



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT

“The Child in Gothic Literature and Film”

verfasst von

Stefanie Weilingner, BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2015

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 066 844

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

Masterstudium Anglophone Literatures and Cultures
UG2002

Betreut von:

Dr. phil. Dieter Fuchs, M.A.

für
Heidemarie
und
Walter

1	Introduction	1
2	Gothic Children	5
1.1	The Changing Image of the Child in Literature.....	5
1.2	The Role of the Child in the Gothic Genre	10
1.3	Haunted Children in 20 th and 21 st Century Horror Film	15
3	Theory.....	20
3.1	The Uncanny	20
3.1.1	Ernst Jentsch’s Notion of the <i>Unheimlich</i>	20
3.1.2	Sigmund Freud’s <i>Uncanny</i>	23
3.2	Adaptation Studies	26
4	Henry James – “The Turn of the Screw”	30
4.1	Youth in Revolt – Flora’s and Miles’s Dark Side.....	33
4.2	“Good children do get a bit boring, don’t they?” – “The Innocents”	49
5	Stephen King’s Gothic Children.....	66
5.1	Torrance Family Ties in “The Shining”	70
5.2	“Come play with us, Danny” – Kubrick’s “The Shining”	86
6	Susan Hill’s Child Spectres	96
6.1	Susan Hill’s Classic Ghost Story – “The Woman in Black”	99
6.2	“The Spectre of Darkness” – Watkins’s “The Woman in Black”	108
7	Conclusion	123
8	Bibliography	128

1 INTRODUCTION

The Gothic is an unstable genre divided into numerous modes conveyed through different media such as ghost stories, films, plays, television series, musicals, and video games. A classic Gothic tale, for instance, most commonly comprises specific features such as a particular setting – castles, graveyards, abbeys, or old houses – or themes, like secrets and mysteries from the past. One of the major reasons the Gothic is still successful is its abundance of symbolism, its spectres and hauntings. Even as society changes, the reader is still able to project many difficulties of modern conditions onto these spectres and thereby banish them into the realm of the grotesque (Hogle 1-6). The Gothic genre is a bleak, mysterious, and terrifying phenomenon. Almost every theme surrounding it is in one way or another linked to darkness, the supernatural, death, and the afterlife. Generally speaking, it is hardly ever associated with little children or anyone highly sensitive, for that matter. Therefore, it is important to look at the changes that have happened in society, literature, and the arts that somehow brought those seeming contradictions together – the purity, joy, and innocence that is usually linked with childhood versus the dangerous and scary tales of the Gothic genre. Children have not always been interpreted in this genre as they are nowadays. Although there have always been Gothic stories featuring children at some point or other, the quantity of Gothic novels and horror films that centre on a child protagonist has become enormous. Especially the film industry is using child characters more frequently in horror movies, an interesting development that startled audience expectations. The Gothic tradition features all sorts of characters, very common however, is the depiction of a family in their domestic sphere. As Lucie Armitt points out the “Gothic thrives in a world where those in authority – the supposed exemplars of the good – are under suspicion” (11). Guardians, parents, sovereigns – in the Gothic such characters frequently show their shady sides and may become

foes in order to create confusion in the audience or reader. This is, basically, the purpose of the Gothic genre – to create unease and to startle the audience. The logical counterpart of a person in authority is the victim, a weak and helpless character, most commonly a woman or a child. It is an undisputable fact that children have always played a major part in the Gothic genre, naturally, in most instances as victims. Although scholars have given attention to the child in the Gothic, hardly anybody has laid the focus on the child's fear factor, or on the child as a person in authority, respectively. So far, there is only one monograph dealing with the various depictions of children in Gothic literature and film, and just one anthology devoted to the concept of evil children in popular culture (cf. Georgieva *The Gothic Child*, Renner *The 'Evil Child'*). Without doubt, the last century has brought about a switch in the perception of children especially in Gothic literature and horror movies. Armitt points out that in this respect twentieth-century Gothic fiction clearly differs from its predecessors on account of the new and prominent theme of a haunted childhood. The fear of losing a child, his or her vulnerability, and the parents' duty to protect the child is the clear focus of Armitt's first chapter (cf. *Twentieth Century Gothic*). One of the first scholars to address the theme of children in Gothic stories is Margarita Georgieva, who published the first book solely dedicated to this topic. In her study she gives a broad overview of the function of children in Gothic stories primarily in 18th and 19th century fiction. Georgieva begins her book with an excellent point, that "when calling someone 'child', the narrator usually takes into account that person's innocence or lack of knowledge, their potential for development or their intellectual pliability" (2). However, she also points out that in Gothic fiction, a child is not always submissive, but can also dominate certain events and influence adults in their surroundings. Basically, according to her, there are two different types of character types children most commonly occupy in Gothic fiction. The first kind includes

passive characters, somehow included in the Gothic environment, who do not actively contribute to the plot, such as child corpses. The other kind, however, are child characters who are active participants and crucial for the plot and often function as the protagonists of the narration (Georgieva 3-8).

This thesis takes a closer look at the children in Gothic literature and film with special regards to three texts and one movie adaptation each. Henry James is one of the first writers to depict an evil child; his ghost story *The Turn of the Screw* focuses on the siblings Miles and Flora who have an uncanny connection to the afterlife. Stephen King, arguably the most popular author and bestseller of Gothic fiction in the 20th and 21st century, specialises on Gothic children and their families, respectively, in various stories. *The Shining* depicts the Torrance's coping with their son Danny's psychic abilities and their struggle with paranormal forces at the mysterious Overlook Hotel. Finally, contemporary author Susan Hill frequently incorporates child ghosts into her work. In one of her novels, *The Woman in Black*, an eerie spectre casts a curse upon a small village mostly affecting the children of the town. In order to gain insight on the roles of children in horror films as well, these three texts will each be compared to a respective movie adaptation: *The Innocents* (1961; dir. Jack Clayton), *The Shining* (1980; dir. Stanley Kubrick), and *The Woman in Black* (2012; dir. James Watkins). At first, this thesis will give an overview of the representation of children in literature in order to present the roles children have occupied in various literary traditions and how the view of the child has changed. Thereby, I will for instance discuss the idealisation of childhood in the Romantic era, the victimisation of children in Victorian times, and specifically focus on the portrayal children in Gothic fiction. Especially in the last couple of years depictions of children in horror film have increased; therefore there will also be a particular focus on the depiction of the Gothic child in

film. In this respect, the corner stones for the characterisation of children in Gothic literature and film will be Margarita Georgieva's monograph *The Gothic Child* and Karen Renner's collection of essays *Evil Children in Film and Literature*. The next chapter focuses on Ernst Jentsch's and Sigmund Freud's theories of the uncanny. Their interpretations of what evokes fear in human beings is crucial in order to analyse the fear factor of Gothic children in literature and film. A short sub-chapter will also look at the main questions of adaptations studies in order to compare the three chosen novels with their movie adaptations accordingly. The most important issues that have emerged during research are: Which functions do children take in the Gothic tradition? How is their relationship to their guardians or parents represented? Are children in horror movies employed differently than in their literary counterparts? How and why do they evoke fear in the readers or viewers? My anticipated conclusion is that children occupy various functions in the Gothic tradition and that exactly these functions influence the outcome of my other research questions crucially. I assume that the relationship to their parents, guardians, or role models has a major impact on their action in the stories, and that, furthermore, the focus on children and adults shifts from novel to movie adaptation, respectively. Finally, their fear factor may be ascribed to experiences or processes in the human mind, especially the assumption that children are innocent, weak and harmless, a belief that is completely shattered in Gothic fiction. In Gothic fiction, children become uncanny under the right circumstances. Either, the roles they occupy or the context they are set in refute precast stereotypes of children.

2 GOTHIC CHILDREN

1.1 The Changing Image of the Child in Literature

Literary tradition rarely regarded the nature of children as that of an infant. Considered small adults, children were disciplined out of their childish behaviour and introduced to the world of morals and rationality of adulthood. One of the most important philosophers who engaged with the theme of childhood was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, most commonly known for his ground-breaking essay on education, *Emile*. In his work, the writer and pedagogue drew attention to the individual nature of the child itself and put the emphasis on an education that is adjusted and aligned with the child's nature. Furthermore, the child as such, in Rousseau's eyes, is nothing but innocent; a child, by nature, is virtuous and pure. Rousseau believed that everything a child experiences during his or her education is supposed to stimulate rational growth and cultivate them (Coveney 40-45). In *Emile* Rousseau regards the child also as a weak and helpless character: "If we consider childhood itself, is there anything so weak and wretched as a child, anything so utterly at the mercy of those about it, dependent on their pity, their care, and their affection?" (52). These assumptions paint a very remarkable picture of the image of the child. The child is inherently pure and innocent, unspoilt by experience and thus natural, but also weak and helpless. In this regard, the child is juxtaposed to the adult world just as nature is juxtaposed to culture. Education is necessary in order to cultivate a child, to teach logic and morals. Hence, children are not only pure and innocent, not yet corrupted by society, but they are also not yet subject to rationality and morals.

The glorification of childhood is a concept that first emerged in the literature of the Romantic era. Peter Coveney also points out that especially the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge mirror this new mind-set. For Wordsworth, the expansion of the human intellect and

imagination was deeply shaped by infancy and youth. The connection between nature and child was elementary for the development of a moral personality (Coveney 68). Romantics thought children to be pure, almost immaculate and deeply connected to nature. They valued childhood above all and frequently wrote about their own experiences at an early age. One example is Wordsworth's famous *Two-Part Prelude* where he praises the power of the imagination that is present in childhood and, unfortunately, is gradually lost when the child grows up. According to Wordsworth, an adult is "an inmate of this *active* universe" (477), if we do not learn to use our imagination in childhood we will be confined to an uncreative and cruel prison. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the image of the Romantic child had been fully established; it was, however, mainly a poetic symbol. The increasing popularity of the novel in the eighteenth-thirties brought about self-awareness, increased understanding of individual personality, as well as a different perception of the child as an icon of innocence, conveyer of social commentary, manifestation of nostalgia, uncertainty (Coveney 91-92).

The factor governing the literature of the child from the 1830s was the condition of children in society. The romantic period had asserted the innocence and frailty of the child. The victimized condition of the child in early Victorian England did not square with the image of childhood that had been created. The tension between innocence and experience . . . became the main motif of early and mid-Victorian literature of the child. (Coveney 92-92)

In Victorian times, writers leaned towards regarding the child not only as a symbol, but also as a subject, concentrating also on his or her emotional state and physical health (Berry 169). With the nineteenth century came a new development in the image of childhood. Victorian novels mirror the trend of the victimised child. Works such as *Great Expectations*, *David*

Copperfield, or *The Mill on the Floss* capture the essence of the vulnerability and fragility of a child and also how severe childhood experiences can leave a mark on a person. Benton also points towards exploited children in Victorian England, for instance, a stark contrast to the notion of childhood propagated by the Romantics (51). Charles Dickens's novels put the child as protagonist in the spotlight like no other writer had done before. Coveney points out that especially the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor is what makes Dickens's novels so fascinating, and generally the oppressed in his works are children. The author's own youth and that of so many other children in the Victorian era were the emblem of atrocities committed by a ruthless society against its victims. For Dickens, the child was the symbol of delicate feelings in a society confused by the longing for material progress (Coveney 112-115). In this respect Berry claims,

The endangered child-subject is a focal and unique position that intersects with foundational epistemological categories of this period, specifically social welfare. . . . childhood is unique because the child occupies a position that homogenizes rather than fragments the social community. Simply put, everyone can lay claim to membership, at least for a time, in the community of children, because everyone must have been a child. (4)

The notion of a joyful childhood that shapes our mind and imaginative powers, full of awe-inspiring and spectacular impressions is neglected in Victorian times and a much more realistic view on infancy is gradually adapted. In other words, in contrast to the idealised childhood images of the Romantic era, Victorian times offered a grim view on childhood and being a child in a harsh and brutal society. Although children more commonly function as protagonists in numerous novels, they are often the victims in their own storyline. They are abused by their

environment and taken advantage of, like Pip in Dickens's *Great Expectations* or Oliver in *Oliver Twist*. The latter, as Coveney points out, is the first novel in the English language that truly centres on a child protagonist (127). Most frequently these child characters are inherently innocent but corrupted or broken by society, often awaiting a pitiful fate such as Maggie Tulliver's in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Our modern conceptions of childhood as a phase of innocence and purity comes from the common assumption that a child does not express or even have sexual desires, hence sexuality is something non-existent in a prepubescent body. This notion goes back to the eighteenth century, where childhood was considered something pure and innocent, and was delimited from adolescence. During the Middle Ages, for example, the desexualised child was not an established notion, and also in the first half of the eighteenth century images would show children in a sexualised context. The perception of prepubescent bodies to be pure is part of a social and historical construction established during the Enlightenment period. Around the time when Rousseau was writing his text on education entitled *Emile*, also the mind-set regarding sexuality and childhood saw an overall change (Milam 45-48).

In this respect, hardly anybody had a greater impact on the image of children with his studies than the influential Viennese psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. His views revolutionised the view of childhood and brought about a dramatic shift in the portrayal of the child. Coveney explains that the child gradually was emancipated from the concept of 'original sin' and 'original innocence', respectively, which is mostly due to the new insights in the field of psychoanalysis and the examination of a child's nature (291-292). In this respect Sigmund Freud claims:

One feature of the popular view of the sexual instinct is that it is absent in childhood and only awakens in the period of life described as puberty. This, however, is not merely a simple error but one that has had grave consequences, for it is mainly to this idea that we owe our present ignorance of the fundamental conditions of sexual life. . . . So far as I know, not a single author has clearly recognized the regular existence of a sexual instinct in childhood (Three Essays 51)

In the chapter ‘Psychology of Errors’ Freud explains that sexual impulses already exist in new-born children and evolve further as the child ages. Usually, a child’s sexual drive emerges in an observable form around the age of three or four (Freud Three Essays 55). As a matter of course, the majority of the turn of the century society did not share Freud’s views, quite to the contrary, sexualising the child seemed nothing but appalling and completely refuted the view of the child as innocent and pure. Freud disturbed the prevalent image of children by saying that “small children are essentially without shame, and at some periods of their earliest years show an unmistakable satisfaction in exposing their bodies, with especial emphasis upon the sexual parts” (Freud *Three Essays* 70). The famous psychiatrist is the first writer who openly seeks to present a new image of childhood and to explore the depth of the infantile psyche in its entirety. Hence, he does not only comment on infantile sexuality, but also on cruelty by children. Until this point, children used to be portrayed as weak or victimised, as something the adult world has to look after and care for. However, according to Freud, “cruelty in general comes easily to the childish nature, since the obstacle that brings the instinct for mastery to a halt at another person’s pain – namely a capacity for pity – is developed relatively late” (*Three Essays* 70). Furthermore, he connects this absence of pity with sexual activity: “The absence of the barrier of pity brings with it a danger that the connection between the cruel and the erotogenic instincts, thus established in

childhood, may prove unbreakable in later life” (*Three Essays* 71). With Freud the prevalent image of the innocent child is overcome. The child is not only described as an independent human being with agency but especially as a human being with flaws and sins. The assumption that a child is innately pure and only corrupted by society later in life is, according to Freud, a major misconception.

1.2 The Role of the Child in the Gothic Genre

Since the nature and character of children is in a state of flux, the child is in a state of growth and development, children in Gothic fiction frequently grow into various roles or archetypes, such as the traditional hero or heroine or Gothic villain. Hence, various writers focus on this mechanism of growing up, as well as on the influences the child is exposed to in this process of becoming such an archetypal character. The development into adolescence or adulthood and consequent crises are features that refine the gloomy atmosphere of the Gothic novel. Commonly, the child is the centre focus of the Gothic family; quite often kids are also the heart of domestic or parental conflicts (Georgieva 13-14). Complex family ties and conflicts centring around the young ones in the family are one of the major themes in Stephen King’s works such as *The Mist*, *Pet Sematary*, and *The Shining*, to mention but a few. Moreover, Georgieva points out, that children in Gothic stories mirror their parents, they often inherit their past and thus also their curses (23). But not only family curses but also parental sin can have an impact on the child. Quite commonly, monstrosities in children are a result of parental immorality and children suffer for their parents’ faults. In this respect, Georgieva refers to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* regarding physical abnormalities as well as abnormal ideas that may lie in a human being’s or creature’s soul. The original fault lies with the parent or creator who, in this case, made his creation unfit for society (Georgieva 51). Children who suffer because of the

mistakes their parents made is also the main issue in Watkins' adaptation of *The Woman in Black* (2012), however, in this case, the wrongdoings of just one family affect the children of a whole town. Regarding the family structure in the Gothic genre, Georgieva maintains that the child occupies the lowest rank in this construction, however, simultaneously it is the foundation of the family hierarchy. The child, as the most vulnerable and weakest member of the family is therefore supposed to follow the rules and orders of the guardians and, due to its weakness, under perpetual threat and danger from outside influences. As the Gothic child is the family's foundation, the parents' role is to control their offspring or protégé, keep them within the family, and to maintain peace amongst all family members. For the time the child remains in this fixed structure, in the enclosed space of their family, the safety of this network is assured. In the Gothic, however, most frequently the plot develops and suspense is created when the child crosses these boundaries by either being abducted or by leaving this safety zone on their own accord. This break may either be of physical nature, i.e. the child is abducted or runs away, or the child may symbolically or ideologically distance itself from the household, for instance through rebelling against the parents (Georgieva 126-128). In some cases, being possessed, for example in the case of *The Exorcist* (1973; dir. William Friedkin), can separate the child from the family and thereby cause the family structure to sway.

Interestingly, Georgieva takes the view that the world of childhood and the Gothic world are one, especially childhood fears and thrilling adventures are prominent in the Gothic genre (60). The Gothic world is tormented by prevailing childhood fears such as rattling chains, the unseen, monsters standing in shadows, ghosts in the attic and so on. Gothic atmosphere seems to draw freely on anything that is related to night-time fears of children and any other childhood phobias (Georgieva 175). In the Gothic genre, characters often regress into a childish state.

Infantile fantasy worlds come to life, contrary to the expectation of any adult. Monsters that lurk under the bed and the bogeyman become real threats in the supernatural world of the Gothic. Suddenly, protagonists are confronted with fears that had been suppressed for most of their lives and are often labeled nonsensical childhood fears. Although the world of childhood and the Gothic world apparently have similar patterns, especially when it comes to supernatural and fantastic encounters, the fact that characters are disempowered by their childhood fears is only loosely linked to the question why children as such have become a major theme in the Gothic world. The fact that the realm of the Gothic regularly merges with childhood fantasies is discussed in detail in Jackson, Coats, and McGillis's collection of essays in *Gothic in Children's Literature*. These essays point out quite clearly that the Gothic has always found its way into the lives of children, be it in their beliefs, their fears, or also in children's entertainment such as books and TV. In this respect, Smith makes clear that the Gothic always develops when familiar patterns are distorted. Children find nothing more terrifying than ghosts, fairies, or aliens that could haunt their real school, bedroom, neighbourhood. According to Smith, these fears are regularly used by children's literature to capture readers (131). As already mentioned and as Georgieva also tried to suggest, fears that are typically associated with childhood and mostly rejected once we have grown up are exactly those factors that the horror genre thrives on when it comes to creating suspense and thrill. The Gothic shows us that we are not alone in our insecurities and that everybody has to stand up to their fears. It awakens our childhood fears and makes us regress into a childlike, helpless version of ourselves. The renowned writer Stephen King claims that horror films put us "to a level of child-like expectations and point of view" (*Danse Macabre* 206) and "allow us to regain our childish perspective on death" (*Danse Macabre* 228).

One of the most interesting approaches that has been taken in the last couple of years regarding the image of the child in literature and film is Karen J. Renner's collection of essays on children who are not innocent or pure, but purely evil. Her anthology is the first work that solely focuses on children in pop culture who are feared and dangerous. Renner claims that stories containing evil children increased in popularity in the 1950s. Most commonly, these texts maintained the idea that evil children are inherently born to be bad. In the 1960s this interest was rekindled, however, the focus shifted from children who were evil by nature to those who were somehow corrupted. One of the most important examples in this respect is Jack Clayton's *The Innocents*, a movie adaptation of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* of 1961. With Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*, adapted by Roman Polanski, the most evil of all children, the spawn of Satan himself, was presented to the audience in 1967 and thereby concluded this decade of evil children. Due to these new representations of children, both types of evil children, the inherently bad, devious child and the psychologically deranged one, were analysed further. The most successful depiction of the first kind was without doubt *The Exorcist* of 1973, although other films exploring this category, such as *The Omen* (1976; dir. Richard Donner) intrigued the audience almost equally regarding the terror of satanic offspring. Furthermore, in the 70s, numerous writers launched their career in the horror genre by producing stories centring on evil children. Naturally, the most popular of these writers was Stephen King, famous for his depiction of uncanny children such as Danny Torrance or Gage Creed. Interestingly enough, not only the Gothic genre provides us with evil children, also popular TV shows such as *Family Guy* or young adult novels like the *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games* series feature not only strong and powerful but also frightening and evil kids (Renner 1-5). Although Renner and her colleagues do not exclusively concentrate on Gothic fiction, they raise crucial questions when it

comes to the fear factor of children in this genre: “Is the evil child the result of an imperfect environment and thus redeemable, or a sign of inherent corruption? . . . is there evil in the world because we have gone astray, or because we have a natural propensity for wickedness and cruelty?” (Renner 5-6).

Stories featuring possessed children do not only show the reader or viewer the sinister or troublesome behaviour of a child, but also the developments that lead to their possession. Although the families of those children might seem unfortunate victims of these paranormal occurrences, most commonly also the reasons for the respective child’s susceptibility are explored or explained. A troubled family is either brought back together due to this horrifying stroke of fate or the issues that trigger a break are even amplified. The audience observes a domestic breakdown that in some way causes the child to become approachable for supernatural forces. According to Renner, these forces symbolise other shameful influences from which parents fail to keep their children. Hence, stories about possessed children always express ideologies about domestic life and family structures. Feral children, on the other hand, include, according to Renner, everything from zombie or vampire children to children who have been brought up in a supposedly primitive culture. However, feral children most commonly occur as part of a larger group, they are hardly ever characterised as individuals, therefore, it is hard for the audience to feel real sympathy towards them. Most of the stories featuring feral children depict them in gruesome and brutal actions, thereby causing revulsion on the part of the audience and justifying the most often unfortunate and untimely death of these children. As zombies or vampires, these children are often perceived as faceless agents, evoking disgust rather than compassion (Renner 6). One crucial part of the fear factor of children is without doubt the helplessness that is almost increased when it comes to monsters or evil spirits in child form.

While in most horror films the protagonists would either choose to fight or run when confronted with vampires, werewolves, zombies, and the like, the situation takes a completely different turn when these creatures are not fully grown (e.g. *Pet Sematary*, *'Salem's Lot*). Renner also points toward this delicate issue that murdering a child, regardless of its depravity, is not an easy affair. Both for the fictional character as well as the audience, violence against children is difficult to face. The presupposition of a child's innocence is, however, probably the most dangerous weapon of the evil child in literature and film. Recent films frequently make clear that once children are corrupted by evil powers, they are not their former selves anymore and can never be redeemed, thereby justifying any violent act against them (Renner 20-21).

1.3 Haunted Children in 20th and 21st Century Horror Film

Misha Kavka points out that Gothic styles, plots, and characters have been adapted by the screen and often occur in movies that are broadly associated with horror. However, there is no distinct genre of the Gothic film or Gothic cinema. Although Kavka explains that it cannot be restricted to a specific period, figure, or set of images, he continues to use the term 'Gothic fiction' in order to explain movies that adapt features of the Gothic tradition. He especially draws the attention to visual codes that are maintained as familiar elements in the Gothic film and the general sign system or language of Gothic fiction, such as dark cemeteries, shadows, and fogs, is transported on screen. As a result, according to Kavka, the Gothic tradition on screen is situated between film noir and horror (Kavka 209-214). The movies that are introduced in this section can also be classified in the spacing between these two genres. Whereas some of the films employ classic Gothic modes such as haunted houses, other more gruesome movies will bend more in the direction of horror. For the sake of brevity and simplicity, the current term 'horror film' will be used in order to analyse the following movies.

