition, the image of Eleanor as an anti-heroine whose marked psychological issues prevent her from truly belonging anywhere, giving rise to the darkness inside her mind, is a reversal of the typical haunted house tale's endings, in which the house is freed from the presence of evil. Furthermore, there is a familiar aspect of the narrative. In the end, a woman adrift finds her home in an uninhabited house. She needs Hill House as much as the house needs her.

While the film cannot explore the scope of Eleanor's inner turmoil and her relationship with the house, Wise uses a myriad of cinematic tricks to astonish the audience while being faithful to the essence of the original text in a much more succinct way. He manages to build a world dominated by darkness using a rapid carousel of techniques with which he accomplishes to scare and confuse the audience as much as the characters in the movie. Even the issues beyond his reach, like the imposition of black-and-white, end up working in his favor when he shapes a world beyond reality, with its disturbed, distorted, and bleak atmosphere. Moreover, the addition of the sexual subtext makes the film work successfully in its own in a new direction and a new interpretation. While it is true many concessions are taken to make the storyline more palatable to viewers, the film makes it seem as if Eleanor is less of a willing victim of Hill House and more of an irrational woman beyond any helping, hindering her response to her new home. But Wise does his best to respect Jackson's message: Hill House, "not-sane," does seem a living organism by itself, blurring the limits between "absolute reality" and insanity, and welcoming Eleanor into her home beyond life (Jackson 3).

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ANNEX I – RELEVANT DATA ABOUT THE FILM*

- **Title:** *The Haunting*.
- **Directed by:** Robert Wise.
- **Script by:** Nelson Gidding, based on the Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House*.
- **Release date:** September 18, 1963.
- **Country of production:** United Kingdom, United States of America.
- **Produced by:** Argyle Enterprises.
- **Distributed by:** Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- **Runtime:** 1 hour and 52 minutes.
- **Genre:** Horror.
- **Estimated budget:** 1,4 million dollars.
- **Relevant casting:**
 - **Julie Harries** as Eleanor Lance.
 - **Richard Jonhson** as Dr. John Markway.
 - **Lois Maxwell** as Grace Markway.
 - **Claire Bloom** as Theodora.
 - **Russ Tamblyn** as Luke Sannerson.

* All information extracted from “*The Haunting*.” *IMDB*, 18 Sept. 1963, www.imdb.com/title/tt0057129/.