Horror themes such as the clear-cut division between good and evil, the natural and the supernatural, human and monster have always been present in classical scary movies such as *Dracula* (1931; dir. Tod Browning) or *Frankenstein* (1931; dir. James Whale). However, monsters as these have been absent in modern horror stories; in fact, they have gradually been withdrawn from horror fiction since the 1950s. Another type of horror film emerged, with a strong focus on violence and fear, often setting the story in a typical small town, hence setting the horror closer to home and featuring psychotic monsters rather than classical ones. In postmodern horror, binary oppositions such as good and evil are blurred and harder to keep apart. Most commonly, horror is now located in everyday life and features (mostly male) heroes and (mostly female) victims. The postmodern horror film, i.e. most scary movies after the 1950s that do not just focus on classical Hollywood monsters and rather portray violence as part of everyday life, frequently exhibits five distinct features: a cruel disturbance of everyday life, the transgression of classical boundaries, doubts about rationality, the rejection of narrative closure as well as a confined encounter with fear. The first three characteristics refer to postmodern as well as to classical horror, the fourth point is a significant trait of postmodern horror, the last one rather reveals, the relation from film to audience and refers to horror in general. Regarding the first of these characteristics, crucial factors of the horror plot are the disturbance of everyday life and our conception of normality. In addition, it questions our notions of what is real and unreal. As for the second trait, it violates a natural order that is typically taken for granted. Whereas classical horror stories more or less draw clearer boundaries between the realms of good and evil, postmodern horror most commonly transcends these borders. In other words, nothing is what it at first seems to be (Pinedo 89-94). One prominent example in this respect is *The Others* (2001; dir. Alejandro Amenabar) or *The Sixth Sense* (1999; dir. M. Night Shyamalan) in which

the protagonists do not realise until the very end that they exist in a distorted reality and are actually themselves the monsters they were afraid of. Pinedo continues discussing the third horror aspect, the questioning of rationality. The normal world order of the characters is shattered, they see themselves confronted with irrational concepts and must cope with the collapse of causal logic. In contrast to the first three traits, the lack of narrative closure and therefore an open ending is a specific feature of postmodern horror (Pinedo 94-99). In his comprehensive work, Charles Derry focuses on the juxtaposition of contemporary horror fiction and horror from the 1930s until the 1970s. He notes a recession of the supernatural horror film in the 1950s, which was then revived in a way with haunted house films. During the fifties and sixties haunted house movies clearly dominated the industry (Derry 27). The subgenre of haunted house movies is particularly important for this study inasmuch most of the stories featuring children that have been discussed so far show a similar pattern. For instance, the film adaptation of Susan Hill's *Woman in Black* is remarkably similar to other art dread and also haunted house movies. Basically, the pattern is rather simple: the story's protagonist moves to or visits a new house and intends to stay for at least a couple of nights. Apart from the house itself, there is another dangerous or eerie place such as a pond, a cemetery, a maze, a towering tree, or simply a copious garden somewhere around the house. Since the main character plans on staying for at least one night, he or she gets to know the place better and in one way or another stumble upon inexplicable happenings or sightings. In various cases these hauntings include children that are possessed, in some form drawn to various paranormal creatures or happenings or even involved in these events themselves. *Haunt* (2013; dir. Mac Carter), *Insidious* (2010; dir. James Wan), *The Conjuring* (2013; dir. James Wan), *Sinister* (2012; dir. Scott Derrickson), *The Others* (2001; dir. Alejandro Amenabar), *The Haunting* (1963; dir. Robert Wise), *The Babadook* (2014;

dir. Jennifer Kent), and, of course, the three main works for this thesis are but a few examples which combine haunted house movies with haunted children. Derry suggests that the haunted house be read as metaphor; he claims “usually the house is a dead thing, containing memories, corpses, or reminders of an old way of life” (47). One of the main themes, in this respect, is the corruption of children and innocence. Most commonly, children fall victim to a demon and, if they cannot be corrupted, will ultimately be killed (Derry 91). The most famous example of such a corruption is Friedkin’s horror classic *The Exorcist* (1973). Since children are supposed to be small, weak, influential, and pure-minded, they are most commonly used for demonic possession as the seemingly easiest of targets. Derry discusses possession or demonic influence in modern day horror movies also by reference of movies featuring children. One of his examples is *Hide and Seek* (2005; dir. John Polson), starring Dakota Fanning as young girl trying to deal with her mother’s suicide and thereby creating a creepy relationship to her imaginary friend. Another example is M. Night Shyamalan’s captivating story *The Sixth Sense* (1999) outstandingly performed by the young Haley Joel Osment who portrays Cole, a moody and somewhat spooky child who can see the dead. In this case the kid seems quasi-demonic as he relates to terrors of the past. As a last example Amenabar’s *The Others* (1999) is discussed, with a similar surprise ending. The protagonist portrayed by Nicole Kidman lives in a spacious mansion with her son and daughter whose allergy hinders them from being exposed to light and is thereby responsible for the curtains remaining drawn at daytime – quite an appropriate setting for creating an eerie atmosphere. The movie is similar to *The Innocents*, which also focuses on a female protagonist on the verge of insanity (Derry 220-224). The last of Derry’s examples of possessed children and demonic horror, respectively, *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick & Eduardo Sanchez; 1999) differs from his preceding ones. The found-footage mockumentary is an engaging

independent film featuring three students who are determined to capture the witch of Blair on film and therefore travel through the woods of Burkittsville. Although it was a low-budget production without any visual effects it was extremely popular. The lack of music and other cinematic sound effects sets up an eerie mood in which the audience has to interpret any images and sounds on their own. At the end, the outcome is ambiguous, the viewer cannot feel certain about what exactly happened to the three main characters. Although not directly a profound movie, it is remarkable in horror film history with regard to how much the producers have achieved with so little (Derry 228-229). Especially when it comes to sound and images *The Blair Witch Project* draws a lot of its ghostly atmosphere from children in the movie, albeit no child is featured in the film. However, since the urban legend in these woods in Maryland is mostly concerned with the abduction of children by the witch of Blair, their ghosts seemingly haunt the forest. In the middle of the night, Heather and her companions are not only awakened by strange noises such as rattling leaves, breaking twigs, or clacking stones, but also by the sounds of crying children. Naturally, this creates an atmosphere of unease, since sounds as such are generally the last thing one would expect in the middle of the night and in the middle of nowhere. In addition, as the three students proceed into the forest they finally reach the infamous house in which children had supposedly been taken hostage and murdered. As screams fill the air and the viewer prepares for the big show-down, we never get to see exactly what is behind all that horror. The only thing the audience is presented with at the end are children's bloody handprints on the walls of this haunted house and, eventually, Heather's bloodcurdling screams.

The outline of the current state of research has merely touched upon the subject of children in Gothic fiction. Although children in literature and the various functions of child characters, even those who do not fit the stereotype of the innocent child anymore, have been examined,

they have not been studied elaborately enough in the Gothic genre. Studies have not looked at this issue across media, and most commonly scholars have either looked at children in literature or in film, but neglected to examine how the use of children has changed in movie adaptations. Nevertheless, in Gothic fiction and horror films the portrayal of children is crucial to a book's or film's fear factor.

3 **THEORY**

3.1 **The Uncanny**

Regarding the depiction of children in literature and art, a public outcry followed Freud's unprecedented account of childhood, moving away from the classical image of innocence and virtue. In the case of Gothic fiction, various scholars refer to psychoanalytic theories in order to explain and analyse the fascination and impact of Gothic literature or horror films (cf. Massé, Bruhm, Prince). In this respect, Freud's most cited essay is "The Uncanny", which connects to Gothic fiction in numerous ways. However, Sigmund Freud is not the first in the field of psychoanalysis who deals with the unknown, in this case, the 'unheimlich'.

3.1.1 Ernst Jentsch's Notion of the *Unheimlich*

In 1906, Ernst Jentsch published his article "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" in the *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* and thereby laid a groundstone for the theory of the Gothic genre. In this essay, the German psychiatrist discusses the term 'unheimlich' which roughly translates into English as 'uncanny'; however, the meaning of the word, whose importance lies in the etymology of the phrase, is partly lost in translation. 'Unheimlich', German for 'not homely', deals with everything that is unknown and that the human mind is not used to. As Jentsch points out, it is everything that is strange and new to us, and stands in

connection with a lack of orientation. He simultaneously asks for the emotional and mental conditions that come about when encountering something that is *unheimlich* and how they are triggered (Jentsch 195). In his theory, he connects familiar concepts to something that is trusted and reassuring; on the other hand, the notion of the *unheimlich* includes feelings of hostility and irritation. A lack of knowledge and orientation causes feelings of unease, insecurity, and confusion. Jentsch points out that especially children are affected by uncanny concepts, since they are unexperienced and unsure of their world and show a lack of general knowledge that explains their surroundings. For Jentsch this uncertainty is why children are insecure, self-conscious, and, anxious (196). Another issue addressed by Jentsch is the amplification of unease and uncanniness by loss of certain sensory functions. According to the psychiatrist, the fear of incessant noise and especially an aversion for darkness and nighttime are common among a majority of people (Jentsch 197). This particular factor is strongly correlated to the topic of Gothic fiction. In this respect, Stephen King points out: “The dark, it goes almost without saying, provides the basis for our most primordial fears” (*Danse Macabre* 210). He then continues: “Fear of the dark is the most childlike fear. . . . This is a fact that every maker of horror films and writer of horror tales recognizes and uses – it is one of those unfailing pressure points where the grip of horror fiction is surest” (*Danse Macabre* 212). Darkness, nighttime, being unable to see and the feeling of uncertainty, insecurity, and aberration are therefore indispensable in the Gothic genre. The fear of a specific concept, be it monsters, murderers, curses and what not, is not necessary to evoke terror in the reader or viewer. Disorientation and uncertainty as well as situations that are inexplicable and completely new for the audience are the main ingredients for a shocked reaction.

Jentsch goes even more into detail as he presents more examples of uncanny situations that have a deep impact on the human psyche and trigger fear and terror. In this respect, any doubt about the ‘ensoulment’ of an object, as Jentsch calls it, is one of the most vigorous psychological uncertainties responsible for uncanny feelings. He points out that the doubt about whether an object is animate or inanimate, and whether a supposedly inanimate object suddenly comes to life or vice versa, is an uncertainty that provokes severe anxieties in the human psyche (Jentsch 197). Heart-stopping moments with sudden movements of inanimate objects, for example in *The Woman in Black*, are typical methods of horror films to make the audience shudder; not only does this refer to objects that are not supposed to be alive, but also to dead bodies that should not be moving anymore; in this case classical horror figures such as zombies or vampires tie in with Jentsch’s theories. As another unsettling example with regards to inanimate objects, Jentsch mentions the common fear of realistic replicas of human bodies in particular. The source of the resulting unease is the problem of distinguishing between live and still, since semiconscious doubts as to whether a figurine might be moving or not are troubling for the human mind (Jentsch 198). This notion has frequently been used in Gothic fiction, be it in Ann Radcliffe’s classic *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or the teen horror movie *House of Wax* (2005; dir. Jaume Collet-Serra). According to Jentsch, this fear is even amplified by automatic figures (203), nowadays, this might relate to the fear of robots or other replicas. However, everyday objects such as dolls cannot be included in this category, and also toys that are supposed to move do not cause the same reactions in the human psyche as life-sized mannequins would (Jentsch 203). Contrary to Jentsch’s statement, various novels and films in the horror genre make use of devices such as dolls and toys. Freud’s theory, which will be introduced in the next subchapter, presents

figurines and dolls as examples of the uncanny as well. The use of dolls and toys in particular will be of central importance because they commonly occur in horror films featuring children.

Jentsch points out that noises that seem unfamiliar and cannot be traced back to a comprehensible source are extremely off-putting for the human mind (198). In this case, again, the movie *The Woman in Black* features various scenes with uncanny noises that seemingly come out of nowhere, or can only be attributed to inanimate objects or things that would generally not make any kind of noise, and, respectively, other sounds. Also, as already pointed out, the found footage film *The Blair Witch Project* makes use of familiar noises, such as the cries of babies and children, however, puts them in an unfamiliar context by making them seem to come out of nowhere.

3.1.2 Sigmund Freud's *Uncanny*

Based on the theories of Ernst Jentsch, Sigmund Freud presents his own ideas regarding the uncanny in his identically named essay published in 1919. As a definition, Freud states that the uncanny “belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread” (Freud *The Uncanny* 123¹). His theory serves as basis for numerous works on Gothic fiction and similar genres. Although emotions such as fear are subjective and not identical for every single person, Freud is looking for instances which evoke the same amount of unease in every individual, instances that are universally acknowledged as uncanny. Therefore, he examines “under what conditions the familiar can become uncanny and frightening” (124). The psychoanalyst sets out to establish certain factors, rules, or situations under which familiar situations become uncanny, and new, under which unknown circumstances are scary rather than exciting. Freud attempts to

¹ For the sake of brevity and readability this subchapter will only use page numbers in order to refer to Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. Introd. Hugh Haughton. London: Penguin Group, 2003.

go beyond Jentsch's explanations, since, in his opinion, there is more to the uncanny than intellectual uncertainty and the unfamiliar (125).

As already mentioned, Jentsch maintains that situations of everyday life may become uncanny. In his opinion, the uncanny is strictly related to something that an individual has never experienced before, therefore, confusing and overwhelming the human mind. But according to Freud, uncanny situations do not have to be strange or new to a person, also "something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed" (148) is unsettling for the human mind. In his opinion, the uncanny is not only linked to the unknown, but to something that is repressed or supposed to be hidden (148). Freud acknowledges the common fear of corpses, death, ghosts, or haunted houses – all of which are major elements in the horror stories treated in this thesis. Emotional reactions to death as well as uncertainty and vagueness, also on the part of science are closely related to this fear. Moreover, he relates these feelings to the ancient fear of death and an old concept that all dead instantly and automatically become opponents of the living. However, since death and everything surrounding it has always been something appalling and unsettling for the human mind, the question of whether it is truly necessary for a concept to be repressed in order to become uncanny arises. Freud explains that this essential repression lies in the nature of, in his words, "so-called educated people" (149) who deeply reject the notion of ghosts and spirits. In order for a living person to become uncanny, some evil intent has to be ascribed to him as well as supernatural or special powers. In summary, uncanny effects can often be traced back to situations when the boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, when suddenly something that has been considered as fantasy or imaginary turns out to be real (148-150). Hitherto Freud makes clear that "the false resemblance of death and the raising of the dead have been represented to us as very uncanny themes" (153). These are

ancient fears that were once believed and have been overcome by modern human society by now, yet, as soon as some situations hint at these old superstitions those repressed assumptions return to the surface. Other fears may result from repressed childhood complexes and turn up as something uncanny in later life. Hence, Freud concludes “the uncanny element we know from experience arises either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs that have been surmounted appear to be once again confirmed” (155).

With regards to fiction, Freud maintains that there is a vast difference of the uncanny in literature and in real life. According to Freud, since the human mind adapts to the medium of literature, and feels comfortable and secure with the fact that these stories are fictional, a so-called safe haven, there is no room for the uncanny in this case. However, if the writer portrays a story that is closely linked to our reality, a world in which the supernatural and spiritual are as little accepted and believed in as in ours, whatever is perceived as uncanny in reality is also uncanny in fiction. The author seemingly tricks the audience by initially portraying everyday life and then transgressing it (155-157). Indeed, if one examines the most popular ghost stories of the last decades, the most frightening and spine-chilling stories and films take place in a familiar setting, in a world, where the belief in supernatural powers is uncommon and a matter of childish imagination.

Freud mentions the fear and doubt about whether something is inanimate or not in connection with the uncanny as well (138-139). In this respect Freud underlines that children treat their dearest toys, be it stuffed animals or dolls, as live objects, they may even want their favourite playthings to come to life since very often children become attached to such objects. The uncanny thus cannot be traced back to an infantile fear but to a wish, which seems contradictory, since Jentsch claims that especially children are usually overwhelmed and

frightened by unknown phenomena at various stages of his essay (141). In addition, Freud stresses the “motif of the double” (142). For this theory he draws on Otto Rank’s ideas concerning the double and its connection with “mirror-images, shadows, guardian spirits, the doctrine of the soul and the fear of death” (142). In Freud’s view, as soon as the primeval narcissism which controls the mental life of the primitive man is conquered, the connotation of the ‘double’ is altered: “having once been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death” (142) and thereby “the double has become an object of horror” (143). Interestingly, some incidents, like a doll coming to life, might be uncanny and terrifying for an adult but might not scare little children. As a result, children can themselves become uncanny as their expectations of the world and resulting actions can differ vastly from those of their parents. This hypothesis will be debated in the analyses of Gothic stories in the following chapters. Gothic fiction uses underlying fears and weaknesses of the human psyche in various novels and films, especially in the following three examples: *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Shining*, and *The Woman in Black*. All of these stories feature children that become uncanny under particular circumstances.

3.2 Adaptation Studies

Precast images of a well-read audience seem to be the worst enemy of a producer of a movie adaptation. On one hand the storyline has to come across to all viewers who are not familiar with the source text, on the other, those viewers who have studied the text will be alert regarding each and every minor change in the storyline. Changes have to be made in order to meet the standards of the new medium even though fidelity to the source is the major point of criticism in most adaptations. Especially Gothic stories which frequently deviate from reality, portray unimaginable creatures, overwhelming scenery, and paranormal phenomena are difficult

to put on screen. Some alterations might not be necessary because of the switch in medium but because of a shift in focus of the story or in order to create genre-specific audience reactions, such as fear in the case of horror films. Since one of the aims of this thesis is to show that there are crucial differences between the representations of children in horror films compared to their literary counterparts in selected examples, this sub-chapter takes a closer look on adaptation studies.

Numerous scholars have tried to define the term ‘adaptation studies’ on the one hand, and have also taken a look at the risen doubts about movie adaptations and the striking hostility between literature and film on the other. As Cardwell correctly points out “the term adaptation studies had historically implied a perspective of comparison, which admits a fundamental and determining relationship between ‘this book’ and ‘this film’ and leads frequently to ‘fidelity criticism’” (51-52). Such a comparison leads us to expect certain things that the movie can never achieve, therefore the audience is often biased when it comes to watching a movie and often persists on the storyline of the book, thereby ignoring crucial contextual factors (Cardwell 52). Also McFarlane hints at a certain rivalry between literature and film. In this respect, he claims that quite often scholars and audiences complain about the movie, as if it were more important to make it more like literature, albeit as a different medium. Frequently, viewers look for exactly those features they valued in the novel or play when watching the film adaptation, regardless of whether these are possible in this kind of medium. Often, the audience is not interested in any additions or alterations in the adaptation, but only seeks for the maximum of accordance with the source (McFarlane “It Wasn’t Like That in the Book” 4-6). A valid question by Robert Stam is what exactly it is that movies are trying to be faithful to. Whether it be the exact happenings of the story, or the author’s intentions behind their work, the description of characters in the book

and finding actors or actresses that fit these descriptions most regardless of their acting skills, or including every little detail of the plot – none of these things can be properly transferred on screen and please a hundred percent of the audience at the same time. The insistence on fidelity completely disregards the actual conduct of making a movie. Films are very complex to be planned and involve, in contrast to most novels, more than one person to produce. Lastly, a perfectly faithful adaptation is impossible, especially due to the mere change in medium (Stam 15-17). McFarlane notes that the inability of the audience to understand what is and is not possible in the realm of film adaptations with regards to narrative, is what then leads to an outcry about the violation of the original plot. He makes a clear distinction between what can be transferred from one medium to another and what can be properly adapted. The former denotes the process whereby particular narrative elements of the text are quite accessible to be portrayed in a film, the latter those processes in which novelistic features have to find other equivalences available in the film medium, if available at all. McFarlane draws on Roland Barthes's theories of narratology and applies them to the field of adaptation studies. Hence, he distinguishes between distributional and integrational functions, also called functions proper and indices, in order to differentiate between what can be adapted or transferred. Whereas the functions proper denote certain actions and events of the plot, indices refer to less specific concepts such as atmosphere or psychological information about the characters. The former are, generally speaking, more easily transferred from text to screen, even though also indices may be transferred properly. McFarlane also adopts Barthes's concepts of cardinal functions, as the cornerstones of the action, and catalysers which merely support the former. In the field of movie adaptation, changing or even deleting a cardinal function will most likely elicit with popular outrage and dissatisfaction on the part of the audience. However, these cardinal functions can

still be altered in the movie version by varying catalysers surrounding them. Both aspects can to some extent be transferred into a film, since they refer only to the plot and are independent of language. Within the notion of integrational functions, subdivided into indices proper and informants, respectively, the former may not be directly transferred, since they are linked to character and atmosphere. Informants on the other hand refer to basic knowledge about the story, the occupation of characters, their name and age, the setting of the story etc. (McFarlane *Novel to Film* 12-14).

Stam adds that there are always two ways to portray a story on screen, which can be crucial when producing a precast story. Filmmakers can make huge differences by showing or telling a story, that is, monstration or narration (35). These techniques can be used very cleverly in order to show different points of view or to clarify the position of the protagonist. If a novel is adapted into a movie, which is the case for all three examples that are worked with in this thesis, it is crucial to investigate how much the story has to be changed because of a switch in the narrative point of view. As McFarlane explains, there are various ways in order to maintain the points of view in movies with the help of various techniques. Some of them might be the subjective cinema, with, e.g., the point-of-view shot, other techniques may include voice-overs or oral narration in order to keep up the illusion of a first-person-narrator. In an omniscient novel the story is presented by two kinds of discourses that is the direct speech of the characters and the narrative. By means of *mise-en-scène* the camera becomes the narrator and introduces the characters' appearance or setting to the audience. However, the camera, in contrast to the omniscient narrator, will always stand completely outside the narration. Whereas the filmmakers might adopt certain dialogues from the source word by word, they can never achieve the same

with the narrative. Yet, by means of editing, shot types, music, etc. the filmmakers can transfer some of the functions of the narration. (McFarlane *Novel to Film* 15-18).

With the help of McFarlane's theories, the novels and movie adaptations chosen for this thesis will be analysed not in terms of their overall sameness, but especially with the aim of switch in character representation. By taking a closer look at the films' cinematic codes and mise-en-scène as well as Barthes's notions of functions proper and indices as well as cardinal functions, and catalysers, respectively, it will show whether these concepts are used to shift the focus or distort the view of child characters in horror films compared to their source novels. As Stam points out, a comparative narratology of a movie adaptation also investigates how adaptations may add, erase, or alter characters, which is an important aspect when specifically looking at the representation of certain groups of people, in this case children (34).

4 **HENRY JAMES – “THE TURN OF THE SCREW”**

In the 1890s Henry James was introduced to a new critical phase in his life. Gradually, he had lost interest in topics that had previously been prevalent in his work such as the political and social subjects he had discussed a decade earlier. Now, in this new stage the author was frequently attracted to the field of the ghostly. A vast interest in the Victorian phenomenon of the haunted house brought James close to this field and marked the beginning of this phase (Lustig “Introduction” *The Turn of the Screw* vii-viii). In the same time, Henry James acquired a new home with a twenty-one-year's lease on Lamb House, Sussex, similarly looking to his descriptions of Bly in *Turn of the Screw* and left London behind. This house was seemingly more suitable for the lifestyle of an artist and a completely new situation compared to his restlessness and travelling in the past (Edel 186-191). During this time of his life, in Lamb House, James

created the story of Bly, a mysterious manor, home to ghostly happenings and strange events. Peter G. Beidler explains, the fact that Henry James wrote a ghost story in this period is anything but surprising. In the late eighteen-hundreds a general interest in spiritualism and the supernatural manifested itself in all classes, even the most educated men were fascinated by the paranormal. One example of his fascination is ‘The Cambridge Ghost Club’, a gathering of educated men who admitted the possibility of supernatural happenings. In addition, one of its members became the founding president to another society in 1882, ‘The Society for Psychical Research’ which counted over seven hundred members by the end of the eighteen-eighties. Although there is no evidence James was interested in these clubs and their theories, he was definitely intrigued by narratives of encounters with supernatural powers (Beidler 24-26). According to his notebooks, James’s initial idea for the short novel came from an encounter with the Archbishop of Canterbury in January 1895. The ghost story that the Archbishop told James this day is quite similar to the final version of James’s novel. James described the story he had been told merely as “faint sketch” and related “very badly and imperfectly”; however, it made up the basic structure of *The Turn of the Screw* (Matthiessen & Murdock 178). Scholars have established two camps, one claiming James’s intention was to depict a classic ghost story about a haunted house, and the other determined that, in fact, James portrayed an insane governess who is a threat to the children. Beidler points out that in this case the story centres on a young and naïve governess who seemingly falls in love with the head of the house. Her work at Bly overwhelms her, she is tired and stressed. Eventually, as the boy Miles is expelled from school without apparent reason that she knows of, the exhausted woman starts to imagine ghosts. In this reading the children are perfectly sane young pupils who gradually become afraid of their teacher. The deluded young woman is suspicious of the children’s behavior; they appear to be

hiding something when, in reality, she is the one who is losing her mind. As a shocking result, it is the governess who takes Miles's life at the end of the story (Beidler 6-10). Although this reading is supported by some researchers, Edel, for instance, the majority of scholars, like Beidler, acknowledge both interpretations but are more interested in the supernatural version of James's narrative. The most convincing evidence, however, lies in James's notebooks where the author describes the original composition of the story. The crucial parts include two children left alone with servants in an old manor, presumably because of their parents' death:

The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children; the children are bad, full of evil, to a sinister degree. The servants die (the story vague about the way of it) and their apparitions, figures, return to haunt the house and children, to whom they seem to beckon, whom they invite and solicit, from across dangerous places, the deep ditch of a sunk fence, etc. – so that the children may destroy themselves, lose themselves, by responding, by getting into their power (Matthiessen & Murdock 178).

Although the underlying structure of the plot is a typical haunted house story, it has to be kept in mind that this is merely the tale James heard that one evening in January 1895. How James dealt with the source for *The Turn of the Screw* at the end of the day is open to interpretation. It may well be the case that James, after all, simply tried to create an ambiguous tale which lets its readers decide for themselves where the evil lies in Bly House. Nevertheless, without doubt James intended to create a gripping story, placed in an eerie setting with an uncanny atmosphere that is decidedly unique in the Gothic tradition.

4.1 Youth in Revolt – Flora’s and Miles’s Dark Side

Regardless of whether James wanted to depict an instable young governess who is a threat to her young fosterlings or whether he intended to write a story about possessed children, *The Turn of the Screw*² presents itself to the reader from the perspective of an unnamed young woman who takes on work as a governess at Bly house and the behaviour of the children in the story will be analysed on the basis of her account. The novel has a frame story and starts out with the narration of a man called Douglas who tells the story of Bly on Christmas Eve. According to his account, the unnamed governess put down to paper all the horrifying happenings that she encountered when working with Flora and Miles, and, since she later became the governess of Douglas’s sister, somehow passed her notes on to him. The story of the supposedly supernatural encounters at Bly house is recounted long after her death.

Henry James’s ghost story starts out as a paramount example of a haunted house story. The protagonist moves to a strange and spacious house with a gruesome past and is suddenly deeply involved in the house’s secrets. In this case, the young governess is confronted with the unusual family circumstances of her protégés Flora and Miles, both orphaned and left in the care of their negligent uncle who does not reside at Bly and wishes to be informed and disturbed as little as possible. Hence, the children are in desperate need of care and involvement since their last caregivers have left. With no parents and no other nurturing relative to turn to, they are forced into a situation where they have to attach themselves to a stranger. Aside from that, Bly House provides the children with numerous attachment figures such as the housekeeper Mrs Grose and various other attendants who are mentioned but not described in detail. Right from the start the

² For brevity’s sake this chapter uses only page numbers to refer to James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*. 1898. Ed. T.J. Lustig. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.

children at Bly House are described to be special and, right from the start, Bly itself is presented as an eerie place. Flora, the young girl, is defined by the governess as the “most beautiful child I have ever seen” with an “angelic beauty” (124). In the governess’s view, Flora represents the classic image of a child in the nineteenth-century; innocent, angelic, and beautiful – the perfect little girl. The woman is completely absorbed in Flora’s radiance, as if under a spell, and is unable to rest at night – an aspect that she, among other factors, attributes to “her little girl” (124). In this respect, Flora is the epitome of beauty, virtue, and innocence. As soon as the governess’s first night at Bly is over, strange sounds in the house foreshadow later events. Classic Gothic devices such as unusual noises, cries and footsteps startle her, especially since she ascribes them to children: “I recognized, faint and far, the cry of a child; there had been another when I found myself just consciously starting as at the passage, before my door, of a light footstep” (125). From this point on, James hints at the unease that is to be felt at Bly, most importantly in connection to its children. As the young governess continues to ask about the little boy who lives in the house as well the housekeeper describes the young man as an extraordinary child, apparently well-behaved and educated, and as she points out the governess “will be carried away by the little gentleman!” (126). The fact that Miles is a mysterious young boy, who might not be as well-behaved as the governess assumed, is made apparent to the governess the next day, when she finds out he has been expelled from school. James does not reveal why Miles has been let go, the only implication is that he is a bad influence on his “poor little innocent mates” (129). Mrs Grose’s and the governess’s reaction mirror this exact image of the unthreatening child. Miles’s schoolmates are young boys aged around ten, hence, the first thing that comes to the women’s minds is that they must be poor and innocent. Moreover, one of the reasons they cannot believe the content of the letter of Miles’s school is the fact that Miles is just a child. Mrs

Grose points out that it is unbelievable to say such things about a boy who is not even ten years old. Both women are biased in their view of the children; they think them innocent, angelic, and sweet; they cannot even grasp the concept of a child being a threat. As already mentioned, the Victorian time saw children as inherently pure characters who are victimised in their corruption by society. To assume that a young boy merely ten years of age is the corrupted one who pollutes his fellow pupils is unthinkable. As the governess finally makes young Miles's acquaintance, she is as fascinated with him as with Flora. Her description of the boy almost sounds supernatural, since, again, apparently she has never encountered any child like him. According to the governess he is surrounded by "the same positive fragrance and purity" (132) as Flora and is sweet, innocent, and her encounter with him is somewhat divine. In the following chapters as well, the governess's appraisal is resumed. She compares them to cherubs, is "dazzled by their loveliness", and acknowledges their singularity (140-141).

From the governess's perspective, the children she is supposed to look after are extraordinarily beautiful and angelic. Her expectations about her work with the children, however, are completely refuted and her view of the little boy and girl is shattered once they start to behave oddly. In this respect, the children become uncanny for the governess. In addition, although Mrs Grose knows the children better and is aware that there have been quite a few attendants who have worked with the children and subsequently have left, she is equally drawn to them, and is equally shocked as the young governess when the letter from Miles's school calls him a threat to other pupils. Both women are absorbed in their notion of childhood and childlike behaviour which is shattered by the happenings at Bly. The case of Flora and Miles is exemplary of the deconstruction of the familiar, however, theirs is extreme. There is hardly another novel or film in which uncanny children seem to be glorified as much as in *The Turn of the Screw*, hence

their fall is even graver. Similar to the notion of childhood in the Romantic era, Flora and Miles are idealised and put on a pedestal. However, no other story paints such an ambiguous picture of two children as this short novel by James. The author makes clear from the beginning that these are no ordinary children, the fascination of the governess is very straight-forward in that respect. Already in this context Miles and Flora are becoming something uncanny, somewhat unfamiliar. They are described to be almost too perfect, unapproachable to some extent and therefore quite extraordinary children. They are continuously praised, albeit not for actual achievements but merely for their looks and charisma. The fact that the governess and housekeeper seem to be under a spell suggest inconsistencies at Bly. Hence, the reader is always aware that there is something odd about the kids in *Turn of the Screw*.

Still, at this point of the plot the only thing that strikes the governess as odd is Miles's expulsion from school, up to the point she finally meets one of the ghosts of Bly House. Peter Quint, a former valet at Bly who died of a head wound under mysterious circumstances, is the first ghost to present himself to the young governess. Interestingly enough, James immediately draws a connection to the children of the story: the governess points out that she sees the apparition standing on top of a tower that Flora has only recently shown her around in. The little girl is therefore instantly linked with the stranger on the tower, apparently the ghost of the late valet of the house. Shocked by the sight, the young governess naturally thinks of an intruder to the estate, however, decides not to worry her co-worker Mrs Grose with the subject. Only as she encounters the mysterious figure for a second time she eventually confides in her friend. In one of the novel's most eerie scenes an enigmatic figure looks through the window straight into the governess's eyes and she immediately recognises it as the same one she saw standing on the tower. As she comes to confront the man there is nobody to be found outside the window. Upon

this mysterious encounter the young governess finds out about Mrs Grose's true sentiments toward these occurrences at the manor. She, too, is intrigued by the sightings and indirectly confesses her belief in ghosts as she indicates her suspicion that Peter Quint may have returned to the premises. According to her, Quint is haunting the manor again because of the boy Miles. Mrs Grose's interpretation of Quint's motives and Miles's behaviour after the appearance of the valet's ghost resembles Renner's characterisation of possessed children that has been discussed earlier (cf. *The 'Evil Child' in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*). Apparently, Miles's and Flora's uncle has neglected to take care of the children and has left them exposed to the sinister influences at Bly. Since society views children as a blank page, as pure entities who have yet to be formed by the community, a proper guardian and suitable role model seems to be the only prevention against corruption by evil forces. The twisted family structure at Bly house suggests that the two children are even more vulnerable and prone to fall into the hands of these paranormal powers. In addition, the absence of their guardian and their consequent fixation on household servants unfit to provide an adequate exemplary function suggests that under other circumstances and secure social surroundings the hauntings at Bly house might never have occurred in the first place. Even worse, Miles and Flora are seemingly pushed from one guardian to another. As the young governess confronts Mrs Grose with the negligence of the children's safety she dismisses all charges and blames their uncle as sole culprit. Although the woman apparently knew about Quint's dubious influences on the boy she failed to shield the child from him. In this case, the source of Flora's and Miles's dark side seems to be the corruption of innocence evoked by sheer negligence and the lack of a person of authority.

Mrs Grose explains to the governess that Flora is supposedly too young to remember Quint and his connection to Miles. Meanwhile, the governess's little angel is soon to become her worst

nightmare. When she and little Flora go down to the lake near the house, the governess perceives a figure at the opposite shore, a mysterious woman in black watching the little girl. She realises that the little girl is aware of the figure as well but to the governess's astonishment Flora does not react as a typical child would when perceiving an eerie looking stranger clad completely in black with unusually pale skin: "I waited for what a cry from her, what some sudden innocent sign either of interest or alarm. . . . I waited, but nothing came" (155). Once again Flora refutes the governess's expectation of childlike behaviour and the familiar becomes uncanny. The precast assumption that a child might be startled at the view of a scary-looking stranger is completely false in this case. The governess is alarmed by Flora's lack of fear and even interest. It seems as if the girl remains completely untouched by the sudden appearance of a stranger observing her play. On the other hand, the fear of the unknown, in this case the reason why a strange woman is standing on the other side of the lake and her motives for trespassing, troubles the governess. This encounter becomes something uncanny for the young woman, since an intruder is on the property she is living at and thereby endangering the safety of her pupil. Oddly enough, what makes the scene even more frightening is the child's inexplicable reaction, which is hardly any reaction at all. The fact that this little girl does not abide by her guardian's expectations is one aspect of James's unusual depiction of children. In this respect, not only this deconstruction of the familiar but also Flora's acceptance of the uncanny makes her the uncanny herself. As soon as she perceives this situation – which is, without doubt, strange and unfamiliar for the governess – as natural, the girl herself becomes part of the realm of the uncanny. This crucial scene in James's *The Turn of the Screw* marks the key turn of the plot. From this point onwards the governess is afraid of her innocent, little angels. As she recounts the situation to Mrs Grose she soon realises that she cannot trust the children anymore. Flora keeps quiet about what

they have witnessed, for numerous critics a sign that the young governess is going insane. Nevertheless, when Grose hears about what happened regarding the woman in black, seemingly in mourning, she does not contradict the governess's assumption that the figure is the late Miss Jessel, her predecessor. After all, it was Mrs Grose herself who first started talking about the supernatural when she suggested that Peter Quint stalked the grounds. Yet, what the young governess seems mostly upset about is not the trespasser she noticed at the lake, but the fact that the little girl is keeping everything to herself. The governess is convinced once Mrs Grose confronts Flora with the subject the child is going to lie. In the blink of an eye she does not trust her pupils anymore. Whereas at first she was delighted by their presence and enchanted by their beauty, she now is terrified of what they may say. After all, a child that does not fear what seems to be a representative of evil is unfathomable for the governess. That is also why she is repulsed by Mrs Grose's suggestion that Flora might have liked the situation and is intrigued by the bystander at the lake. She even advocates the view that this might even be a sign of Flora's innocence; that she cannot distinguish between good and evil, between a friend and a foe. This lack of judgment might be the reason the children are drawn to the two ghosts at Bly although they are actually aware that Quint and Miss Jessel both have died.

At night, after the governess's third encounter with the ghost of Peter Quint on the stairs in the house, Flora's behaviour continues to be rather peculiar for a little girl. In fear for the children after another confrontation with the spectre, the governess walks into her room only to find Flora's bed empty and the little girl climbing back in through the window. Oddly enough, instead of disciplining the child for leaving her bed, she is the one who is snapped at by the girl. All of a sudden, Flora talks to her governess like a grown-up. She calls her teacher "naughty" and complains about her absence (172). As the young governess asks if she were looking for her

outside on the grounds, she merely responds that she thought somebody was walking around outside, but apparently she did not necessarily expect the governess, leaving the woman suspicious of her behaviour. Especially as the girl vehemently denies to have seen anybody the woman is convinced she is being lied to. As she tries to corner Flora, the little girl is unimpressed. Flora is, without doubt, the master of the situation, she has the young governess completely under control. It seems as if that so much self-confidence in an originally shy and sweet little girl frightens the adult. The innocent girl who is supposed to be protected and looked after by the governess seems much stronger and powerful than the teacher herself. Flora does not heed the governess's accusations as if entirely sure that nothing that the grown woman can do will have any consequences for her. As the governess inquires why she has left the curtain closed around her bed, in order to create the illusion she is still in there and sleeping, little Flora is very much unimpressed by the governess's curiosity:

‘Because I don’t like to frighten you!’

‘But if I had, by your idea, gone out-?’

She absolutely declined to be puzzled; she turned her eyes to the flame of the candle as if the question were as irrelevant, or at any rate as impersonal, as Mrs Marcet or nine-times-nine. ‘Oh but you know’, she quite adequately answered, ‘that you might come back, you dear, and that you *have!*’ (173)

In this scene the role of the child and that of an adult is almost reversed. Although Flora is not disrespectful to her governess, she does not talk to her in a way a typical little girl would speak to her teacher. Naturally, the governess is upset by Flora's lack of cooperation and interest, nevertheless she drops the subject and wanders around the halls of Bly to clear her head. She is visited by the spirit of Miss Jessel for the second time, when she is startled by a woman,

seemingly in distress, sitting at the bottom of the stairs. However, as soon as the governess can take a closer look the apparition suddenly vanishes. In the middle of the night, the governess finds proof that Flora and Miles are not the little angels she has thought them to be. In this case, Flora has left her bed again and she is sitting on the windowsill and looking out onto the gardens. To the governess's horror she witnesses that the little girl is communicating with the mysterious creature she has observed earlier sitting on the stairs. As she attempts to eavesdrop on their conversation she perceives another unknown figure on the grounds, but has to go to another room in order to observe it more closely. The person on the lawn apparently looks up on the roof, as if somebody were again standing on the tower above the governess's window. To her dismay, the person standing on the lawn, conversing with someone standing on the tower, is Miles himself.

Little Flora's character has definitely gone into a new direction, from the innocent little girl in the beginning, to a sturdy and defiant child who dominates her governess. Furthermore, James puts the conflict between Flora and the governess right between her two encounters with both apparitions, thereby creating a connection between Flora's unusual behaviour and the hauntings at Bly house. For the governess it is evident that both Flora and Miles have lied to her at some point in the story and obviously share a dark secret. Although she is taken aback by the children's actions, she is still rather afraid for them, not of them. As she sees the boy standing on the lawn in the middle of the night against orders, she still sees him as "poor little Miles" (176). The woman is convinced that they do not act upon their own account or free will since her notion of childhood excludes the possibility that they could simply ignore her orders out of spite. The idea that the children could be spoiled like this goes against her perception of innocent childhood, in her view they must be corrupted by Jessel and Quint. Whether or not James meant

the children to be evil by birth or be corrupted later on by the ghosts of former employees is unclear, but in this respect demonic possession could be a plausible explanation for Miles's and Flora's unruly attitude. Furthermore, when the governess confronts Miles with his little excursion out onto the lawn in the middle of the night, James toys with the uncanniness about the boy. Whereas any other child would repent, find excuses, be stubborn or irrational, Miles stays perfectly calm when the governess asks him why he went outside:

‘Well,’ he said at last, ‘just exactly in order that you should do this.’ ‘Do what?’

‘Think me – for a change – bad!’ I shall never forget the sweetness and gaiety with which he brought out the word, nor how, on top of it, he bent forward and kissed me.

It was practically the end of everything. I met his kiss and I had to make, while I folded him for a minute in my arms, the most stupendous effort not to cry. (179)

Miles and Flora intentionally tricked the governess into looking out of the window in order to scare her, which they undoubtedly achieved. Gradually, the governess becomes suspicious of her little angels and enters an inner conflict between fearing them and being afraid for them. Not only the fact that they consciously tricked her, which she apparently never would have expected of such well-behaved kids, but also their reactions and explanations are unsettling. They play wicked pranks just for fun without any sign of remorse; on the contrary, they are completely frank about their intentions and unwilling to apologise. As a matter of fact, at least in this scene, Miles does not even seem to understand that commonly an apology would be needed to settle this situation. Miles's complete lack of empathy and guilt startles the governess. He is not aware of the consequences of his actions, if anything, he finds these consequences amusing. Oddly enough, he does not seem to want to provoke the governess and get on her nerves with silly pranks, he actually toys with her, experiments with his powers over her and observes her

reactions. If she reacts in a certain way, the way he was initially aiming for, he feels entertained. Miles apparently holds the upper hand in this scenario and the governess is merely a puppet on a string.

Over the next couple of weeks the young governess becomes more obsessed and even paranoid regarding Flora's and Miles's behaviour. She assumes that both children do not belong to this world anymore, but are now subjects to Jessel and Peter Quint. The governess's assumption, that the kids are definitely not subordinate to their own teacher is highlighted by the way Flora and Miles continue to talk to her as if she herself were a child. Finally, the governess is a nervous wreck, collapsing at the very spot at the lowest step of the stairs where she once saw the spirit of her predecessor. Mirroring Miss Jessel on the stairs, the former governess herself might have been agonised by the children as well. As soon as the governess is fit to stand up and walk to the teaching room, the woeful woman in black sits on the governess's usual spot, as if waiting for her, weeping. Henry James interestingly makes the two governesses switch places. The new governess seems as distressed as Miss Jessel was, both petrified and unable to find consolation. However, it still is unclear whether Jessel was tormented by her unhealthy relationship to Quint or whether there were other reasons. Although Mrs Grose claims it was the valet who corrupted them and Miss Jessel, it could have been the other way round as well. The only thing she has ever observed was a deep and heartfelt relationship between the two adults and the children, but, in the end, it was Quint and Jessel who both died mysterious deaths. Moreover, the young governess's theory that these evil spirits came back to haunt the children simply because of their sheer evilness makes perfect sense regarding the valet. Yet, there is no explanation as to why Miss Jessel would return as vengeful spirit into the world of the living. At no point has Mrs Grose mentioned that the late governess corrupted the children; in her eyes,

only Peter Quint appeared to be a threat to Miles. But now that the new governess is seemingly in the same spot as Jessel and vice versa the question arises whether she has been in Jessel's previous spot all along. James tried to depict not only wicked servants but, more importantly, sinister children, hence, Miles and Flora might have been those who corrupted Quint and Jessel and not the other way round. In this case, the former employees at Bly are not evil ghosts but vengeful spirits who are not possessing but haunting the children. Now, that the new governess is close to expose the children's true nature they go into offense mode. The young governess's approach might have been wrong all along. At any rate, the spirits have never shown any signs of aggression or harmed anybody. The young woman's instincts, however, told her to shield the children and therefore, she did not factor in the possibility that the late servants might have tried to warn her, instead of threatening her or abducting the children. In addition, the strange power of the children and their influence is illustrated throughout the novel. When the young governess attempts again to get through to the boy, she asks him for his understanding that the only wish she has is to help him. She interprets a sudden blast of air as his answer:

The answer to my appeal was instantaneous, but it came in the form of an extraordinary blast and chill, a gust of frozen air and a shake of the room as great as if, in the wild wind, the casement had crashed in. The boy gave a loud shriek which, lost, in the rest of the shock of sound, might have seemed, indistinctly, though I was so close to him, a note either of jubilation or terror. (204)

In sudden darkness, she realises that although the candle has gone out, the window is closed and the curtains unruffled. Upon her fright, the boy even admits it was him who blew out the candle. The fact that there is a gush of wind although the window is closed directly points towards a paranormal phenomenon which is, after all, also acknowledged by Miles who screams

at the same time. Nevertheless, it is peculiar that the boy claims it was him who blew out the candle – in the view of the governess this is clearly a lie. His explanation is implausible; if he merely blew out the candle, there would have been no reason to scream, if he wanted to frighten the governess, why did he assert he turned off the lights. Miles might be able to use supernatural forces or the governess is completely delusional and imagines absolutely anything he says or does, which, with regard to Henry James's notes on the subject, would make no sense at all. Miles is not merely a victim in this scenery. He may be possessed by spirits, but the assumption that the boy is the most influential and powerful character in the story is much more likely. By no means is the boy the only one who holds dubious powers. Only the next day, young Flora is suddenly absent and the young governess's intuition leads her straight to the lake. Apparently defying the laws of physics, little Flora rowed the boat to another spot near the lake and Grose and Giddens have to travel quite a distance to reach her. This fact is very much overshadowed by the governess's next encounter with Miss Jessel. James's twentieth chapter in *The Turn of the Screw* might be the most expressive proof for critics who maintain that the young governess is deluded. In this case, she is the only one who can see the apparition and the fact that Flora denies to seeing it makes the governess furious. She does not see Flora as she used to, suddenly she is "common and most ugly" (214). Also vice versa, the governess's accusations upset Flora. The little girl will not stop screaming until Mrs Grose leads her from the scene. It is, however, very unlikely that Flora is merely so upset because the governess was cross with her. As the little girl will not calm herself, Grose tells the young governess about all the things she keeps saying. Although the housekeeper is confused by the governess's behaviour, since she herself did not see the late Miss Jessel, she is now appalled by the horrid language Flora displays: "From that child – horrors! . . . It's beyond everything, for a young lady; and I can't think wherever she must

have picked up –” (220-221). Upon the governess’s allegations the little girl seemingly reveals her true self. Since she is in sole charge, the governess decides to send everyone away, excluding Miles and herself. Mrs Grose and Flora are supposed to visit the master in London right away and deliver a letter from the governess, which, mysteriously vanishes. Also Beidler regards some of these happenings as key facts that weaken the theory that the governess is insane. Flora rowing a boat much too big for such a little girl, Miles confessing to extinguishing the candle, Mrs Grose identifying the former valet only by the governess’s description and the fact that, although she never actually sees the ghosts with her own eyes, Grose is always convinced of the truth of the governess’s statements (Beidler 12). The old housekeeper is aware of the fact that something is amiss at Bly, and that it is not the new governess. Hence, she agrees to leaving the estate with Flora and leaving the matter to the governess.

Convinced that she can somehow save the boy, the governess approaches Miles as they are alone at Bly. She questions him, especially about his feelings towards Bly and his frame of mind regarding his life here. Upon this inquiry, she finds out that Miles is awfully drawn to this place. Like a ghost that haunts the halls of Bly, Miles seems to be an inherent part of the estate. The young governess tries again and again to get information from the boy; at first about stealing the letter to his uncle and the mysterious circumstances under which he was expelled from school. As the governess resumes to talk to Miles and tries to make him confess his connection to Quint, the said valet shows his face again outside the window, directly behind Miles, as if pulling his strings or, otherwise, pouncing on him. The boy’s white face echoes the whiteness of the ghostly appearance behind him outside of the window. Eventually, Miles gives in and admits to taking and burning her letter. She takes this confession as a hint to why he was forced to leave school. However, Miles denies having stolen or burnt anything at school but he rather has said things

that distressed the other children and teachers. Plausibly, the bad things Miles came up with at school stand in relation to the ‘horrors’ Grose heard his little sister speak after the event at the lake. In the boy’s case, however, these words had a strong effect on his fellow pupils, his influential character was a threat to other children. The situation becomes more tense, both are frightened and the governess attempts to shield Miles from Quint. As she points out he is near them, calling him “coward horror”, Miles asks, astonished: “‘It’s he?’” (236). The governess, convinced she finally can get all the information she needs out of the boy, asks whom he means. Miles addresses her the last time, exclaiming “Peter Quint – you devil!” (236) and dies in the woman’s arms.

In the end, it remains unclear whether the governess is insane and accidentally kills Miles with her tight grip, or whether the boy is finally released from the evil ghost who has possessed him. Whether or not there actually are ghosts at Bly, or merely a mentally unstable governess, Henry James produced a haunting story with children in charge. Flora and Miles may or may not be possessed; they are definitely in charge of the action in *The Turn of the Screw*. They are far superior to any adult who lives at Bly in terms of their self-confidence and, although officially the governess is responsible for everything that happens during their uncle’s absence, they control the actions at Bly. With their enchanting nature they seduce the governess into thinking them angelic and pure, only to refute her view at the end. They entirely turn her expectations of the children, which are typical Victorian notions of innocence and dependence. In order to create a gripping tale, James cunningly included the unfamiliar in the story, namely children who completely shatter this paramount notion of the Victorian child. Only their governess, who lives by these notions and is convinced of them, sees Flora and Miles as victims. At first, the two children are represented merely through the point of view of an adult who holds a precast image

of childhood. However, by looking at the story closely, Flora and Miles are hardly victims at all. Even if they are somehow connected to the ghosts of their former wardens, neither the girl nor the boy seem unhappy or scared of it. The only thing that becomes a threat to them in the first place is an adult who cannot cope with the fact that children are not always on the good side. As soon as the governess begins her attempts to save them, Flora and Miles appear cornered and start to revolt. By urging them into the socially acceptable role of the victimised child the governess may even become more of a threat than Quint and Jessel. Interestingly, the only time the governess has ever been interpreted as threat to the children is when she is viewed as deluded young woman who only constructs the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel in her head. The existence of ghosts at Bly, however, does not exclude the possibility of the governess being a threat to the children, namely to evil children. Naturally, Miles and Flora do not tell her that they, too, can see the ghosts of Quint and Jessel, since they do not want to break their bonds with them. This possibility is not once thought of by the governess due to her fixed opinion of her angelic pupils. Therefore, they become something uncanny, something the governess is scared of, something that she has never seen before and contradicts all her previous perceptions of children. In this respect, the governess might perfectly well seem confused and at the verge of a nervous breakdown with her uncountable accusations of Miles and Flora and her wild speculations about Quint and Jessel. She is terrified of the children, who are clearly toying with her and trying to take control over her. As already mentioned, it might just be the case that the kids in *The Turn of the Screw* are not possessed by Quint and Jessel, but that they held a tight grip on their former servants, just like they did hold on the young governess.

4.2 **“Good children do get a bit boring, don’t they?” – “The Innocents”**

Jack Clayton’s adaptation of Henry James’s novel is already remarkable in its title, which the producer did not directly adopt from the turn of the century novel. Thereby, the movie seemingly takes a stance in pointing towards the innocent nature of the characters in the novel. It is doubtful, however, that the label refers directly to the children. On one hand, the title might suggest that the children remain the victims of the story, the governess is a threat for them after all, and their nature stays pure until the end. On the other hand, the only person who refers to the children by that term is the young governess, and she does so ironically to reveal their twisted nature and hypocrisy. In addition, the title may not necessarily denote the kids but the governess and the old housekeeper who, almost until the end, stick with their naïve and innocent notion of childhood and childlike behaviour. They themselves could be the innocents of the story; the deceived and betrayed guardians of evil children who stand in close collaboration with demons from the past.

In the beginning of the movie a childish voice sings an eerily depressing song, ‘O Willow Waly’, which roughly relates the story of the late Miss Jessel who used to work at Bly: “We lay my love and I beneath the weeping willow | But now alone I lie. Oh willow I die, oh willow I die” (*The Innocents*³ 00:10-00:29). The song seems to be sung by a little girl, perhaps suggesting Flora, and is used as leitmotif throughout the feature. Birds start chirping in the background, creating an uncanny atmosphere, since the screen remains dark during the opening credits. The birds, as harbinger of spring, connect the child’s voice to nature, to purity, yet their chirping does not make the scene soothing or safe, but rather unsettling. This impression is intensified by an

³ All scenes discussed in this subchapter refer to *The Innocents*. Screenplay by William Archibald and Truman Capote. Dir. Jack Clayton. 1961. DVD. Capelight Pictures, 2012.

additional sound, the sobbing of a young woman, and the close-up of her hands in prayer that hint towards an unexpected turn and a strong force behind those pure powers. The scene remains dark, almost as if it were nighttime, however, the chirping of the birds continues as the woman sobs. Twittering birds at night, a sobbing woman in prayer, and the child's song at the beginning – all those symbols create a well-made eerie atmosphere. The combination of these devices seems unusual, uncanny, they make no sense together. Taking a closer look at the story, however, these devices incorporate the themes of the story perfectly. Natural phenomena, such as birds chirping or, in this case, the innocence of children, are taken out of context and placed in a darker and menacing setting. As a result, they leave the governess broken, scared, and praying for support. Finally, the actress's voice-over gives away the point of view of the story, as she says "All I want to do is save the children, not destroy them" (02:04-02:09). First, the audience is presented with the narrator of the story, her statement at the beginning in this voice-over makes obvious that the happenings at Bly will be related from her angle. Furthermore, she is already apologising to the audience, or to herself, and clarifying her motives. Since the audience may question her credibility, she tries to set things straight from the beginning by explaining that her intentions are good.

Clayton omitted the frame narrative from the original story, but included a scene in which Flora's and Miles's uncle occurs. Moreover, he chose to change some catalysers in the story, for instance giving the young governess a name, Miss Giddens. This scene, however, contributes to the characterisation of the children, by telling the audience about their past and present needs. As their uncle highlights, the children need somebody whom they belong to, and, vice versa, who also belongs to them. In this case, he undoubtedly means their new governess, in the end however, it is clear that they belong to Quint and Jessel, and the other way round. He thereby

foreshadows what is bound to happen – the children will belong to somebody, but neither to him nor anybody he assigned the task. Unlike in James's novel, Miss Giddens learns about the fate of her predecessor early on, and is also informed by her employer about the mysterious circumstances of Jessel's death. Miss Giddens's arrival at Bly is accompanied by a cheerful and carefree mood. The weather is beautiful, the woman seems to be in awe about the magnificence of the estate. Shortly after her arrival though, she hears a woman's voice calling for the little girl Flora repeatedly. Once again, the viewer witnesses the events in Miss Giddens's point of view – the voice calling the little girl is distinctly audible. When she encounters Flora herself for the first time, however, she denies having heard anybody call her name. Since the story is filtered through Miss Giddens's senses, the fact that Clayton included the voice of a strange woman calling Flora's name in the movie makes the viewer uncertain of whether the little girl is telling the truth. As Giddens is introduced to Mrs Grose the housekeeper, she also negates calling the little girl, but quickly reminds the governess that there are other employees at Bly, who might have looked for Flora. It is very unlikely that some maid or the cook would call Flora out in the garden, therefore Clayton might suggest Miss Jessel is calling little Flora. Just like in the source novel, Giddens is quite astonished by the girl's angelic beauty, although already in the first scenes with her some things about her strike the governess as strange. As Grose explains that the boy will be at school for the term, Flora, interestingly, predicts his early return to Bly. Naturally, Giddens is confused by her remark, unaware that the girl is anticipating Miles's expulsion from school. Burkholder & Carse point out that, apart from the usual haunted house setting, especially in this respect *The Innocents* are closely related to Amenábar's horror film *The Others*. The children, especially the young girl, make numerous remarks throughout the movie that indicate the shocking twist at the end of the film. They seem to have some sort of psychic connection to

each other. Miles also claims to know what Flora feels before she herself does. The paranormal setting at Bly might even reinforce the link between Flora and her brother (Burkholder & Carse 210-214).

Although the governess is quite happy at Bly at first, eerie events pile up the longer she stays there. Even before Miles returns from school, she notices that little Flora alone is special in her own sense. Apart from her anticipation of Miles's early return to the estate, her charisma in general is unusual for a little girl. As she walks Miss Giddens to their shared room, she claims to like being in the dark, a notion which is in direct contrast to the customary idea of children's fear of the dark. As they enter the room, Flora starts praying next to her bed, looking astonishingly angelic. Yet, as she sits on her bed and starts to talk to her new governess she asks what would happen if she were not a good girl – a strange question for a child, and even more surprising for Miss Giddens, who simply cannot imagine that Flora could be naughty. Eerily, the child keeps asking if the Lord would resent her then, and if she were to walk the grounds of Bly forever instead of ascending to heaven. Once again confused by Flora's remark, Giddens does not yet realise that Flora obviously knows about ghosts and the lore that lost souls keep wandering the grounds where they passed away. In addition, she is aware that only if you are not a good person you are stuck in the world of the living and cannot leave on your own will. In this scene Flora hints at her friendship with two lost souls who have to stay at Bly and cannot be released from their earthly existence. Appropriately, the very moment Flora asks such profound questions a scream, as if by an animal, is clearly perceivable for the audience and Miss Giddens. The girl, again, claims not to have heard a single sound. Once again Clayton lets his audience hear the same noises as his protagonist Miss Giddens, thereby suggesting *The Turn of the Screw's* narrative situation and point of view. Before Miles's entrance at Bly, the figure of Flora is a

terrific means of setting an eerie mood and focusing on uncanny children. Not only her statements and questions seem to be peculiar, her appearance and presence seem unnatural and odd as well. As the window is suddenly opened in the middle of the night, Flora gets out of bed and wanders around in the nursery. Simultaneously, Miss Giddens seems to be having violent nightmares and tosses and turns in bed as Flora eerily stands over her, watching her. The girl becomes even spookier as she watches her governess having bad dreams and starts to grin at the sleeping woman, as if pleased by Giddens's horror. As she walks towards the window, Flora looks out onto the lawn, directly to the statues underneath her bedroom, humming the same tune that is featured in the exposition of the film. Flora's theme is ubiquitous during the movie. Frequently, the young girl hums it in the background and Miss Giddens even stumbles upon the tune herself, as she finds herself in an old, cobwebbed storage room in the attic. A little music box, probably property of the late Miss Jessel, plays exactly the same, sad tune the little girl hums all day long. In connection with the picture of Peter Quint she finds next to it, the tune as well as the picture suggest the strong bond between the children and the ghosts. While this device is not available in the book for obvious reasons, Clayton cleverly uses noises and music to demonstrate the deep alliance between the girl and her former governess. It almost seems as if Flora can summon Jessel's presence with 'O Willow Waly', as if it were a spell designed to call the dead.

Finally, Giddens and Grose find out about Miles's expulsion from school. Just like in James's source novel, both women are shocked by these news and cannot believe that such a sweet little boy might cause any disturbances in class. Miss Giddens is suspicious of Flora and seemingly remembers what the girl said the day before, Giddens turns to her and inquires whether she knew anything about it. The shots of the two characters faces, the one of Miss

Giddens, looking increasingly worried, the other, the face of Flora, smiling as if very pleased with the developments at Bly, hint towards the power relations between the confused adult and the uncanny child. Of course, Flora does not heed the governess's question, but watches a spider devour a butterfly with an unsettling fascination. As another example, one of the most haunting scenes that Burkholder and Carse analyse in *The Innocents* is connected to little Flora. While cutting roses the governess finds a stone cherub in the bushes, the epitome of innocence. The governess, however, looks closer to discover that the little putto is holding broken off hands, which apparently belong to a different, larger figure. According to Burkholder and Carse, the governess witnesses the literal interpretation of the disconnected relationship between Quint, Jessel, and the children. To Giddens's horror, a black insect is crawling out of the putto's mouth, foreshadowing all the horrors that will come out of kid's mouths later on (Burkholder & Carse 206). During the whole scene, as if to connect the little cherub to Flora, the girl hums her usual tune, "Oh Willow Waly". The little stone angel also symbolises the mask the children are wearing. From the outside they seem lovely, innocent and darling; on the inside, however, the children are rotten and appalling. The scene suddenly takes a turn, when Flora stops humming her tune. As if woken from a dream, the governess looks around her confusedly only to find the next horrifying sight at Bly: a strange man standing on top of the tower. In this scene, the producers of *The Innocents* put a lot more focus on the link between Peter Quint and little Miles. In contrary to the novel, Miss Giddens runs to the top of the tower not to find the strange man but the little boy Miles in his stead, playing with the pigeons. As he tells Miss Giddens's that nobody has been with him in the last half hour he also reveals that he has learned from Flora that Giddens is not sleeping well these days. The boy, however, adds that one cannot always trust his sister because she likes to imagine things and make things up. For Miss Giddens this scene is

very revealing. Not only does Flora keep Miles informed about their governess's current condition, she also is exposed as a liar with a powerful imagination.

Although gradually becoming more aware that the children are not the innocent little angels she thought them to be, Miss Giddens does her best to occupy and entertain them. When she tells them about her own youth one evening, Miles asks her what she thinks he will grow up to be. Foreshadowing his own fate, he claims he would like to stay a boy forever and never leave Bly. In the end, his strong connection to the house will lead to his premature death. As night approaches, Miss Giddens allows the children to play one last game of hide and seek before they go to bed. Interestingly, this scene is not present in James's novel, however crucial in order to establish an even tighter bond between the children and the ghosts. Miss Giddens, searching for the hiding children, stumbles through a corridor where she first encounters a woman dressed in black walking past her. Confused, she continues her search for the children and finds herself in a cobwebbed storage room crowded with clutter. The darkness encloses her, the only thing she can properly see is a toy clown rocking back and forth as if hit by a child in passing. Hence, she assumes that at least one of the children is hiding in this dark, restrictive place. What she finds in this room, however, is the already mentioned music box playing Flora's tune. In connection with it, she finds a miniature portrait of a handsome man – the very same one she encountered while cutting roses. The parallel display of music and photograph reveals that each item once belonged to the deceased servants. As already mentioned, Jessel's music box is where Flora picked up her little tune which connects her to the dead governess. Suddenly, a creaking noise behind her back startles the governess, just in time for Miles to open the door and cling to her neck. Miss Giddens is obviously still in shock and suddenly realises that, despite the moving clown and the noises, nobody has been in the room with her. Miles claims to hold her prisoner and very tightly clings

around her neck. His grip is so tight, that, in connection with the tension from being in this claustrophobic and eerie place, the governess becomes almost furious with him as she tells him to let go. For the first time in *The Innocents* the governess's fear of young Miles is completely obvious. Although he is just a little boy and physically much weaker than she is, the young woman's fear and desperation displays the threat she sees in him. Only as his little sister enters the room he lets go, and the children start to count for the governess to hide. Finally, hiding behind the curtain in the drawing room, she encounters Quint's face behind the window again. Certain that the face she sees is the exact face on the miniature she found in the storage room, she tries to confront him on the patio; her efforts, however, are fruitless. Like a ghost he has vanished into thin air before she even sets foot outside. Suddenly, just like when she put Flora to bed a couple of days ago, she hears an animal scream again, and Mrs Grose appears. Immediately she tells the housekeeper about the strange man she saw standing behind the window, the same man whose portrait she found in the cobwebbed room, and the elderly woman suggests she saw Quint, the master's late valet. In this very scene, which Burkholder and Carse, too, label as "one of the most eerie scenes" (210) of the movie, Grose tells Miss Giddens that the valet can hardly be standing outside the window, since he is dead. At this cue – 'dead' – children's laughter resounds in the background and the camera pans to a close-up of Flora and Miles looking down on Giddens and Grose from the stairs (38:43). While the children continue laughing, both women look terrified. Hardly any other scene is more insightful than this particular one. The association of the word 'dead' and the laughter of little children is as uncanny as a horror feature can get, combining horrible and dreadful events with the epitome of happiness and life. This uncanny juxtaposition is, of course, manifest in the women's countenance full of shock and horror. The situation is incredibly grotesque, and as Edwards and Graulund point out:

“But it [laughter] can also have a dark side: laughter can be ridiculing, alienating, inclusive/exclusive and hierarchical; it is sometimes associated with intoxication or madness, as in hysterical laughter” (93). In this sense, the children inappropriately bursting into laughter is an utterly unsettling scene.

The following day Miss Giddens is exhausted and distracted during the lessons with the children. Flora’s scratching on the chalk makes her furious, she is extremely weary of her protégée. The woman depicted at the beginning of the story is not the same anymore; the children have made her weak. Nevertheless she still has not given up hope for the children. In an act of kindness she lets them dress up and stage a little performance. Miles, however, recites a poem that makes her blood run cold. With a grave countenance, the little boy performs a poem that almost sounds like a summoning ritual for the deceased Quint:

What shall I sing
 To my Lord from my window?
 What shall I sing?
 For my Lord will not stay –
 What shall I sing?
 For my Lord will not listen –
 Where shall I go?
 For my lord is away.
 Whom shall I love
 When the moon is arisen?
 Gone is my Lord

And the grave is his prison –

What shall I say

When my Lord comes a-calling?

What shall I say

When He knocks on my door?

What shall I say

When his feet enter softly

Leaving the marks

Of his grave on my floor?

Enter, my Lord! Come from your prison!

Come from your grave!

For the moon is arisen! (Sinyard 102; *The Innocents* 45:03-46:01).

Crayton added this scene as cardinal function to the plot without any inspiration from the novel. Through this poem Miles almost confesses his connection to this mysterious lord, the servant Quint, who has passed away and without whom he is lost. Furthermore, he is willing to invite him into the world of the living and to come for him. The governess is, of course, aware of this connection. She looks frightened and does not take her eyes off Miles. The boy himself majestically walks around the room with a candle in his hand as he keeps reciting his lines. During the final passage he dramatically walks to the window and looks out. At the final words of the poem he looks down on the governess, sitting on a sofa next to him. The candle illuminates him from below, distorting his features. His glance from above, and the woman's fearful look from below signal his superiority to the adult and her fear of the child.

Flora and her connection to the music box is brought up again the following day when Miss Giddens and the children relax in the gazebo next to the lake at Bly. The governess inquires where the girl has learned the tune and whether she knows anything about the music box in the storage room. As usual, Flora does not acknowledge Miss Giddens's questions and avoids a straightforward response. In comparison to *The Turn of the Screw*, where Flora's tune is not used as leitmotif, this scene differs a lot from Henry James's original. Clayton puts the children in charge again and makes Flora summon the ghost of Miss Jessel by humming "O Willow Waly". All of a sudden the woman in black appears at the lakeside in front of them. While Miss Giddens is shocked by the sight and fiercely asks Flora about the identity of the woman, Flora confusedly stares at Miss Giddens until the mysterious figure disappears for the moment. Now the young governess is entirely certain that the children are deceitful and have to be rescued from evil spirits. When she consults Mrs Grose about her opinion on the matter she mockingly calls the two "innocents" (54:28). Additionally, Miss Giddens learns of the presumable affair between Jessel and Quint and that she probably died of a broken heart. Eventually, she finds out that Jessel committed suicide by drowning herself in the lake. Thereby, James created the same fate for the lovesick governess that Shakespeare gave his tragic heroine Ophelia. Miss Giddens obsesses over the tune Flora hummed that day at the same site. In her dreams, or more accurately: nightmares, the governess not only sees the angst-inducing face of Peter Quint but also Flora and her late governess dancing to the same music. The dancing sequence in Miss Giddens's dreams could allude to the 'danse macabre' or 'dance of death'. Stegemeier describes the dance as a nocturnal spectacle during which the dead come from their graves and beckon the living to dance with them. At times, the dead caution the living of their imminent demise, sometimes they pull the living into the afterlife. However, whoever dances with the dead joins

them immediately or soon after (Stegemeier 18). In the case of *The Innocents*, through the perpetual sound of the enchanting tune from the music box, the late Miss Jessel comes from the grave in order to lure Flora into dancing with her.

Miss Giddens tries to get some rest and reads alone in the living room the following night. She is, however, haunted by strange noises and music. The piano seems to be playing, albeit nobody sitting at it – similar to a scene in Amenábar's *The Others*. As the governess tries to locate the source of the mysterious noises the scene becomes more intense. Whispering, giggling, and sobbing sounds follow her as she walks through the corridors of Bly and opens one door after another in order to find the reason for these disturbances. The noises grow even louder and a woman's broken voice utters statements like "The children are watching" and "Stop, you're hurting me" (1:07:15-1:07:35). Bewildered, Miss Giddens runs to her room to find Flora. Rather than Flora, one of her dolls lies in her bed. The girl herself is sitting by the window, dreamily looking down into the garden to where her brother is standing. Miss Giddens immediately retrieves the boy from the cold, puts him in bed and demands an explanation. Oddly enough, Miles's only motivation to walk outside in the middle of the night was the governess's reaction. As soon as she tells him that she is, in fact, very angry with him he seems delighted. Miles wanted her to see his evil exposition because "good children do get a bit boring, don't they?" (1:10:41-1:10:43). However, the fact that he merely wanted to be mischievous for once makes Miles's appearance strange and unfamiliar; the boy is not in the least concerned about his governess's reaction or his punishment. He looks eerily calm and content, smiles at her as if there were nothing she could do to keep him from doing things like that in the future. Miles seems as if he knew exactly that the governess is at her wit's end. Furthermore, Clayton adds another interesting theme to the story which is not part of the source novel. As Miles lies in bed, talking

to the governess, not even thinking about apologising to her, Miss Giddens discovers a dead bird under his pillow. As already mentioned, Miles keeps himself busy by caring for the pigeons that live on top of the tower where the governess first encountered Quint – a storyline that is not present in the book. The boy claims to have tried to warm the pigeon and nurse it back to health although the bird's neck is obviously broken. Miles suddenly jumps at Miss Giddens, hugging her, wanting a goodnight kiss from the woman who looks frightened beyond all measure. The scene concludes with an intense close-up of the dead bird. His sister, too, has a strange connection to animals. Her tortoise Rupert is obviously a quite neglected pet. Not only does she try to put it into the lake, she also abandons the creature when she has to leave Bly with Mrs Grose to get to her uncle in London. Eventually, Miles throws poor Rupert out of the window in one of the last scenes of Clayton's movie. This cruelty is symbolised by the occasional screams of animals the governess overhears, for example when she puts Flora to bed or when she sees Quint's face behind the window. In contrast to the novel, where the young governess sometimes overhears cries of children, the movie adaptation mostly features cries of animals. When Miss Giddens has sent Grose and Flora away to London in order to confront Miles alone for example, as she is searching for the boy in the house, she hears peacocks screaming outside, almost sounding like the word 'help'. In this respect, the children seem ruthless and their wickedness is enforced by this theme in the movie.

In the final parts of Clayton's adaptation the relationship between the children and the governess is more than tense. Once again, one of the children clandestinely goes to meet their ghostly friends. Flora apparently rowed over the lake to the gazebo alone, much to the disbelief of Miss Giddens who does not think the little girl is strong enough to move the paddles. Reminiscent of her late governess, Flora dances in the gazebo to the music box and the melody

of “Oh Willow Waly”. Again, Miss Giddens demands to know where she encountered this tune and where she found the music box, respectively. As before, the child lies to her, at least Miss Giddens is convinced of it, and the woman in black appears on the other side of the lake again. Flora still claims she does not know what Miss Giddens is talking about when she maintains the child has seen the ghost as well. Eventually Mrs Grose has to carry Flora away because she will not stop screaming. All of a sudden it seems as she were madly afraid of Miss Giddens and in extreme panic. Even hours later, in the evening, Flora cannot be calmed down by Mrs Grose. Interestingly enough, even though the scene by the lake implied that Miss Giddens were maltreating Flora, and she herself did not see the apparition, Mrs Grose believes in Miss Giddens’s words – especially now that Flora seems untamable. According to the housekeeper Flora ‘talks horrors’ and will not stop screaming. It is almost as if her inner demons were finally set free when Miss Giddens assaulted her. In comparison to her older brother Miles she is not as restrained and calm as he is throughout the course of the events. Only at the very end, the boy lets his guard down during his final confrontation with Quint. Flora’s fits force the governess to send her, together with Mrs Grose, to her uncle in London while Miss Giddens herself intends to stay at Bly and cure Miles of his evil possession. Just like in James’s novel the governess confronts him about the letter that was supposed to reach his uncle in London and about his expulsion at school. The usually calm and composed boy becomes furious, starts to verbally abuse her, calls her “hussy” and “hag” (1:32:22). Behind him in the window the face of Peter Quint appears once again and, reflecting Miles tantrum, laughs frantically with the boy. Eventually he runs out into the garden, and dramatically falls down amidst a circle of statues. This scene, specifically, points toward demonic possession in *The Innocents*. At the final moments of Miles’s young life, Peter Quint gradually seems to let go of him. The boy becomes

more and more like a child in this scene, begging the governess for forgiveness, desperate and pleading. The wicked boy that has been haunting the governess's dreams seems to be no more, suddenly, there is only a frightened child in the arms of his warden. Miss Giddens is convinced: if the boy just shouts out the name of his tormentor, the spirit will let go of him. As Miles takes his final breath he screams out the deceased valet's name and the very same appears before them. Miss Giddens is relieved since she is certain that the haunting is finally over. However, only as the spirit has disappeared she realises that Miles has gone with him. The governess shouts for the little boy who lies dead in her arms. Eerily, although it is night, birds start chirping again and the film concludes as it started, with praying hands.

Jack Clayton's impressive version of *The Turn of the Screw* at first seems like a highly ambiguous interpretation of Henry James's novel. Although the director explicitly expressed the first person point of view by Miss Giddens, by letting the audience experience the same phenomena she sees, and although at some points of the adaptation Miranda Kerr's performance expresses some paranoid features in Giddens's character, the wickedness of the children is definitely emphasised by some of the movie's devices. Clayton's adaptation is an excellent example of how the portrayal of Gothic children changes from literature to film. The major plot lines, or cardinal functions, are mostly left unchanged; Clayton builds his interpretation of the story on the foundations of Henry James's ideas. Catalysers like Flora's tune or the use of animals such as the beetle, the tortoise, or the bird are results of Clayton's own interpretation. At first, the title might be misleading since the audience would normally assume the children are, indeed, 'innocents'. Yet, with devices that are especially deployed by the different medium, such as music, the children are linked to the evil forces in the story to a greater extent. Furthermore and ironically, 'innocents' is the name the governess gives to the children. It is her

who puts this label on them, the one woman who is always convinced of the existence of ghosts at Bly. The presentation of Flora in particular emphasises the theory that she is still in contact with her late governess. Interestingly, the girl takes on an unfamiliar, unusual, and uncanny behaviour when she hums the tune. She seems constantly underwhelmed by Miss Giddens's attempts to find out more about the deceased servants. Sometimes she appears to be unemotional and hardly childlike. Only her fits towards the end, when Miss Giddens verbally assaults her, give her the air of a furious, spoilt child. Miles's depiction, on the other hand, is particularly uncanny because of his mature way of speaking to Miss Giddens. At various times, in the novel as well as the movie, he is her superior and the master of the situation. An important factor of his portrayal is the recitation of his poem which is an addition to the original story. This performance, most likely addressed to Quint, shifts the focus of the movie towards the Gothic child and away from the deluded governess. Finally, probably the most telling scene concerning the children's uncanny disposition is their roaring laughter at the word 'dead' combined with the housekeeper's and the governess's alarmed look. In other words, the changes Clayton made in his adaptation, even if they may not change the overall plot of *The Turn of the Screw*, suggest evilness in the children.

Miles and Flora are my examples of Gothic children in film and literature. They are the agents of the story, both of them clearly in charge and more than once superior to the adults who are supposed to take care of them. Their uncanny nature results from their unusual behaviour, their very mature disposition, their lack of empathy, and their emotional lethargy and indifference. These children simply are not as the adult characters in the story, or even the audience, would expect children to be: innocents. William Wandless (cf. "Spoil the Child: Unsettling Ethics and the Representation of Evil") discusses the appearance of evil children in

film and highlights that environmental triggers explain the depravation of the child. He claims that movies such as *The Exorcist* shift the focus away from children and highlight the paranormal forces that stand behind the child's behaviour. However, if there is no obvious supernatural explanation behind the wicked child's actions the audience must acknowledge that the evil may originate, at least partly, from fairly realistic circumstances. A closer look at family structures, developmental differences, and analyses of the characters and possible peculiarities might offer the viewer relief, however, other movies disappoint the audience's request for explanations behind a child's evil deeds (Wandless 66-67). James Watkins's portrayal of a child's unexplained evilness, is rarely found in Gothic fiction. In most cases, including the three stories that are main focus of this thesis, there is some explanation for the child's viciousness in order to distance it from its deeds. In Clayton's film more than one justification for the children's unique and sometimes spooky behaviour is employed. On one hand, the complicated family structure is a possible trigger for Miles's and Flora's misbehaviour. Orphaned and overlooked by their uncle and legal guardian they do not only lack adult role models but also somebody who cares for them. Coming from a broken home, Miles's and Flora's spoilt behaviour may also derive from their relationship to Peter Quint and Miss Jessel who were their confidants but left them behind as well. On the other hand, although employed less overtly as demonic possessions and supernatural forces than in *The Exorcist* or *The Omen*, the ghosts of the former employees at Bly deliver credible evidence for the audience that the children are guided by Quint and Jessel. In this case, Flora and Miles are ideal targets for demonic possession or the paranormal force of Quint and Jessel. After all, they are children – open-minded, influential, weak, and 'innocent'.

5 STEPHEN KING'S GOTHIC CHILDREN

“It doesn’t hurt to emphasize again that horror fiction is a cold touch in the midst of the familiar, and good horror fiction applies this cold touch with sudden, unexpected pressure” (King *Danse Macabre* 299). Stephen King’s pet issue is the portrayal of an average American family whose life takes a tragic turn, most commonly through a very sudden confrontation with supernatural powers. Tony Magistrale (cf. *Hollywood’s Stephen King*) as well as Claudia Gottschalk (cf. *Gute Kinder, Böse Kinder. Zerstörte Unschuld und ihre Folgen in ausgewählten Werken Stephen Kings*) both looked at Stephen King’s family structures before and partly analysed themes that are presented in this chapter. Magistrale mainly focuses on King’s negative father figures, like the one that also appears in Kubrick’s adaptation of *The Shining*, whereas Gottschalk focuses on King’s children, especially in *Pet Sematary*. Gottschalk points out, that children are regularly used as epitome of innocence because they lack experience and are inherently free of guilt. In this respect, Stephen King carries the pursuit of innocent children to extremes until innocence is destroyed (Gottschalk 3-4).

Pet Sematary is one of King’s goriest novels depicting a young family with two children who have just moved to Ludlow, Maine. The family father and new local doctor Louis Creed finds out about an ancient Native American burial ground in the woods behind their house and right behind a pet cemetery (incorrectly labeled ‘Pet Sematary’ by the children of the town). The ‘MicMac’ burial ground is a haunted place, not only by a vicious demon-like Wendigo but also because of its bewitched soil. All dead things that are buried there will – more or less – come back to life. Instead of burying their deceased cat Winston Churchill (short: Church) in the ‘Pet Sematary’ Louis decides to spare his daughter the pain of losing her beloved pet and brings the

cat back to life by choosing the Micmac burial grounds as his not-so-final resting place. Yet, as Louis's son Gage dies in a tragic accident he has to decide where to bury his son.

In many respects, Stephen King's novel *Pet Sematary* is exemplary of the depiction of various prototypes of the Gothic child apart from the novel's main attraction – Louis Creed's undead son Gage. The Creeds' daughter Ellie is connected to a paranormal sphere and possesses powers similar to Danny Torrance's shining, yet less pronounced. In her dreams, Ellie can see present and future events, whereas her visions are even more cryptic than Danny's. Even though the little girl sees things others do not, it has to be noted that the bewitched grounds behind the 'Pet Sematary' affect all of the Creed family in terms of nightmares. Nevertheless, hers are eerily prophetic; either she has paranormal abilities or the magic around the old Micmac burial grounds affects her the most. Considering Gottschalk's theory of King's portrayal of the destruction of innocence (cf. *Gute Kinder, Böse Kinder*), Ellie's innocence remains intact until the very end of the novel. However, Ellie undoubtedly possesses supernatural powers. Although her paranormal abilities are not as strong as Danny Torrance's, she has visions in her dreams and is a medium through which the dead can communicate with the living. Another Gothic child in *Pet Sematary* is Rachel's late sister Zelda. She is not actively featured in the novel but only presented through Rachel's memories and narratives. However, the image of Zelda is continuously haunting Rachel's dreams; her background story is tragic as well as horrid. Zelda and her sister Rachel had to grow up too fast because of Zelda's heavy case of spinal meningitis. Rachel Creed points out that since Zelda was in constant pain and unable to go outside she was also not able to enjoy a carefree childhood. Although her little sister Rachel's life was far from being carefree, inasmuch as she had to care for her sick sister too, the two children had a complicated relationship. Despite the tragedy of Zelda's fate, Rachel grew to hate her own sister. Frustrated

by her existence, jealous of Rachel and desperate for alleviation of pain, Zelda became a spiteful character: “Victims of long illnesses often become demanding, unpleasant monsters. The idea of the saint-like, long suffering patient is a big romantic fiction. . . . They can’t help it, but that doesn’t help the people in the situation” (King *Pet Semetary* 269). Rachel admits that in the end she thought of her sister as the “foul, hateful, screaming thing in the back bedroom” (King *Pet Semetary* 271). Although Zelda is not a child ghost, visions of her dead sister torture Rachel in her sleep. As Rachel encounters the resurrected body of her only son Gage she initially thinks it is the ghost of Zelda: “She was hunched and twisted, her body so cruelly deformed that she had actually become a dwarf, little more than two feet high; and for some reason Zelda was wearing the suit they had buried Gage in” (King *Pet Semetary* 527). Although Gottschalk does not address Zelda in her text, she as well is an example of a girl that has become a Gothic child because of the loss of innocence. In her case it was not a curse or paranormal powers that made her uncanny but her illness. Rachel’s nightmares and her gruesome descriptions of Zelda establish her eerie and haunting character. At the end of the novel, it even seems as if she has taken possession of the Creeds’ daughter Ellie by communicating via the little girl’s visions.

The most gruesome description of a Gothic child in this story, and maybe in all of Stephen King’s work, is Gage Creed, a little boy who returns from death as a vicious and dangerous zombie. Even though Louis is warned by his neighbour Judd about resurrecting people through the haunted graveyard behind ‘Pet Semetary’, he rationalises his intend. Notably, Judd points out a similar case decades ago when a father brought back his deceased son from the grave. The consequences were disastrous, the young man who was raised from the dead had become evil and hardly human anymore. In order to highlight his change, Judd continuously uses the pronoun ‘it’ to refer to the resurrected boy. However, Louis’s unconditional love for his son surpasses his

doubts and he is sure that he will love his son regardless of the condition in which the boy might come back. If worst comes to worst, Louis decides to kill his son again: “He would kill it as he would kill a rat carrying bubonic plague. There need be no melodrama about it” (King *Pet Sematary* 421). This passage is particularly upsetting as it is unthinkable to harm a child. However, Gage is no longer treated like a child in this case. He is not an innocent little boy anymore but has the potential to be a monster who has to be stopped. His childish essence might have been stifled by death and Louis is willing to take that into account. The father’s actions turn out to be fatal; Gage comes back from the grave and is not the child he used to be; in fact, he does not even seem to be child anymore. As the boy enters their neighbour’s house and talks to Judd, Gage’s speech is like that of an adult, only his voice indicates that the monster who speaks to the old man is in a toddler’s body: “‘Hello Judd,’ Gage piped in a babyish but perfectly understandable voice. ‘I’ve come to send your rotten, stinking old soul straight to hell. You fucked with me once. Did you think I wouldn’t come back sooner or later and fuck with you?’” (King *Pet Sematary* 518-519). All of a sudden Gage is able to speak in full sentences and uses foul language which proves that it is not the sweet little two-year old boy speaking to Judd, but a monster that inhabits Gage’s body. Once again, the fact that the child is not human anymore is highlighted by the use of the pronoun ‘it’ instead of ‘he’. In contrast to Judd’s description of Gage, Louis still finds it hard to view Gage as a non-human monster. He still thinks of his son as ‘he’ instead of ‘it’ and for a moment it seems like Louis cannot stick to his plan to kill Gage if he becomes too dangerous: “Now Gage looked up at him and for a moment Louis saw his son – his real son – his face unhappy and filled with pain” (King *Pet Sematary* 547). Louis is faced with the horrible task of killing his own son after Gage has murdered Judd and Rachel. Although it goes against his primal instincts to murder his own offspring, the father has to murder the

monster child to stop it from killing again. Louis succeeds but in the end he repeats his most risky endeavour – he buries his wife Rachel behind ‘Pet Sematary’.

5.1 Torrance Family Ties in “The Shining”

Similar to Louis Creed, the writer Jack Torrance moves to an unfamiliar place together with his family, namely the Overlook Hotel in Colorado to assume his new position as caretaker⁴. The hotel is shut down during off-season due to the harsh winter in the Rocky Mountains; the Torrance family are on their own, isolated from the outer world and about to be torn apart by the haunted building. On top of that, his son Danny is about to come to terms with his psychic powers, or ‘shining’, and despite his very young age overcome his fears and save his family. Danny’s special abilities let him peek inside the heads of other people, have visions of past, present, and future events, and communicate with others who ‘shine’ non-verbally. On the downside, the boy is especially vulnerable to paranormal forces.

Early on in the novel, Jack Torrance is portrayed as grouchy head of the family with obvious anger management problems. During his interview for the position of the new caretaker at the Overlook, he could not be more fed up with his counterpart Mr Ullman’s questions. The job Jack is offered is not for the light-hearted, as Ullman explains. Most importantly, the boiler has to be tended to each and every day and the place has to be looked after. The winter up in the Colorado Rockies is a cruel and merciless phenomenon; whoever takes the job as caretaker has to be in a top physical and mental condition. Hiring a family apparently is a high risk for Ullman, who has to be sure of the strong family ties of the Torrances as well as the condition of Jack’s wife and his son. He explains that there has been a tragedy when he hired a family instead of a

⁴ For brevity’s sake this chapter uses only page numbers to refer to King, Stephen. *The Shining*. New York: Anchor Books, 1977.

single man to take care of the Overlook hotel in the first winter they shut it down. The man, Delbert Grady, was a drinker, Ullman explains, knowing that Jack used to have a problem with alcohol as well and that he lost his previous job due to his addiction. However, Ullman is confident that Jack is a responsible young man and that history will not repeat itself. Almost at the end of the interview Jack finds out what happened to his predecessor at the Overlook hotel: “He killed them, Mr. Torrance, and then committed suicide” (12).

A quick glance at the characters’ nature is established on the very first pages. Jack seems to have a problem with Ullman’s authority, he used to be a drinker and had to quit his job as an English teacher because apparently he lost his temper at some point. Hence, from the beginning on the man is a potential safety hazard, just like the former caretaker was. His initial position is similar to Grady’s, however, it is pointed out that the Torrance family is special. Jack’s boss is obviously surprised that Wendy approves of her husband’s new occupation at the deserted hotel. Their son Danny is described to be “quite self-reliant for a five-year-old” (4). Stephen King’s *The Shining* introduces a troubled family who take on an exceptional task despite the hotel’s unsettling history. In this respect, the Torrances’ singularity is highlighted in the course of the story. Interestingly enough, the author elaborates the characters and happenings at the hotel through the eyes of multiple focalisers. Although King uses a third-person narrator, the story is voiced through the Torrance family as well as the Overlook employee Halloran in order to get a better insight into the characters’ actions and to portray one and the same event through the eyes of more than one character. Therefore, Jack, Wendy, and Danny are not only indirectly characterised by their actions but also by the emotions and reactions they evoke in their loved ones and outsiders, respectively. Throughout the novel the thoughts and the feelings of the characters are shared with the reader. The mental state, all their insecurities, their fears, and their

rage are experienced by the reader as well. Hence, we quickly find out that Ullman's assumption about Wendy's worries regarding the job at the hotel are, in fact, quite justified.

Wendy Torrance is introduced as a fragile character, worrying about Jack and her boy Danny. Yet, her worries are justified most of the time taking her husband's temper tantrums and her son's peculiarity into consideration. Flashbacks of times when she was on the verge of divorcing her husband constantly shoot into her head, especially when it comes to her son's well-being: "Sometimes --- (Danny with his arm in a cast) --- he does things he's sorry for later" (19). She does not try to justify her husband's behaviour, if anything she still holds him responsible for what he has done in his past, but Wendy is an exceptionally loyal and fierce young woman who will do anything to keep her son safe but also her family together. Yet she knows, that she and Jack might not be the best parents to Danny: "sometimes she wondered just how he was supposed to survive with her and Jack for parents" (20). Two years ago, when Jack still used to drink a lot, he grabbed his son's arm a little too tight after Danny had spilt beer over Jack's work, and broke it. The couple's frustration with each other can largely be ascribed to this incident. Jack's unstable mental state is highlighted by odd thoughts and, most commonly, cravings for a drink. As he listens to the gruesome story of the homicide and suicide in the building the hotel's strange influence on the man becomes apparent:

He thought of Grady, locked in by the soft, implacable snow, going quietly berserk and committing his atrocity. Did they scream? he wondered. Poor Grady, feeling it close in on him more every day, and knowing at last that for him spring would never come. (36-37)

Although in his thoughts Jack admits to the fact that the happenings at the Overlook were ‘atrocities’, his mind wanders off and he suddenly empathises with the murderer. Jack is aware of the darkness of his thoughts and therefore immediately lusts after a drink in order to drown these ghastly thoughts. However, the Overlook Hotel is dry for the winter, the only way for Jack to find a drop of alcohol in the building is to bring beverages along with himself, which he, for his family’s sake, refrains from doing.

Jack starts to obsess with the hotel, the vast impact of the paranormal forces that reside there show themselves not only to his psychic son. Flashbacks to the time he lost his temper with a former student, an incident which resulted in Jack losing his job, trigger feelings of guilt and shame. Although he does not justify his actions and mostly regrets them, he still feels irrationally angry and aggressive towards the people in his surroundings. Jack’s obsession intensifies as he finds old documents and newspaper articles in the building’s basement. He digs through the hotel’s shady past: changes in management, involvement of the mafia, suicides, and murders. The Overlook is a restless place with an intriguing history – interesting for a young writer like Jack. Gradually, the ghosts of the Overlook’s past start to get into his mind. Jack becomes more aggressive towards his family, the seclusion of the hotel driving him slowly insane. Even though at first he does not express his anger physically, he aims his irrational fury at his loved ones in his mind. His whims are increased by his urge to have a drink and by his fascination with the hotel, respectively. While Wendy and Danny feel uncomfortable in the large and deserted place he starts to develop feelings for their new home. His family’s concerns about their isolation in the mountains infuriates Jack, their naiveté drives him insane. Jack even goes as far as boycotting his secured job at the Overlook by confronting Ullman with the hotel’s past. Although he need not mention his intentions at all, he reveals to his boss that he plans on writing

a book about the institution. Immediately, Jack regrets his action: “Instead he had made than damned senseless call, lost his temper, antagonized Ullman, and brought out all of the hotel manager’s little Caesar tendencies. Why?” (271). His instant regret and challenging his own actions testifies for the influence the hotel has over him already. He cannot comprehend his actions and seems to relate choices to those he made while under the influence of alcohol: “But he had been sober; dead cold sober” (271). This time it is not alcohol that is steering his mind but the hotel which slowly takes control of him. His wife Wendy is aware that something has changed her husband although she is ignorant about the source of this sudden reversal: “The most frightening thing, vaporous and unmentioned, perhaps unmentionable, was that all of Jack’s drinking symptoms had come back, one by one . . . all but the drink itself” (281). Inebriated by the hotel’s paranormal forces, Jack shows signs of schizophrenia; he makes decisions, gets irrational and regrets them straight away or gets uncontrollably angry at the people in his social environment, in this case his family. Jack’s obsession becomes worse, his mental state declines and his anger directed towards his family is fed by the hotel’s voices. Yet, not only the hotel’s past is catching up with Jack, but also his own. Episodes from the childhood home he shared with a violent father and submissive mother, a similar situation as the one he finds himself in now, continue to pop up in Jack’s head. Interestingly enough, in order to affect Jack the hotel seems to echo the voice of his father to instruct him of the murder: “You have to kill him, Jacky, and her, too. Because a real artist must suffer. Because each man kills the things he loves” (335). He tries to resist the voice inside his head and soothes himself by repeating over and over that his father is long gone, and that not a trace of him is inside Jack. He recapitulates horrible episodes from his youth, especially when his mother had to go to hospital because of his father’s beating. Remembering these events makes Jack shudder at first. However, the hotel infiltrates his head bit

by bit. His mind is occupied by a constant struggle between his own voice of reason and the hotel's ghosts. Eventually, Jack talks back and accepts his schizophrenia induced role at the Overlook hotel. In order to get away from his, in his opinion, nagging wife he tries to find solitude in the ballroom of the building. Casually, Jack starts to chat to the former bartender Lloyd. While the former directly addresses the latter, Lloyd's parts of the conversation are expressed solely in indirect speech, therefore indicating that the bartender is only alive in Jack's head. Somehow, Jack is half aware of what is going on. He knows that he and his family are the only people up in the mountains this time of the year. Nevertheless he indulges in the imaginary drinks the imaginary bartender hands him and finds solace in the sympathy the vision shows him. At a later point in time Jack pays his friend behind the ballroom's counter a second visit, this time King uses direct speech to give Lloyd a voice indicating Jack's surrender to the hotel. Whereas at first he still acknowledges the fact that the social interaction with Lloyd in the ballroom is imaginary, indicated by the indirect representation of Lloyd's voice, now he conducts an entire conversation with the hotel's ghost. Finally, Jack does not only smell alcohol when he enters the ballroom, now he also tastes the beverage as Lloyd's hands it to him. As other spirits join the party Jack begins a conversation with his predecessor Grady. This time Grady is a bartender and claims Jack has always been the caretaker of the hotel. He shares his worries about the job at the hotel and that also his daughters and wife were not pleased with his decision. Grady claims to have corrected his family, to have shown them how wrong they were about the hotel. Now, they too understand his love for the Overlook. He urges Jack to do the same and teach his family the value of his position at the hotel. Grady warns him about Danny and that he might bring additional forces to the hotel in order to defeat their purpose. The hotel's plan to destroy Jack and his family have finally convinced Jack that the only way out of his misery is the

death of his wife and son. His wife he mistrusts, and his son Danny is to blame for everything that has gone wrong with his and Wendy's life: "It was Danny's fault. Everything had been Danny's fault. He was the one with the shining, or whatever it was. It wasn't a shining, it was a curse. If he and Wendy had been here alone, they could have passed the winter quite nicely" (415). The hotel's main target seems to be the boy. Apparently, his special abilities are a threat to the hotel, or, as Magistrale points out, he would make "an attractive addition to the supernatural energies already at work in the hotel" (86).

While Jack is almost seduced by the supernatural powers of the Overlook, Danny is a foreign matter and enemy for the establishment. Since Wendy is not as prone to paranormal phenomena and Jack is caught in the hotel's web, the hotel's horrifying images are presented to the little boy first. The hotel might not want to absorb the boy after all; the Overlook might as well feel threatened by Danny's psychic abilities. In many respects, however, Danny seems like a normal little boy who could not take on evil forces such as the Overlook hotel. Even though his abilities save his mother and himself in the end, Danny is just an ordinary five-year-old boy in many ways. Although he is perfectly aware of the drinking problem his father has, he prefers to use the term 'the Bad Thing'. His parents have accepted his imaginary friend Tony as the typical reaction of a boy of his age who does not interact with other kids very often but Danny knows that his abilities are unusual and that he is something extraordinary. Part of himself is afraid of his power because he can feel how people react to it. At first, his parents were proud of Danny's brightness, of his insight into certain things, and his inherent understanding of structures: "Their son was intelligent, they knew that, but it would be a mistake to push him too far too fast. Jack had agreed. There would be no pushing involved. But if the kid caught on fast, they would be

prepared . . . Danny . . . seemed to be catching on with almost scary speed. It bothered her” (175).

Even if having an imaginary friend seems quite common for a child of his age, the things Tony tells their son bother the Torrances. However, numerous Gothic tales and horror films use the phenomenon of imaginary friends. Frequently, what starts out as harmless playmate turns out to be a vicious remnant from the past or a demon who tries to gain access to a family via the naïveté of a child. In such cases, the parents expect the familiar, namely a common circumstance that children make up fictional friends to simply play with or overcome a specific situation. Often, those include separation of the parents, loss in the family, or moving houses (cf. for instance *The Others*, *The Amityville Horror*, *The Conjuring*). The device of an imaginary friend is a clever trick used by Gothic writers and producers to lull the reader or audience into a false sense of security. In most cases, however, the creature communicating with the child is neither imaginary nor a friend. Apart from *The Shining*, another well-known example is the horror classic *The Amityville Horror: A True Story* by Jay Anson and the eponymous movie adaptation. The overall theme is yet the same: a family with at least one small child moves into a new home that is haunted by evil forces. Also in this case, the paranormal events occur in unison with the appearance of little Missy’s imaginary friend, Jodie. Interestingly enough, the figure of Jodie changes a lot with the growing popularity of the *Amityville* franchise. In numerous movie adaptations the controversial ‘true story’ has been over-dramatised beyond recognition in order to appeal to contemporary audiences. Whereas in the original movie version of Anson’s text, the imaginary friend Jodie remains a demonic pig with glaring red eyes (Stuart Rosenberg, 1979), Andrew Douglas’s 2005 remake *The Amityville Horror* transforms the pig-like creature into a little girl who, apparently, was killed in the Lutz’s new family home and is even more vicious

than the pig in the source novel. Another interesting example in the horror film industry is Amenábar's *The Others* (2011). Due to the terrific plot twist at the end, the children in the story turn out to be the 'imaginary friends' themselves as they find out to be the actual ghosts. The boy they befriended, on the other hand, is the actual inhabitant of the house. A recent example can be found in Scott Derrickson's shocking feature *Sinister* (2012). Although the daughter Ashley seems frightened by her imaginary friend Stephanie, once again the paranormal powers reach out to the smallest child in the story. There are uncountable examples of Gothic fiction, more specifically haunted house stories, in which the supernatural forces contact the children of the family first. The child might not be able to distinguish between real and imaginary yet, or it might be too young to know the difference between good and evil. A child who observes supernatural powers, might not know whether these are normal or not, hence it would not know whether they are a threat or harmless. This, for instance, is exactly the point Mrs Grose in James's *The Turn of the Screw* is trying to make – Flora might have been too innocent to even realise something is not right when they witness the woman in black across the lake. Evil forces can spread out in a haunted house and be perfectly undisturbed if they make themselves visible to the children only. Stephen King reinforces this explanation when he discusses children's openness to horror and the supernatural: "kids are the perfect audience for horror. The paradox is this: children, who are physically quite weak, lift the weight of unbelief with ease. They are the jugglers of the invisible world" (*Danse Macabre* 121). Even if children in Gothic fiction were able to distinguish good from bad, normal from paranormal, the adults in the house would probably shrug off the children's reports of invisible creatures as constructs of a child's powerful imagination. Powers like demons or ghosts can best infiltrate the family via its most unreliable member, the child. It uses the child's naiveté to assume control of it, and therefore control of the

rest of the family. The child is, in any case, the most precious person for any parent. Its vulnerability is the perfect opportunity for evil forces to use it as either hostage or vessel.

In the case of *The Shining*, Danny's imaginary friend and psychic abilities, respectively, start to upset the Torrances; not only can he predict certain events; he also has insight into their marital problems which Jack and Wendy actually try to conceal. When the boy reveals that he knows of Wendy's inclinations towards a divorce, his parents are not only taken aback by Danny's knowledge but also embarrassed. Hence, Danny is self-conscious about his shining. His worst fear is to be brought to a 'Sanny-Tarium' by the strange men in white like it happens to other people who are somewhat out of the ordinary. Nevertheless, this childish fear is what pushes Danny forward in certain situations. His bravery is drawn from the fear of being separated from his family, so that Danny tries to stay calm and reasonable even in terrifying situations: "It was his fear that kept him silent" (289). For the most part, Danny's coping with the supernatural threats of the Overlook is pulling himself together in order not to disturb his parents and not to be taken away from them because he is a freak. His abilities mostly allow him to foresee certain events although he is not always sure of the meaning of his predictions. Frequently, words, pictures, concepts, or statements that refer to past or future events pop into his mind or are introduced by his imaginary friend Tony. In this case, his friend tries to warn him not to go to the Overlook and provides him with one clue: REDRUM, 'murder' spelt backwards. As soon as Danny stands in front of the building for the very first time he is convinced that whatever Redrum is, it is hidden behind the walls of the hotel. Notably, at first Danny gains confidence through their new abode in the Colorado Rockies. The Overlook's chef Dick Halloran enlightens Danny about his special powers since Halloran, too, 'shines' as strongly as the boy does. He makes him feel more secure, more powerful and in control of his psychic

abilities. Halloran is Danny's safety net and their connection makes the boy stronger and eventually saves his and his mother's life. However, the hotel tries to intimidate Danny with all its might, showing him gruesome scenes and gory images. In his dreams, Danny is chased through the hotel, voices come after him and threaten the boy: "(Come out here, you little son of a bitch!)" (189). But it is not only in his mind that the hotel is trying to harm him. In the scene mentioned above, for instance, Danny is terrorized by the hotel in his sleep but simultaneously gets hurt in reality, too. The wasps' nest Jack had emptied and prepared for his son to have as a keepsake has suddenly come to life again and wasps start to sting the boy in the middle of the night as he awakes from his nightmares. To his parents' horror, numerous wasps have found their way into Danny's room, which represents an inexplicable phenomenon for Jack and the mere negligence of the boy's father for Wendy. This is not the only time that the hotel's assaults on the boy drive a wedge between his parents. Assured by Halloran's expertise, Danny is convinced nothing in the hotel can actually hurt him. Therefore, his curiosity leads him to a room the old chef warned him about. Upon entering room number 217 Danny has to face the shadows of the Overlook's past and is assaulted by the horrifying corpse of a woman in a bathtub. The bruises she inflicts on Danny's neck are a red flag for Wendy who interprets her son's wounds as the marks of her husband's latest flash of anger. In this case, the Overlook might not only try to harm the boy but by doing so also single out the other target Jack. Another fight with his family might just tip him over the edge and convince him of the plan to get rid of Wendy and Danny. In this respect, the Overlook uses Danny as means to divide the family. Nevertheless, Danny is not the most vulnerable member of the Torrances, even Jack himself has to admit that "it wasn't Danny who was the weak link, it was him. He was the vulnerable one, the one who could be bent

and twisted until something snapped” (411). Unexpectedly, in King’s novel Jack assumes the role of the child in the family, the weakest and most vulnerable part.

While the Overlook’s ghosts continue to lure the man into their midst, Danny is lulled into a false sense of security by thinking the Overlook can only get to him because of his shining. Yet, the forces that are at work in the building are much more powerful than that. Notably, in both the source novel and Kubrick’s reinterpretation on screen, Danny is confronted with child ghosts. On the playground, Danny crawls into a dark concrete tunnel covered with snow. Just as Danny realises he feels trapped in the dark and tight space the snow on top of the concrete ring collapses and traps the boy. Danny is engulfed in darkness and the boy is frozen in shock. He can feel somebody else in the concrete tunnel but since he cannot see a thing he depends on his other senses: “He could hear his breathing; it sounded dank and quick and hollow” (421). Danny immediately draws the conclusion that whatever is trapped with him must be a ghost who died on this very site: “There was something in here with him . . . maybe the corpse of some little kid that had died here on the playground” (423). However, the ghost Danny encounters at the playground is not one of the Grady girls who were killed by their father at the hotel. Danny identifies the spirit as a boy. Therefore, the Grady kids are not the only children who have died at the Overlook hotel. Some other child seemed to have had a tragic accident at the playground of the hotel. Now, the ghost is closing in on Danny who regains control of his body just in time to dig himself through the snow out of the tunnel. Looking back on his momentary prison he can see something reaching after him:

Something moving. A hand. The waving hand of some desperately unhappy child, waving hand, pleading hand, drowning hand.

(Save me O please save me If you can't save me at least come play with me...Forever. And Forever. And Forever.) (425)

The hotel sends a ghost after Danny to reach him on another level. A child ghost might actually lure him into playing, but his psychic abilities exceed his naiveté. The ghost implies he wants to kill Danny so that he is trapped on the grounds of the hotel as well. The unexpected pairing of a child wanting to play and death makes this scene uncanny. In this case, it is not a vengeful spirit but a child ghost trying to kill Danny. Following the boy's escape, the spirit the Overlook hotel re-arms by attacking Danny with the animated topiary in front of the hotel. Danny tries to be brave and to ignore them; he thinks that if he will not heed the animals they may go back to being normal, lifeless hedges again. Each time he turns his back on the animals they move slightly – a change in posture, expression, or position. As Danny is close to the hotel stairs he hears snow crunching and something leap. One of the hedge animals slashes Danny's calf, injuring him as he falls on the front porch. Just in time his father arrives and drags him inside. At that point the hedge animals have already withdrawn themselves again, all Danny can see now is the topiary covered in snow as if nothing had happened.

The hotel's final attempt to kill the boy is recruiting his father as assassin. Already, Jack is aggressive towards his family due to the hotel's pressure on him. Although he has seen the hedge animals change positions before, he attempts to talk Danny into believing he imagined the assault. As the boy does not agree with his father's version of the story Jack slaps Danny in front of his mother. When Jack's aggression reaches a peak and he attacks his family in the ballroom, Wendy knocks him out and locks him away in the kitchen. She finally realises that the Overlook uses Jack as a means to get to Danny and that he might be the trigger for the assaults on her family:

Danny might be the one the hotel really wanted, the reason it was going so far...maybe the reason it was able to go so far. It might even be that in some unknown fashion it was Danny's shine that was empowering it, the way a battery powers the electrical equipment in a car. . . . Without Danny it was not much more than an amusement park haunted house, where a guest or two might hear rappings or the phantom sounds of a masquerade party, or see an occasional disturbing thing. But if it absorbed Danny...Danny's shine or life force or spirit...whatever you wanted to call it...into itself – what would it be then? (550)

The hotel comes to Jack's rescue and sends Grady's ghost to help him. However, Grady only agrees to free Jack from the pantry if he delivers his son to the hotel. In this respect, the former caretaker also urges Jack to kill Wendy, since she will not cooperate with their plan. Locked up in the pantry, Jack rethinks the decisive memories of his childhood. Suddenly, he cannot understand anymore why he was scared of his father's strict conduct as a kid. In his twisted mind he realises that his father's actions were necessary, that he had to discipline his mother for being disrespectful. Agitated by the flashbacks to his childhood he focuses his entire fury on his family. As a starting shot, the ghost of Grady then opens the pantry for Jack and he starts to chase Danny and Wendy through the hotel. However, the Overlook's plan to incorporate Danny into its realm backfires. His psychic abilities enable him to reach Mr Halloran to come for help and in addition he takes matters into his own hands. While hiding from his father, Danny retreats into another realm within his mind, consisting of dark corridors, where he finally encounters Tony. His imaginary friend urges him to fight back, to save his mother and himself. Halloran who is on his way to save them is brutally attacked by the hotel as well. The hedge animals fiercely try to keep him off the grounds and to keep him from reaching the boy. At first,

Danny does not seem to be prepared for this task, begging for help from his mother. But then Tony points out that his father is lost to the hotel and not even he can turn the situation around anymore. Giving up hope on his father, Danny understands he is alone and in charge of his own life. Tony also gives him the crucial advice that he will remember something that his father did not. When finally confronted with Jack he knows that it is not his father, but the hotel acting through him. The danger of the Overlook hotel has forced Danny to leave behind his childhood within a very short time span. Standing in front of his father, who is nothing more than the puppet of the hotel, the boy has a sudden shock of recognition: “For the first time in his life he had an adult thought, an adult feeling, the essence of his experience in this bad place – a sorrowful distillation: (Mommy and Daddy can’t help me and I’m alone.)” (633). He attacks the man who looks like his father with the mallet that was actually intended to kill Danny. He understands that his father is finally gone. Luckily, he also remembers what Tony said about his father forgetting something – the boiler in the basement which might explode unless it is maintained regularly. However, due to the hotel’s influence, Jack has neglected to look after the machine. As soon as Danny reaches his mother and Dick Halloran they run from the premises. His father stays behind and blows up together with the sinister Overlook hotel.

“When we go home and shoot the bolt on the door, we like to think we’re locking trouble out. The good horror story about the Bad Place whispers that we are not locking the world out; we are locking ourselves in ... with them” (King *Danse Macabre* 299). The story of the Torrances works on exactly this level. A typical American family with issues like anybody else tries to overcome their domestic troubles by a change of scenery. However, the problems they are actually trying to escape wait for them at their new destination. Evil forces manipulate and attack the family, in this case the focus lies on the father’s addiction problem. Yet, Stephen King

indicates the roots of Jack Torrance's mental condition – his childhood. Jack's vulnerability to addictions, be it alcoholism or the obsession with the Overlook, are rooted in his unhappy childhood. More importantly, the Overlook reveals that the connection of his father's aggression toward his family, and in particular, his wife, resurfaces in Jack's behaviour. In this respect, Danny breaks a vicious cycle – and an Oedipal triangle – by defying his father. Despite the deep connection between him and his dad, be it the fact that he has always been his father's boy, as Wendy indicates a couple of times, or that they share certain traits and behavioural characteristics, he has to stand up against his father in the end. *The Shining* is not just a ghost story that exploits the theme of a haunted house. It also depicts a young boy who has to grow up in a short period of time and confront a monster that has once been his beloved father. The development that Danny has to live through is an astonishing evolution from a frightened and sensitive five-year old, to a boy who has to give up on his father in order to save his own life. In Gottschalk's terms, through this development Danny Torrance becomes one of King's children whose innocence is destroyed (cf. *Gute Kinder, Böser Kinder*). He becomes a fighter who is guided by his psychic abilities. His shining is disguised as a little boy called Tony, whom his parents interpret as imaginary friend. A seemingly normal phenomenon, a little boy in lack of contact with other children making up his own friends, becomes something paranormal, something unexpected. In some way, Danny's otherness makes him uncanny. The boy is capable of things hardly any other child can do. Without doubt, Danny is an incredibly remarkable boy, which is not only highlighted by his shining but also by the reaction he evokes in the Overlook hotel. The hotel is not only keen on absorbing Danny, it also feels threatened by him. According to common reader expectations, a haunted hotel in need of an easy target is not overthrown by a little boy. Yet, in *The Shining* a grown man is the victim and a little boy a major threat to the

supernatural forces at the hotel. Apparently, Danny and his father have switched roles regarding their agency. Danny takes control of the family's fate whereas the father becomes the child in the Overlook hotel. He is incorporated in the ghostly family of the Overlook hotel as their youngest son and executes the hotel's command. Whereas Jack is reduced to the role of a child, his son takes over and heroically rescues his mother.

5.2 “Come play with us, Danny” – Kubrick’s “The Shining”

Regarding adaptation studies, Sarah Cardwell stresses that the literary genre provides the corner stones, the structure of the story, and thereby also equips the audience with certain presuppositions about the adaptation (56). Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining*⁵ is known to differ from the original novel in numerous ways. His version of the story can be categorised into the genre of psychological thriller rather than that of the horror film. However, this sub-chapter will not exclusively deal with Kubrick's reinterpretation of King's text or his unique cinematographic style, but mostly focus on the changes that were made regarding Jack and Danny's character and the representation of children, respectively.

Kubrick's Overlook hotel is even bigger and hence equipped with even more mysterious rooms and hidden parts of the building. His version of a haunted house does not appear outdated, cobwebbed, or grim, an impression that is influenced strongly through the choice of colours. While *The Woman in Black*, for instance, uses a colour scheme characterised by very low saturation and mostly shades of gray, the set at the Overlook hotel combines numerous bright colours, especially the colour red. The interior is characterised by Native American patterns; as

⁵ All scenes discussed in this subchapter refer to *The Shining*. Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1980. DVD. Warner Bros Entertainment Inc., 2008.

Ullman points out at the beginning, the Overlook hotel was built on a Native American burial ground – a concept the author reintroduced in *Pet Sematary* several years later – which adds to the hotel's shady history. Kubrick's choice of setting also supports the representation of Jack's state of mind. Tony Magistrale, for instance, points out Kubrick's use of mirrors to reveal the hotel's true face on the one hand but also to hint towards Jack's divisiveness and psychosis on the other hand. As an example he mentions the scene in which Jack goes to room 237⁶ in order to find the alleged madwoman who tried to strangle Danny. In Jack's eyes, the woman he then encounters in the bathroom is beautiful and seductive. However, only the bathroom mirror behind her back reveals her true form, indicating the true form of the seemingly glamorous Overlook hotel. The true meaning of the key term 'redrum' is eventually explained through a mirror again. In trance, Danny repeats the word over and over again, finally writing it on a drawer with Wendy's red lipstick. To her horror, the reflection in the mirror reads murder, revealing the meaning of Tony's prophecy (Magistrale 88-89). The audience's initial look at Danny's talent is also presented in a mirror scene in a bathroom. While Jack is being interviewed by Mr Ullman, Danny talks to the reflection of his own face in the bathroom mirror and uses his finger to let his imaginary friend Tony speak to him. This scene also indicates a detail that is not revealed in the Kubrick version of *The Shining* – that Tony looks like Danny, and is actually nothing but another self of the boy. Apart from Kubrick's use of mirrors, the composition of crucial bathroom scenes is remarkable in terms of colour as well. Not only is the revelation of the hideous creature in room 237 in the mirror noteworthy in the movie adaptation, also the garish green colour and the lighting of the room are fascinating. Compared to other scenes in horror films which introduce monsters or ghosts, the room is well illuminated without any dark

⁶ Kubrick's version changes the room number from 217 to 237

corners. The colour of the room is bright green, a very soothing colour signaling vitality and nature. It accompanies Jack's emotions when he unexpectedly finds a naked woman climbing out of the bathtub in the supposedly empty room. However, the image is misleading, the figure in Jack's head cannot be real. As Jack starts kissing the woman in the bathroom he expresses his obsession and deep connection with the hotel. It seems like the hotel, in this case the woman, is the affair he hides from his wife. He deceives Wendy in order to make the hotel happy, in order to obey the Overlook's wishes and demands. Magistrale notes as well, that the hotel starts to seduce Jack Torrance in the exact moment he enters Ullman's office (89-99).

There are two other crucial scenes that explore Jack's interaction with the hotel through a mirror or in a bathroom, respectively. He stumbles upon the so-called 'Gold Room', a huge ballroom, eerily empty during off-season. Jack approaches the empty bar, facing its backside covered in mirrors, and mumbles to himself about his cravings for a drink. In a medium close up Jack Nicholson looks directly into the camera as if breaking the fourth wall and greets a man called Lloyd. The camera then focuses on the bartender Lloyd, who is standing with his back to a mirrored wall and the formerly empty shelves, now all of a sudden filled with numerous alcoholic beverages. In this respect, the mirror exemplifies Jack's mental decline and his ongoing schizophrenia. Moreover, it could be a hint to the scene in the book in which, each time Jack Torrance addresses him, Lloyd's answers are represented in indirect speech, suggesting that the conversation only takes place in Jack's head. In the adaptation, at first glance, it also seems as if Jack were having this talk only with himself. In this respect, Magistrale underlines that each time Jack talks to the hotel he simultaneously looks into a mirror, indicating that he is, in fact, having a conversation with himself (94).

This is not the last time Jack takes a break from his family in the ballroom. Later on in the story, when his mind has been infiltrated by the hotel even further, he is not only confronted with a man standing behind a counter; he even witnesses an entire party of hotel guests in the ballroom. Drawn from loud noises, music, smoke, and balloons and tinsel on the floor in front of the Gold Room, Jack gatecrashes a soiree of former hotel guests whose outfits and taste in music recall the 1920s. He bumps into a waiter who accidentally spills some beverages on Jack and himself, forcing them to retreat to the nearby men's room in order to wash the stains out of their clothes. Compared to the vintage style and dimmed light in the smoky ballroom, the bathroom is brightly lit, almost unpleasant and garish. The entire room is designed in white and mostly bright red. This time, the bathroom's colour indicates Jack's advanced fury and even desire to kill. The colour scheme symbolises the threat emerging from the family father. Aside from the design of the bathroom, Grady stirs Jack's aggression towards his wife and son. Incredulous of his identity, Jack enquires the waiter's name once again, accusing him of being the one who murdered his wife and daughters. However, the waiter seems confused and claims that he has never been the caretaker at the Overlook because it is Jack, who has always held this position. Yet, he warns Jack about his son Danny, telling him that he attempts to use his talent against the hotel. Grady explains that his little girls were not quite fond of the Overlook either. Nevertheless, despite the resistance of his wife, he was able to fulfill his duty and correct them. By sending the ghost of Grady the hotel instructs Jack and gives him orders. Once again, as it does so, Jack is framed in a room full of mirrors, reflecting his torn character.

The topic of children and childhood is approached rather differently in Kubrick's adaptation than in King's original. Jack does not explore his childhood traumata in order to explain his mental instability. The voice of his father does not speak to him and convince him of

the necessity to hit his wife. Hence, the link between him and his son, both sharing their stories of a violent father is missing. Jack and Danny do not share much time together on screen. In contrast to King's novel, it is not apparent that Danny is his father's boy. When Jack tries to bond with Danny the hotel has already changed him and his son seems to be rather cautious of his father's affection. About a month after their arrival at the hotel, they have a one-on-one conversation about their current situation. Jack Nicholson, sitting on a double bed, is filmed from behind and once again his front and face are presented to the audience through a mirror across the bed. Hence, the audience is already aware that the Jack who is about to have a talk to Danny is not the Jack who entered the Overlook a month ago. He beckons the little boy to come to him and places him on his lap. Affectionately, Jack kisses his son on the forehead and talks to him about the hotel. Danny, being able to detect Jack's tenseness, does not only ask him about his feelings towards the hotel, but also whether he would ever hurt him or his mother. Although the scene should be cozy and familiar, both father and child are awkwardly tense. Jack repeats that he loves it at the hotel, that he would like to stay here with Danny and his mother forever, echoing the ghosts of Grady's twin daughters. Moreover, he claims that he loves Danny more than anything and would never do anything to hurt him. However, Jack is far from calm in this moment, but rather suspects Wendy of playing his son off against him. Only two days later Jack explains the incident in which he broke Danny's arm a couple of years ago to Lloyd. In Jack's eyes, Wendy has persuaded Danny that Jack is a violent and dangerous man. While he tells Lloyd that he would never hurt Danny and that he loves him with all his heart, he is very upset and expresses his anger by foul language. In this case, for instance, he claims that he would not touch a single hair on his "goddamn little head", that he loves the "little son of a bitch", and that he would do "any-fucking-thing" for the boy (50:53-51:08). Furthermore, as he recalls the events

for Lloyd he calls Danny a “little fucker” (51:44) who threw his papers on the ground. Jack justifies his actions by lamenting the fragility of the boy and by claiming he merely picked him up with a little bit too much energy. Naturally, the expression of his affection for his son is mitigated by the forcefulness and anger in his tone. In addition, he blames Wendy for never letting him forget about the accident and constantly reminding him of what he has done. Jack’s view of the incident seems extremely distorted; his feelings of guilt are substituted by anger and fury towards Danny and his wife. Ridiculously, he tries to turn the tables and complains about the fact that he was the culprit in this scenario.

In some cases, Jack’s irrational behaviour resembles that of a child. The longer he stays at the hotel, the more he regresses into a child-like state. His frustration about the play he intends to write manifests itself in his restless and futile roaming through the hotel. Four weeks after the family has moved into the Overlook hotel, Jack still has not put anything to paper. In this respect, Magistrle also emphasises the scene, in which Jack’s typewriter with a blank sheet suggest that he has not been productive regarding his work. Instead of working, he plays with a ball, throwing it at the wall of the Colorado room. Magistrle points out that he is actually playing with the hotel, as the Overlook throws it back to him (97). Jack’s refusal to face his responsibilities as a writer, and more importantly as a rational adult, make him seem like a child who hides from his duties. Inside, Jack wanders around the great entrance hall, whereas Wendy and their son explore the gigantic maze outside of the hotel. In contrast, Jack Torrance looks at the toy-sized replica of the labyrinth inside of the hotel, where he suddenly sees two tiny figures looking for their way out. As the camera zooms in, Wendy and Danny become visible as if Jack were watching over them. Magistrle also indicates, that the symmetrical maze is reminiscent of the human brain and that by this scene Kubrick indicates that Jack’s family is trapped inside his

mind (88). In *The Biology of Horror*, Morgan addresses almost all the important themes of the classical horror story of the 20th century and, naturally, at some point arrives at the haunted house phenomenon as well. For him, architecture in general establishes a text constructed regarding the human physicality. The layout of a house hints at the residents' customs and their nature. The house is anthropomorphised in some ways (Morgan 183). However, the miniature version of the maze as well as the two figures walking around through its hedges recalls toys with whom Jack can play. In this case, Wendy and Danny become Jack's dolls and he himself a child who toys with them. The man himself indicates his regression to an infantile stadium later on in the movie as Wendy finds his typewriter. Armed with a baseball bat the woman looks around the hotel to find whoever caused Danny's bruised neck. In the Colorado room she eventually stumbles upon Jack's writings and is stupefied with horror when she finds out what he has put down to paper so far. All pages are filled with only one sentence: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (1:15:38). Jack indicates once more that he does not want to pursue his adult responsibilities by keeping track of his writing and work, but that he would rather, just like a little child, drop everything and play. The hotel or Jack himself calls him a boy, indicating that he is now a child, more precisely, the child of the Overlook hotel.

The actual child in the story, Danny Torrance, is somewhat neglected in the adaptation compared to Stephen King's novel. Magistrale notes that while King mostly concentrates on Danny's supernatural powers and the hotel's efforts to collect the child's abilities, in Kubrick's *The Shining* Jack's boycott of the Torrance's marriage and his allegiance to the Overlook hotel takes the centre stage (90). However, it is noteworthy that the scenes Kubrick focuses on are also present in the book. In both the novel and the adaptation the boy's victimisation functions as a catalyser to stir his parents' conflict. With that in mind, Danny does not actively contribute to his

parents' friction; however, their main disagreement focuses on the upbringing of their child and family values, respectively. Without doubt their main issues lie in the breach of confidence that originated in Jack's brutality towards Danny. From this point on, Wendy is suspicious of everything her husband does and is overprotective of her only son. Jack, on the other hand, is frustrated with the guilty conscience that is constantly reinforced by Wendy's mistrust. Kubrick neglects to depict Jack's victim-blaming of his own son Danny, as Jack points out in the novel that a lot of their marital problems were less dramatic if the boy were not with them at the hotel. Thereby he indicates that their perpetual efforts to shield Danny have resulted in a battle for the boy. The adaptation mostly depicts Wendy's concern about Jack's angry outbursts but not the fact that Jack is suspicious of her as well. Regarding the bruises on his neck, Danny keeps mumbling that it was a woman who caused his injuries in King's original leading Jack to the assumption that it was his own wife who strangled their son. Under the pretext of wanting the best for their child, Wendy and her husband are torn apart. More precisely, the hotel's longing for the boy is expressed through Jack and thereby he and his wife fight over their only child. Danny's significance to the Overlook hotel is somewhat disregarded by Kubrick. Although the fact that Jack has to kill both his son and his wife are made clear by the former caretaker Grady, it seems like the hotel's main motivation is the threat coming from them. Grady warns Jack about the outside party that Danny wants to introduce to the hotel, indicating the boy's connection with Dick Halloran. He thereby underscores the fact that Wendy and Danny could be obstacles for the hotel's plans. As already mentioned, the Overlook in King's source novel does not only try to eliminate Danny because it fears the boy's powers but also because these abilities are valuable for the hotel. Even Wendy admits her son's shining might be like fuel for the hotel's paranormal powers. Kubrick's adaptation mainly focuses on Danny's psychic abilities as threat

to the hotel. Yet, not even his psychic abilities to harm the hotel, but rather Danny's possibility to contact the outside world are highlighted by Grady. It is crucial to mention once again that King's version, too, features a scene in which the former caretaker warns Jack about Danny's intent to reach Dick Halloran through their psychic connection. Yet, his appeal for help is futile in the sense that the hotel quickly gets rid of the intruder by killing him through Jack's hands. Nevertheless, it is often made clear that its main concern is collecting Danny and drawing from his abilities. The onscreen version of *The Shining* clearly puts Jack in the centre; Danny and Wendy are just standing in the way of what the Overlook truly desires.

Eventually, after Grady has let him out of the pantry, Jack is on the hunt for Wendy and Danny. He arms himself with an axe, exactly like his predecessor did. The woman and her son are able to lock themselves away in their bathroom, and Danny is small enough to climb through the tiny window and escape into the maze. Jack's childish demeanour is stressed again as he stands in front of the bathroom and cites the children's story 'Three Little Pigs' before he starts chopping at the door: "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in" (1:36:20). Meanwhile, and for the rest of the film, Danny hides and runs from his father. Chasing him through the maze, Jack eventually freezes to death. Jack's passing is a crucial alteration of the story, a cardinal function, in McFarlane's terms (cf. *Novel to Film*). In King's original story Danny contributes to the death of his father, whereas the film mitigates the child's involvement. Danny's responsibility for the outcome of the story and the fate of his family is thereby lessened. If we consider Magistrale's interpretation of the maze representing Jack's mind, it is his own psychosis that destroys the man. Danny's cry for help enables him and his mother to leave the premises on the snowmobile in which Dick arrived. In the end, Jack quite clearly has been incorporated into the hotel and, interestingly, also into its past. In the final scene the camera

focuses on an old black and white picture apparently showing the festivity Jack attended in the Gold Room. Music from the 1920s accompanies the shot as it zooms in on one of the party guests. It is clearly the face of Jack Torrance that is in the picture, a small note on the photograph states the date of the celebration – the 4th of July, 1921. Another cardinal function that is changed in the adaptation is the destruction of the haunted hotel. Without the explosion of the boiler, the hotel continues to haunt future guests of the Overlook.

Kubrick's depiction of the Gothic child varies in numerous ways to the one Stephen King described. The novel shows an uncanny yet brave young boy who has to stand up against the evil forces of the Overlook hotel and in the end even attack his own father. Danny's psychic abilities and his cleverness save not only his own life but also of his mother and Mr Halloran. The fact that Danny is a powerful young boy is reflected in the hotel's desire to have the child. Kubrick's version of the story shifts the focus onto Jack; he is the one the hotel wants and he is eventually incorporated in the hotel's timeless realm. Danny merely stands in the way of the hotel's plans. He is supposed to be eliminated by his father just like the Grady twins. Interestingly enough, the representation of the Grady girls is the goriest scene of the movie. Although not present in the source novel, Kubrick included Grady's daughters and, in contrast to the book, made them twins. Although the appearance of the child ghosts may not be a cornerstone of the movie, it is a catalyser intended to present Danny with a ghost on his level. Whereas the Grady twins are less harmful than the malicious child ghost on the playground, their gruesome fate is presented in the disturbing hallway scene. In addition, they are in agreement with Jack when they ask the boy to stay at the hotel, and play with them, forever and ever. Quick, alternating shots of the two girls standing there, holding hands, talking to Danny and them lying on the very same spot, yet covered in blood with an axe lying next to them constitute one of Danny's most cruel visions.

6 SUSAN HILL'S CHILD SPECTRES

Susan Hill, a successful British author of Gothic and crime fiction, has published a number of stories similar to the Gothic mode of Victorian and Edwardian authors. Her novels primarily deal with characters haunted by their past who are confronted with memories of and flashbacks to their childhood. Almost all of her ghostly tales depict the Gothic child in one way or another – be it as shadow from the past, as warning signal, or as victim of a darker force – Susan Hill's Gothic children are omnipresent in her work and assume various roles in her novels. Next to her probably most famous story *The Woman in Black*, Hill produced three other notable works featuring the Gothic child or related themes: *The Small Hand*, *The Mist in the Mirror*, and *Dolly*. The protagonists of the three Gothic novellas share many aspects in their lives. Secrets from the past must be uncovered in order to find out the truth about their childhood and the background of the hauntings they are confronted with. All three stories are set in a similar surrounding; regarding which Susan Hill makes use of classic Gothic devices when it comes to setting and atmosphere such as ghosts, eerie mansions, and hidden secrets from the past. Remarkably, all of Hill's hauntings feature inheritable curses affecting either a single family or even an entire village. Hence, she frequently writes of veiled childhood memories, haunted toys, cursed children, or child ghosts.

In the 2010 novella *The Small Hand* the antiquarian bookseller Adam Snow encounters a vengeful spirit as he coincidentally investigates the grounds surrounding a fascinating Edwardian mansion in the English countryside. *The Small Hand* calls attention to a dangerous child ghost in particular. In contrast to Susan Hill's other ghost stories, the protagonist in this novella senses hostility in the spectre that haunts him. It tries to kill him in the same manner the boy child lost his own life, by drowning: "The small hand had crept into mine and begun to pull me forward

with a tremendous, terrifying strength and, as it did so, a voice spoke my name” (*The Small Hand* 156). The ghostly boy attempts to avenge his death by drowning caused by Adam Snow’s brother when the three of them were children. In this case, Susan Hill portrays an evil child in the realm of Gothic children who, in the end, kills Snow’s brother by drowning. The boy’s only motivation is revenge, hence he is a vengeful spirit who haunts the family who is responsible for his untimely death.

The Mist in the Mirror features another kind of Gothic child, a seemingly friendly ghost who haunts the protagonist Sir James Monmouth in order to warn him of the consequences of an ancient family curse: “I saw a pale, ragged boy, now here now there, now following me, now a little ahead; I encountered hostility and was warned to leave, go back, beware” (*The Mist in the Mirror* 69). Yet, the threat does not come from the boy himself; he appears only as a warning and precedes the feeling of hostility and danger that Monmouth encounters later on. The spectre rather fulfils the role of a guardian angel who tries to warn the protagonist, his descendant, and in the end even ushers Sir James into the afterlife.

Dolly is one of Susan Hill’s most recent ghost stories, and approaches the theme of the Gothic child in a different way. In this case, the story focuses on an anthropomorphised doll casting a curse on a family, affecting the children in particular. As already mentioned in an earlier chapter, the use of dolls and toys in Gothic fiction can be associated with Jentsch’s and Freud’s theory of the uncanny. Jentsch highlights the intrinsic fear of something apparently inanimate coming to life and vice versa (cf. “Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen” 197) whereas Freud, on the other hand, stresses the “motif of the double” (*The Uncanny* 142). In the case of *Dolly* or *Chucky* (*Child’s Play*, 1988; dir. Tom Holland) this fear is used to shock and startle the reader or viewer by drawing on innate human fears. In Gothic fiction dolls employ a

doppelganger motif and their resemblance to humans, mostly children, makes them uncanny. Ann Radcliffe's classic Gothic tale *The Mysteries of Udolpho* uses a wax figure, eerily resembling a real human being, to terrify her protagonist. The Gothic tends to obscure reality; in this case the difference between the animate and the inanimate is blurred. In cases, where figures with realistic features are used (for example wax figures or mannequins), the real and the unreal, the harmless and the threatening cannot be distinguished anymore. This creates a sense of confusion, disorientation, and intimidation. In Gothic fiction replicas of human beings are frequently found in the form of dolls, that is children's toys. The genre uses the familiarity we feel towards toys as an important component of every childhood which creates pleasure as well as comfort. Dolls which imitate the look of babies can evoke motherly feelings in their owners who feel protective of them. Hence, a child's favourite doll or toy is his or her protégé, similar to his or her status to parents or guardians. As they are designed for children, these objects are completely harmless and solely produced for entertainment. By putting objects such as toys in a Gothic setting, they are taken out of their original context and used as an alienating device. The defamiliarisation of toys in the Gothic genre has on numerous occasions been exploited by the horror film industry. Movies easily add fear factor to toys and dolls and often experiment with shot types and lighting to put the toys in another context. Especially broken and ragged toys and dolls add to an eerie atmosphere in horror films as they are turned from cherished paraphernalia to remnants of the past, reminding that childhood, too, is fading.

6.1 Susan Hill's Classic Ghost Story – "The Woman in Black"

*The Woman in Black*⁷ is a frame story in which the first-person-narrator and protagonist Arthur Kipps decides to open up to his family about what happened to him more than a decade ago, in his early twenties. On Christmas Eve, as his loved ones decide to tell each other ghost stories of "dripping stone walls in unhabited castles and of ivy-clad monastery ruins by moonlight, of locked inner rooms and secret dungeons, dank charnel houses and overgrown graveyards", he eventually attempts to come to terms with his gruesome past and puts his own, personal ghost story to paper (14). In his story the young solicitor has to travel to an abandoned mansion in order to manage the late Alice Drablow's estate. However, Arthur does not know that he is about to deal with an old town curse cast by an evil spectre, the woman in black. This chapter analyses Hill's perhaps most popular novella in relationship to her other ghost stories, especially regarding the role of children.

Arthur Kipps is confronted with a most unusual assignment by his solicitor's office – travel to a deserted place in ---shire, as the author Susan Hill calls it, and retrieve all documents from the late Mrs Drablow, at Eel Marsh House. As Kipps enquires some details about the late Mrs Drablow, his superior Mr Bentley reacts in a quite restrained manner, especially in regards to Kipps's question for any other relatives – or children:

'Children.' Mr. Bentley fell silent for a few moments, and rubbed at the pane with his finger, as though to clear away the obscurity, but the fog loomed, yellow-grey, and thicker than ever, though, here and there across the Inn Yard, the lights from other chambers shone fuzzily. A church bell began to toll. Mr Bentley turned.

⁷ For brevity's sake this chapter uses only page numbers to refer to Hill, Susan. *The Woman in Black*. London: Vintage Books, 2007.

‘According to everything we’ve been told about Mrs Drablow,’ he said carefully,
 ‘no, there were no children.’ (28)

Unknowingly, Mr Bentley tells the truth in this scene, by stating that Mrs Drablow remained without children, although at this point of the story he, and everybody else that lives in ---shire, is convinced she once had a son, who tragically drowned in the marsh. Although he himself is not yet aware of the secret his employee Kipps is about to uncover at Eel Marsh House, Bentley’s hesitation foreshadows the discovery the young solicitor is about to make. This is highlighted by his unclear gesture of rubbing his hands. Not only through Bentley’s hesitation, but also the recurring description of the menacing fog, “thicker than ever”, as well as the church bells suddenly ringing, the focus is drawn upon the subject of children in an unsettling context.

Heavy-heartedly, the London-based solicitor leaves his young fiancée behind and leaves the city to attend Mrs Drablow’s funeral in order to represent his company, and to gather all useful documents. Susan Hill draws a picture of a gloomy and eerie London, suffocating in fog, thereby creating a feeling of unease and even claustrophobia. “It was a yellow fog, a filthy, evil-smelling fog, a fog that choked and blinded, smeared and stained” (22). The weather condition restricts the sensory perceptions of the protagonist and other characters: “Sounds were deadened, shapes burred” (23). As noted earlier, Jentsch sees disorientation and loss of sensory functions as paramount example of the uncanny and, interestingly, this technique is omnipresent in Hill’s work: “it was menacing and sinister, disguising the familiar world and confusing the people in it” (23). Although the setting is still London, far away from the actual village where the horror takes place, a threatening atmosphere keeps up with Kipps, announcing the terror he will experience in an unnamed area, called ---shire by the author. As the young solicitor travels north to collect Mrs Drablow’s documents at Eel Marsh House, he meets Mr Samuel Daily on the train

who is an inhabitant of the village and well acquainted with the stories of the deserted house of Mrs Drablow. He makes clear, that Arthur will definitely not escape the gloomy, foggy atmosphere of London by travelling to ---shire, which is often haunted by unpredictable sea-mists which hide the entire countryside in a thick, impenetrable fog. Daily enlightens Arthur about the area he is travelling to in general. Kipps is on his way to a very classic Gothic setting – a deserted village covered in fog, with an abandoned house across the marshes. He describes the town to be very flat, the houses huddled together and only separated by very narrow streets. This vision signifies a kind of claustrophobia which is suddenly broken, as Kipps explains, by the incredible vastness and emptiness that follows the density of the village. Although the town seems peaceful and calm at the point of his arrival, he can imagine how dreary the town must be once the mist from the sea rolls over it and covers the whole area in a grey veil. After all, to the east there are “only marshes, the estuary, and then the sea”; in all other cardinal directions there is nothing but “rural vastness” (48).

Oddly enough, the villagers seem quite distressed about his visit and worried about his inspection of Eel Marsh House. He is convinced from the beginning, that there is some information that is being kept from him: “I had been left in no doubt that there was some significance in what had been left unsaid” (45). Even Jerome, a local agent who deals with Mrs Drablow’s property management, who also attends the funeral is very cryptic about information on the deceased. He evades Arthur’s question about a family grave which, apparently, is situated at Eel Marsh House and for some reason no longer used. Mr Jerome himself, in contrast to Mr Daily, is exceptionally nervous about Kipps’s duties at Eel Marsh House. Not only is he very nervous and evasive when talking about the late Mrs Drablow, he also denies Arthur any help when it comes to gathering her documents. While Mr Daily is the voice of reason, Mr Jerome is

quite the opposite. Like the other superstitious villagers, he is deadly afraid of an alleged town curse. Although Mr Daily is aware that there is something wrong with Eel Marsh House and that Arthur had better not return there, he tries to remain calm and reasonable. Jerome acts as the mouthpiece of the population of Grythin Gifford. Instead of warning Arthur they try to keep away from him and stay out of his business as well as in any way possible. Despite his fear, Mr Jerome attends Mrs Drablow's funeral together with Kipps who sadly notes that nobody else showed up to the memorial ceremony. However, there is one other mourner who attracts his attention. Unknowingly, Kipps encounters his deadly opponent for the first time at Drablow's funeral. The strange woman looks like she is suffering from a terrible disease: her eyes seem to shrink back into her head, her limbs look like she has been starving, and her wardrobe seems to be extremely outdated is an obvious hint at her actual condition. Her body looks like it is decomposing as she stands at the back of the church at the funeral. The woman personifies what Freud has explained as the fundamental fear of death and decay (cf. *The Uncanny* 148-149). Apart from her appearance, the young man also reads the expression on the woman's face:

I saw that her face did wear an expression. It was one of what I can only describe – and the words seem hopelessly inadequate to express what I saw – as a desperate, yearning, malevolence; it was as though she were searching for something she wanted, needed – must have, more than life itself, and which had been taken from her. And, towards whoever had taken it she directed the purest evil and hatred and loathing, with all the force that was available to her. (75)

After the funeral, Kipps is troubled by the sight of the children, who apparently have watched the funeral service from the schoolyard: “It was an oddly grave and touching sight, they looked to unlike children generally do, animated and carefree. I caught the eye of one and smiled

at him gently. He did not smile back” (56). The children of Grythin Gifford are unusual children, Kipps describes them as pale with “solemn faces with great, round eyes” (56). The solicitor is disturbed and to see children behaving in such an unusual, grave manner. It might be the woman in black who is able to influence the children in the town, who is connected to them in a certain way and has made clear that they find themselves in a hopeless situation. Another reason for the children’s peculiar behaviour might be their parents’ warnings. They may have heard stories about others who have disappeared or died because of the town curse and now, just like their parents they are very suspicious of strangers, in order not to provoke the alleged source of the town curse – a woman in black.

Similar to Susan Hill’s other ghost stories, the setting for Grythin Gifford and Eel Marsh House feature classic Gothic elements – a foggy, pale, and gloomy landscape. Only accessible by passing the Nine Lives Causeway, Mrs Drablow’s residence is built in a completely isolated position, entirely surrounded by marshes, and miles away from any other houses. The house is made of very dark, grey stone, and obviously intimidating as it rises above Kipps. Together with the overgrown ruins of a chapel, and a graveyard, the mansion provides its readers with a perfect setting for a haunted house story. The protagonist proceeds to explain that not only the looks of Eel Marsh House are impressive: it also has its own radiance and emanates an air of loneliness. Kipps himself is aware of the scary nature of the house and tries to suppress any superstitious thoughts: “Suddenly conscious of the cold and the extreme bleakness and eeriness of the spot and of the gathering dusk of the November afternoon, and not wanting my spirits to become so depressed that I might begin to be affected by all sorts of morbid fancies” (74). Although Arthur most certainly does not feel very much at home at Eel Marsh House he admits it has some kind of “uncanny beauty” (82) that fascinates him. After having examined almost the entire house, the

young solicitor soon realises that the thick sea-mist has rolled over the area, blurring the entire landscape. His senses are blurred, he can only rely on what he hears, not what he sees. The uncanny feeling of disorientation and loss of one's senses is cleverly used by the author throughout the entire book. As Kipps notes the thick fog that limits his vision, eerie sound effects accompany the protagonist until his parting with Eel Marsh House. While Kipps is waiting for his driver to pick him up from that eerie place, the young man hears the unmistakable gallop of a pony. However, the noise seemingly comes closer and then withdraws again, until it is accompanied by the nervous neighing of a panicking horse. Unable to make out anything in the thick fog, Kipps is petrified, still standing at the gate of Eel Marsh House. Arthur becomes desperate as he identifies the cries of a child and uncontrollable sobbing next to the whickering of the horse: "I heard another cry, a shout, a terrified sobbing – it was hard to decipher – but with horror I realized that it came from a child, a young child" (87-88). His instincts to help a child in need are awakened, yet, in the dense fog that has rolled over the area he is utterly helpless. Still stunned by the situation, and unable to move in the sea-mist, Kipps has to wait until everything falls silent again. In his agony, he rushes inside, drinks some brandy, and walks about the "claustrophobic and yet oddly hollow-feeling old house" (91). Kipps is lost in the maze that is Eel Marsh House; its atmosphere has already had effects on his mind. Exhausted from the horrifying events, he falls asleep until a sudden ringing noise wakes him up. He is perturbed by the sound, confused as he awakes from his slumber as he has "lost his sense of time" (92) in the house. The protagonist feels lost and helpless; on one hand because of strange noises that cannot be traced back, on the other hand by the vastness and dangerous landscape of the marshes. Inside, unused rooms and locked doors convey a feeling of emptiness and secretiveness. The personified building captures Arthur Kipps and haunts him: "I could not run away from that

place . . . I had fallen under some sort of spell of the kind that certain places exude and it drew me, my imaginings, my longings, my curiosity, my whole spirit, towards itself” (111). The Gothic setting in Hill’s novel includes various traditional elements – a haunted house, closed rooms, mysterious noises, etc. The author remarkably describes the place almost coming to life, its frightening and intimidating atmosphere that traps the protagonist and seemingly puts a spell on him. As Arthur points out, the strange sounds and happenings are terrifying on one hand, yet what really agonises him is “the atmosphere surrounding the events: the sense of oppressive hatred and malevolence, of someone’s evil and also of terrible grief and distress” (168).

Bewitched by the mansion and not nearly finished with his work there Arthur returns to the house and intends to stay there overnight. This time, his acquaintance Mr Daily refuses to let him go alone and lends Arthur his dog, Spider, for company. When Arthur gets closer to revealing Eel Marsh House’s secret, he starts to hear an unidentifiable muffled sound coming from somewhere in the house: “It was a sound of something bumping gently on the floor, in a rhythmic sort of way, a familiar sort of sound and yet one I still could not exactly place” (133). The noises seem to remind Arthur of the past, of long forgotten things, and of his own childhood. They are familiar, yet he cannot pin down where they might come from. As Susan Hill emphasises the sound over and over again, as readers we can almost hear the estranged noises ourselves: “Bump bump. Pause. Bump bump Pause. Bump bump. Bump bump” (133). Eventually, he finds out that the bumps come from a moving rocking chair in the nursery – arguably the most haunting room in the house. Arthur realises why he thought the bumping sound “meant comfort and safety, peace and reassurance” (146). What seemed like the soothing sound of a rocking chair that bumps peacefully in a nursery is nothing but the creaking of a bewitched chair rocking on its own in a deserted and dreary room. The nursery is stuffed with

children's toys like toy soldiers, ships, a leather monkey, and a china doll. Naturally, the mourning mother would most likely want to keep the room of her late son as it used to be and try to keep strangers out of it. A deep sadness overcomes Arthur, contrasting the seemingly charming and joyful nature of a child's bedroom loaded with toys, clothes, and books. With the help of old letters and papers Arthur finds out that the nursery was once the safe haven of a boy, Nathaniel, apparently the son of Jennet Humfrye, Alice Drablow's sister. According to Alice Jennet would not have been able to raise the child as a spinster, therefore Alice and her husband decided to take care of Jennet's son. Slowly wasting away from depression, Jennet developed a horrible grudge against her sister which culminated in a horrible accident leading to Nathaniel's untimely death. The woman in black who roams the land around Eel Marsh House is the ghost of Jennet still in mourning for her son. The ghost is mostly depicted as victim of her sister's cruel plot; Arthur feels her desperation rather than hostility when he looks at her. Although she is a vengeful spirit, the circumstances that led to her vendetta are presented explicitly. She never managed to mentally process the separation from and the untimely death of her only child. Driven by the anger directed at her sister and her husband and the distress about Nathaniel's accident, Jennet eventually became mad. Although her evilness is not in the foreground of Kipps's description, the young man is without doubt terrified of her. In the end, he finds out about her true nature, and learns that she is a vengeful spirit who has cursed Grythin Gifford and its children. Each time the woman in black is spotted she takes one of the children of the town. In the end, more than a year after Arthur's stay at Eel Marsh House, she also takes Arthur's only child.

Georgieva points out a common notion in Gothic literature: the parents' sins may affect their offspring, and create generations of damned children (51). Town curses, such as the one in

The Woman in Black work in similar ways. One person is responsible for the suffering of a whole village and, more importantly, the curse is imposed on the youngest of the villagers. The children in Hill's novel are victims, although their appearance contributes to the fear factor of the story. The gloomy looking children in the village, the tragic accident of a young boy, the dreadful cries of a child ghost, and finally the death of the protagonist's first son evoke pity and sorrow in the reader. In this case, their main function is to enhance the tragic nature of the story. One boy is taken away from his mother and the result is a town curse which takes the lives of many other children. Therefore, the villagers are even more alert, more suspicious of strangers – especially Kipps, who is going to reopen old sores – because it is their offspring who is in danger. The fear of losing their children makes the villagers powerless, nobody dares to challenge the town curse, to get to the bottom of it, or even go near Eel Marsh House. The whole town is paralysed by the woman in black. The only one who is able to find out about the dark secrets of the Drablow family is Arthur Kipps, an outsider who is not familiar with the consequences of his deeds. Kipps, as a young solicitor in want of a family, is deeply moved by the tragedy revolving children. The author elaborately describes Kipps's desperation, helplessness, and also empathy as he overhears the recurring accident in the marshes. *The Woman in Black* uses the child as a victim in order to draw empathy from the reader and to highlight the horrifying consequences of a town curse. This curse is particularly gruesome as it affects the most vulnerable and innocent members of the village.

6.2 **“The Spectre of Darkness” – Watkins’s “The Woman in Black”**

Compared to the other horror films like *The Innocents* or *The Shining*, James Watkins’s interpretation of Susan Hill’s Gothic tale *The Woman in Black*⁸ digresses the most from its source novel in terms of plot development. With regards to McFarlane (cf. *Novel to Film*) and his terminology in the field of adaptation studies, Watkins convincingly depicts the integrational functions or indices which usually are more difficult to transfer from book to screen, that is the uncanny atmosphere, the setting of the story, as well as the overall darkness and gloom of the novel. Regarding the corner stones of the story, the distributional functions or functions proper, Watkins added numerous plotlines and scenes in order to shift the focus. Hence, by altering major plotlines in *The Woman in Black* Watkins produced a movie adaptation which displays more deaths, more horror, and more children than the source novel. In this chapter I will analyse the movie in greater detail and compare it to the source novel especially in terms of how children are represented differently than in the book. The outline of the story, the additions made to the plot and a variety of new characters demonstrate Watkins’s intention to put the children in Grythin Gifford into the spotlight.

The young solicitor Arthur Kipps leaves his only child Joseph with his governess in London and agrees to meet him a couple of days later in Grythin Gifford where he manages the legacy of Mrs Alice Drablow. Throughout the movie, the young man is continuously haunted by images of his past, especially of his late wife and her death in childbirth. The additional background with which Arthur is equipped in the movie can be classified as catalyser of the

⁸ All scenes discussed in this subchapter refer to *The Woman in Black*. Screenplay by Jane Goldman. Dir. James Watkins. 2012. DVD. Concorde Home Entertainment, 2012.

movie. Everything he has been through continuously catches up with him and his character is completely altered in the movie. While Susan Hill portrays a young bachelor who may be not be happy about his assignment in Grythin Gifford, he is a man in hope to marry the love of his life and has a bright future ahead of him. Daniel Radcliffe as Arthur Kipps looks worn, sad, and seems to be withdrawn. As a result of numerous flashbacks and visions of his late wife Arthur becomes a miserable and crestfallen protagonist. On the northbound train, the young man finds out about the village's inhabitants' strange attitude as he travels to towards his assignment and the Drablow's mansion. The local Mr Samuel Daily informs him, that it will be very hard to find someone interested in buying the abandoned house, especially a local buyer. In the village itself, Arthur is continuously snubbed. The villagers either avoid him, are particularly rude, or astound him with their peculiar and secretive behaviour. Even the town's solicitor, Mr Jerome, is reluctant to offer Arthur any help in organising Mrs Drablow's papers, quite on the contrary, he urges him to leave the matter and head straight back to London. The Drablow's house holds no comfort for Arthur either. Arthur's work at Eel Marsh House seems overwhelming, nobody had decluttered and organised the place for years, the amount of scattered documents is sobering, nevertheless the conscientious lawyer sits down to work immediately. The scenery in Watkins's adaptation is very true to the book. It is a classic Gothic setting with vast landscapes, dark houses, and eerie graveyards. Similar to Hill's source novel, Grythin Gifford is made up of grey brick houses, small alleys, and sometimes smothered in fog. An extensive establishing shot introduces the viewer to the main location of the movie – Eel Marsh House. Through an aerial shot also the whole surrounding area and its impressive vastness come to view. The scenery is interestingly bright, yet pale, only Eel Marsh House and the large garden surrounding it stand out. The large mansion is much more bedraggled than described in the book, it almost looks like

it has been uninhabited for years. As Kipps sets foot on the Drablow land he immediately spots the graveyard right next to the house and is simultaneously alarmed by a screaming crow nearby. While he walks towards the front door the point of view changes; the audience follows Arthur's steps from the top window, as if looking through somebody else's eyes. This indicates that perhaps he is not alone at Eel Marsh House and that somebody might be observing him or even waiting for him. Inside, a loud echo announces Arthur's arrival as he opens the heavy, creaking door. The place looks abandoned and run-down, it is hardly imaginable that the late Mrs Drablow has been living at Eel Marsh House until recently. Due to the dust and filth on the windows the house is spookily dark and the weather conditions at Grythin Gifford as such definitely do not make the place more appealing. Almost no light can penetrate the fog and sea mists covering the marshes, which restricts the protagonist's vision in and around the house. Furniture and windows are broken, the floor in the entrance hall is covered with leaves and birds have made the Drablow house their abode. The walls of Eel Marsh House are covered with ancient paintings with unknown faces veiled in dust. Typically, the interior is coated in cobwebs in its entirety in order to symbolise that no living soul has looked after this place for quite some time. The mansion consist of numerous rooms, some of them seemingly have not been opened for years.

During the process of sorting and evaluating papers, letters, and documents Arthur comes closer to a terrible secret he could have never imagined. The reason why the town shuns Eel Marsh House and everything surrounding it is an old curse, imposed by a vengeful spirit – the woman in black. Every time she has been spotted by someone from the town a family had to pay with a child's life. The young solicitor is determined to make an end to this terror and attempts to find out about the origin of the curse. As he spots her on the graveyard in front of Eel Marsh

House for the first time, the vicious hauntings of the marshes begin. Arthur starts to hear strange noises, like a carriage crossing the pathway. The sound of a trotting horse is soon replaced by a woman's terrible screams and a horse's desperate neighing. Alarmed, Arthur runs out into the marshes but soon is swallowed by the fog. The scene alternates between medium shots of Arthur, whirling around in confusion and desperation, and between the vision of a woman and a boy, struggling to get their carriage out of the marsh. Because of the thick fog Arthur's vision is impaired; as he turns around once more to locate the screaming his driver Keckwick pops up in front of him.

When the woman in black takes the first life since Arthur has arrived in Grythin Gifford, the villagers blame him for the death of a girl. They urge him to leave the town and the woman in black alone. Mr Daily tries to stand up for Arthur and waves the villagers' accusations off as ridiculous superstition. However, one of the men, who has just lost his daughter, reminds him that the vengeful spirit has also taken the life of his son Nicholas. Nevertheless, Daily is wary of the town curse and refuses to accept the paranormal activity behind the local children's death – even though the alleged town curse has obviously affected his family. Watkins incorporated much more personal stories in the movie version of *The Woman in Black* and expresses the oppression of the town curse specifically through the fates of individual members of the village. In this respect, Watkins focuses on those families whose children have or will be taken by the woman in black. The Daily family, for instance, has never been the same after the death of their son Nathaniel. Mrs Daily has completely isolated herself from the town and projected all her motherly love towards her two dogs. She is an addition by the movie adaptation and serves the function of warning Arthur and supporting him to end the town curse. Although initially portrayed as a mentally unstable hermit, she seems to be a medium who is able to channel the

woman in black's victims' warnings. On one hand, this cross-over with the afterlife and contact to another realm is a means of evoking not only fear but also empathy in the audience. She functions as mouthpiece for the victims of the woman, next to the tragic fate she herself brings along. On the other hand, Mrs Daily is, of course, a means to make the movie version of *The Woman in Black* more frightening and uncanny. Although she obviously is a caring person, her sudden fits are uncontrollable and violent and she certainly frightens Arthur at first. More importantly, the strange drawings she carves in wood at the dinner table or on stone later on in the story, seem to be of prophetic nature: a stick figure who has been hanged as well as two stick figures, a bigger and a smaller one, standing next to a train hint at the woman in black's future murders. Apparently, during her fits she is not only possessed by the children the woman in black has taken, but also by the woman herself. The fact that Mrs Daily receives warnings from the world of the dead not to mess with the haunting at Eel Marsh House highlights the pointlessness of Arthur's operation.

Eventually, while sifting through uncountable slips of paper, Kipps gets to the bottom of the town curse. Mrs Drablow apparently took away her sister Jennet's only son and in her custody the boy died of a terrible accident. He drowned in the nearby marshes and his corpse could never be retrieved from the swamps. His actual mother, Jennet Humfrye, took her own life shortly afterwards. Now, the woman avenges her son's untimely death and punishes the villagers by taking their children, too. Having returned to the mansion to continue his work Kipps lights candles in the house to fight the omnipresent darkness. The quietness of the house is disturbed by mysterious bumping noises from the first floor. Just like in Hill's novel the source of the thud is a rocking chair swinging on its own. In *The Woman in Black* the nursery is the most important link between scenery and Gothic children. Toys and drawings are the only reminders left of a

happy childhood that may once have taken place in this nursery. In contrast to the novel, the toys and dolls in the room are portrayed in a terrifying light through the use of various shot types. Alternating close ups of ragged toys and doll faces create a sense of threat and distress. Moreover, the state of the toys and the room in general reveals that nobody has engaged with the nursery for decades. The broken faces and faded colours of dolls and toys remind of death and decay, of neglect and desertion.

Kipps and Daily are determined to end the woman in black's killing spree, not just for the sake of the children in the town but also for Jenet Humfrye's own. Arthur is convinced that reuniting Jenet's body with her infant's will appease the spirit and she will cease to terrorise the town. With the help of Daily's car, technology that the villagers did not have when the accident happened, they retrieve the body of the boy and reunite him with his mother in her grave. Nevertheless, Arthur is keen on leaving Grythin Gifford immediately and meets his son and governess at the train station only to tell them they will be returning to London right away. For just one unmindful moment Arthur turns his back to his son Joseph who slowly walks towards the rails. The woman in black is standing on the opposite platform, ushering Arthur's boy into death by the oncoming train. As the man jumps to his son's rescue, both of them lose their lives.

Watkins's *The Woman in Black* achieved to create a much crueller villain than its source book. Although the woman is a vengeful spirit that kills innocents in both versions, the horror movie tried to amplify the danger that comes with her. Whereas the narrator Kipps in the novel describes her to look malicious there is also something pitiful in her face. Besides pure threat he also notices longing and desperation. The ghost in the movie version is more sinister, more violent, and vicious. In connection to the altered character of the 'villain' of the story, the focus shifts drastically towards her victims as well. Hence, already the very first scene of the movie

reveals Watkins's approach. The scene portrays an event that is not mentioned in the source novel, namely the death of the innkeeper's daughters. Three little girls and their favourite dolls are having a tea party in their room on the top floor of the inn. There is no actual sound coming from the events on screen but non-diegetic music, similar to a tune from a music box, accompanies the happenings. All of a sudden the girls seem hypnotised by something standing in a corner of the room. As if having received a message or a sign they look in the opposite direction and towards the windows. Very slowly the children stand up and drop everything in their hands. A small cup shatters as it drops to the ground. The diegetic sound is barely audible in comparison with the background music and echoes slightly. As they walk towards the windows they step on teapots and doll heads – dolls whose hair they have carefully brushed just an instant before. Apparently the girls are hypnotised or under the influence of a greater power. At the same time, all three open the windows and step outside. A close up of a china doll's face is accentuated with a woman's terrified exclamation – "My babies!" (2:34). As the camera slowly zooms away from the window, in the bottom right corner of the screen the silhouette of the woman in black is visible. Watkins chooses to open his adaptation with a much more violent scene than Hill does with her frame story. The children are clearly the main target of the evil spirit and are victimised. Their main role is to evoke empathy. The world they live in is dark and cruel, a quasi-hereditary town curse is cast upon the most innocent in the village. At the same time, the woman in black is an even more dangerous spirit. She takes far more lives and is generally portrayed as a soulless monster.

In contrast to the novel, the vindictive spirit plays a lot more tricks on Arthur in Eel Marsh House and, even when he is not aware of it, the audience sees her standing behind his back, lurking in dark corners, and waiting to pounce. Jennet's letters express her grief and, more

importantly, anger about her sister's decision to take Nathaniel in her own custody: "Dear Alice, you leave me no option but to give up my son. If you have your doctors deemed me mentally unfit to raise my child, what can I do? You and Charles can take him from me, but he is mine, mine, he can never be yours, Jennet" (48:23-48:43). Although the fight for her son seemed lost, Jennet swore to not give up on Nathaniel and to never let her sister have him. While Arthur skims through the correspondence between the two women, he also finds an old photograph of the Drablow family. While Alice Drablow, her husband, and her nephew Nathaniel pose in front of Eel Marsh House for a family picture, a small figure is visible in the background looking down on them from an upper floor window. It is Jennet who watches them from afar, yearning for her son. The numerous letters she has written to her sister reveal that she highly doubts Alice's good intentions behind the adoption of Jennet's son. She is convinced that Alice took the boy away from her out of spite not out of concern or support for Jennet. The desperate woman indirectly threatens her sister when she claims she will find a way to reach her son and get him back from her. As Arthur reads on, the content of the letters becomes more grim and aggressive. Those dated after Nathaniel's death blame Alice Drablow for the boy's passing. Jennet is convinced her sister only saved herself and let the boy die. She laments the fact that Nathaniel did not even get a proper funeral but that his body is still out there in the marshes. Jennet makes clear that she will never forgive her sister for what she has done. Further records and documents gathered by Kipps show that Jennet eventually committed suicide in the nursery of Eel Marsh House. Distracted by the growling of Spider the dog, Arthur shortly turns his back on the documents. As he turns around he takes a look at the family portrait again. This time the eyes of Alice Drablow and her husband are scratched out.

The character of Jenet Humfrey and, respectively, the woman in black are developed more elaborately in the movie version. The letters to her sister testify that she became a desperate and vindictive character. Her anger and desperation seem to have driven her into insanity until the poor woman took her life. The suicide highlights the hopelessness the woman had to experience and the grief she felt after her son's death. Moreover, it emphasises Alice Drablow's guilt who not only failed to save Nathaniel but whose vicious acts against her sister indirectly caused her death as well. In the movie, her sister was on the sinking coach with the boy and was only able to save herself – all the more reason for Jenet to hunt her down even from the afterlife. Her hauntings are a constant reminder of what her sister has done to her. Underneath the wallpaper in the nursery, for instance, Arthur finds the words 'You could have saved him' written in enormous bloody letters. Simultaneously the partly broken and ragged dolls in the room start coming to life. A cymbal-banging monkey goes off and also the desperate neighing of the horse in the marshes starts again. The woman goes even further in her attempt to scare Arthur away from the house by showing the horrible scene of her own death. Arthur has to witness how Jenet, once again, hangs herself standing on the rocking chair in the nursery. However, although the woman in black on screen is more aggressive, seems more threatening, and approaches Arthur more often than in the source novel, she never actually attacks him. It seems as if she were only able to influence the children of the town. At least, they are the only ones who get physically hurt because of the town curse.

As the ghost of the woman is more prominent in the movie version, the focus on the victims is shifted as well. The source novel explains that, when spotted, the woman takes the life of a child from the town. Yet, the movie creates a much gorier version of this curse. As already discussed, the very first scene highlights how dangerous and unpredictable the woman is. It is

left unexplained why she takes the lives of the innkeeper's three daughters or who has spotted her before. In the novel, only those who risk going near Eel Marsh House are in danger of seeing the spectre, hence, the villagers avoid the area in general. In Watkins's adaptation the woman seems to move around slightly more – she enters the homes of the villagers, appears at the beach while children are playing, and she even follows Kipps to the train station. In the novel, Kipps enters her former home, he reveals her secret and sees the ghost with his own eyes. As a result, the woman takes the lives of his child and his woman by triggering a similar accident like the one her own child has died in. The movie portrays a vengeful spirit that is on a hunt. She is not only offended when disturbed, she does not only warn people to keep away from her as the woman in the book seems to do. In the film, the villagers are not safe anymore, even when they keep away from Eel Marsh House. This is why they are even more hostile to Arthur and shield their children from him as he walks by – because they know the woman can be unpredictable. Even in a dreary setting like Grythin Gifford one would expect children outside, playing, laughing or planning shenanigans. The only time Arthur sees children is when their sad faces look down on him from behind locked windows. Due to the town curse, the villagers must have been overly protective of their children. Arthur realises the gravity of the situation and the dimension of the ominous town curse as he reports strange happenings at Eel Marsh House at the local constabulary. Two young boys walk in, supporting their horribly pale sister who has apparently drunk lye. In a violent scene, the little girl coughs up blood and dies in Arthur's arms. Now more than ever, Arthur has to acknowledge that the explanation of the strange happenings in town are more than just superstition. Shortly afterwards, the woman takes the next life. Trying to speak to Mr Jerome, Arthur enters their house and searches for them. What he finds is their daughter locked away in a dark room in the cellar. As he tries to talk to her through the door she

is frightened by him, shouts at him and orders him to leave because, in her eyes, he was the one who killed Victoria, the girl who drank lye. Yet, what Arthur sees next is even more shocking – a shadow passing before the small hole in the door through which he communicates with Jerome's daughter. This shadow indicates the presence of the woman in black who is about to collect her next victim. A horrible fire breaks out at the Jeromes' house the next day and as Arthur tries to rescue the little girl in the basement he witnesses her horrible suicide by setting herself on fire in the woman's presence. Through the medium Mrs Daily Arthur finds out that the woman makes them commit suicide. The ghosts of the children try to communicate with the living, they try to reach Arthur and warn him about the malicious spectre. By possessing Mrs Daily they may help Arthur defeat the curse and explain to him what happens when the woman shows up.

However, Mrs Daily is not the only way the children can reach the people of Grythin Gifford. All of the ghostly children appear in front of Eel Marsh House as Arthur is examining the papers there for the last time. From the nursery window he can see the boy returning from his grave in the marshes and slowly walking towards the house. The boy is unrecognisable, he is a tiny black figure walking away from the cross that marks the site of the accident through the pouring rain in the middle of the night. Yet, all the other children are hardly recognisable as well. In panic, Arthur runs down to react to a forceful knocking at the heavy front door. While the man is paralysed with fear, the doorknob is shaking violently as if somebody from outside were desperately trying to get in. As Arthur answers the door he is greeted by the woman's victims standing outside in the shadows of the trees. Each and every child the woman has ever taken, including Mr Daily's son Nicholas, is standing outside Eel Marsh House. Their eyes look hollow, their faces are deathly pale and disturbingly bloody. Contradicting Mrs Daily's message, the children do look sinister rather than desperate and frightened. The weather condition

highlights their threatening demeanour – thunder and lightning in the background intensify the eerie sight. The children and not the evil woman are the ones who frighten Arthur back inside. Yet, inside is not the safest place of the Drablow estate. Jennet's boy has entered the house and his bloody footprints cover the entrance hall. As Arthur follows them upstairs he hears music from a music box, seemingly coming from the nursery. It is a happy tune contradicting and obscuring the situation Arthur is in. The nursery is demolished, toys are moving, and a manic laughter is audible in the background, most certainly that of Jennet Humfrye herself. Arthur rushes out of the nursery and is eventually rescued from the paranormal activities by Mr Daily standing at the door and then driving him away from the house.

The young man is determined to end the madness at Eel Marsh House and the curse that has been haunting the village for decades. In an attempt to appease the woman in black, Arthur is sure that the reunion of mother and son will give them peace. At night Daily and Arthur return to the house to retrieve the boy's corpse from the marshes. The young solicitor dives into the mud at the exact spot where the cross in memory of the boy's fate was put up. He fastens a rope to Daily's car and to the sunken horse carriage in order to retrieve the boy. Back at the mansion Arthur prepares the funeral of the boy and has wrapped the corpse in linen and put a rosary on his chest. Downstairs, a very nervous Mr Daily is drinking whiskey while he waits. The following scenes are alternately pictured on screen. At same time that Arthur is upstairs turning on all the automatic toys and music boxes for the deceased boy, Daily seems to be distressed to be alone downstairs. Through a shot from the hallway a shadow becomes visible and Daily's worried expression is justified. Simultaneously, the happy tunes from the music box upstairs begin to change. The music now sounds eerily off tune, indicating something is not right at Eel Marsh House and with Arthur's plan. In addition, the scary tunes are accompanied by extreme

close ups of doll faces and hands, mostly broken, as if mirroring the death of the children in the village. Downstairs, one of the child ghosts approaches Mr Daily and to his horror it is nobody else but his own son Nicholas. As the boy calls his father his altered features are revealed. His eyes are surrounded by dark shadows and there are black spots on his face, indicating the decay of his body. Nicholas, however, does not seem to wish to be reunited with his father but rather corners him. Daily is shocked by the sight of his dead son and retreats to another room, to which Nicholas follows him slowly and traps him there. Outside the window, all of a sudden a white, ghastly and rotten face appears with his mouth wide apart. It seems as if Nicholas has driven his father into this room, near the window, into the woman's arms. This indicates that the woman does not only take the children away from their parents but also uses them as a bait to get more victims. Upstairs, the rocking chair next to Arthur starts moving again, announcing the woman in black's approach. All of a sudden the hallway on the first floor is drowned in darkness. The lights go out at the same time as all the toys and music boxes Arthur initially turned on stop playing. An eerie silence is followed by a ghostly face of a woman first shouting at Arthur and then vanishing into thin air. Downstairs the young solicitor finds his companion who finally managed to get out of the trap his own son lured him into. The two men finish their plan to reunite Jennet and her son and carefully put the body into the woman's grave. Relieved, they leave the haunted house and quickly return to Grythin Gifford. The house, however, is portrayed one last time on screen. Various shots of the dark and gloomy inside of the building accompanied by strange whispers indicate that the curse is not broken. The whispers become louder and a finally a clearly audible woman's voice repeats the same phrase over and over again, getting louder each time: "Never forgive" (1:24:00-1:24:17). The family portrait of the Drablows with their adoptive son Nathaniel is the last shot from inside of Eel Marsh House. In

the background of the photograph, looking down upon the others from window, there is Jennet Humfrye with eerily black eyes just like the ones of the ghostly children of Grythin Gifford.

The heightened viciousness of the woman in black in the movie version is emphasised not only by the larger number of her victims. She uses the children to haunt the people in the village like Samuel Daily is haunted by his own son at the woman's accord. Not even the attempt to appease her can stop the woman's bloodlust. In the end, her final statement 'never forgive' substantiates the fact that she will not stop killing. She and the children she collected show up one last time at the train station where Arthur meets his son Joseph. As the train approaches, Arthur and Daily say their goodbyes. The voices of the men are muted; instead a tune, similar to the one coming from the music box at the nursery, plays in the background. The childish tune heralds the next murder committed by the woman in black. In slow motion, Joseph is walking towards the tracks, while the woman in black is standing at the opposite platform. In a futile attempt Arthur reaches out to catch his son before the oncoming train passes through. Daily can only stand aside and watch as the train goes by. Through the windows of the compartments Daily sees all the children the woman has ever taken on the other side of the train station. The woman herself is with them, screaming. In the end, the woman in black kills Arthur and his son, yet reunites them with their wife and mother, respectively. Seemingly unhurt, Arthur and Joseph in his arms stand in the middle of the tracks of the train station. Everybody else is gone, only a woman in white slowly approaches them. It is Arthur's late wife who is about to lead them into the afterlife. Together the family walks into a bright fog; the woman in black is still standing on the platform, all alone in darkness.

The most significant development in Watkins's interpretation of Susan Hill's ghost story is the character of the woman in black herself. The vengeful spirit that becomes even more

malicious and violent in the horror film leaves a trail of dead children that is much more excruciating than in the source novel. Her own story as well has been changed to such an extent that even during her lifetime she swore to take revenge at her sister. Jennet's cause of death is changed from a disease that slowly killed the woman in the novel to suicide. Hence, all these factors contribute to a very different portrayal of Jennet Humfrye and to a much more violent ghost that roams Grythin Gifford. Susan Hill's Jennet Humfrye appears to be more of a pitiful character who, out of grief, takes revenge on innocent people in the afterlife. The movie adaptation adds violent and tragic elements, such as Jennet Humfrye's aforementioned suicide as a consequence of her sister's betrayal. The crazy laughter that accompanies the mental torture of Arthur Kipps at Eel Marsh House emphasises her dangerousness and her mental condition by the time she has committed suicide. Still tortured by her own loss, she torments Mr Daily by sending the ghost of his own son after him. Nathaniel belongs to a group of children that are stuck in an intermediate world where the woman in black apparently collects them to make up for her own loss. The victims of the woman are children because they are the most vulnerable target in the village and the most valued treasure of their parents. However, the children's role in the film is not only to evoke pity among the audience. The combination of their victimisation at the beginning and the portrayal of their eerie-looking ghosts is both terrifying and confusing for the characters. The representation of the children, who are the victims of the woman in black at the beginning of the movie, is suddenly changing. In this respect, the key scenes are the appearance of the child ghosts at Eel Marsh House as well as at the train station. They look different, unpleasant and un-childlike, almost threatening and malicious. As the woman kills they stand aside as if she had formed an army of child ghosts to accompany her. In this sense, the ghosts are not the children of the village anymore, their souls are lost and their infantile essence is gone. In

order to highlight the focus on the Gothic child, the uncanny concept of objects coming to life is featured in the form of moving toys and dolls. The anthropomorphisation of the dolls is not only a means to shock the characters or the audience by a sudden, unexpected movement or noise. The numerous close-ups of old, dusty, and broken dolls are reminiscent of the children that have fallen victim to the town curse.

7 **CONCLUSION**

“In the Gothic, children may die and innocence may fall, tainted by infection growing from bad seed. . . . The Gothic world is decidedly not a pleasant place; it is ambiguous at best” (McGillis 227). This strange place of darkness is the sanctuary of everything that is freakish, abnormal, or simply different. Gothic speaks to the young and old because it deals with characters in transgression. The world we live in is scary and the Gothic may just convey our helplessness (McGillis 228-231). The Gothic is a world where anything can happen, where agency is completely reversed and the victim becomes the perpetrator. The most victimised and seemingly most helpless age group is the child, however, since the Gothic feeds on the shattered expectations of its audience, it must present the child in connection to the uncanny in order to create the most successful effect. In this case, to evoke terror in the reader or viewer. Daniel Sullivan and Jeff Greenberg comment on the compelling contradictions that the Gothic genre has brought up regarding the image of children. In their view, the stereotypical Western child is anything but evil. This contradiction of the post-Enlightenment images of the pure and virtuous infant and of the evil child might explain the rapidly growing popularity of monstrous children in pop culture. After all, the monstrous child is nothing else but a provocation of our modern understanding of what childhood is supposed to be like. These devious infants set themselves apart from other appalling characters in the Gothic genre, since the terror they evoke originates

in the instinctive assumption or expectation of innocence (Sullivan & Greenberg 45-46). The refutation of a child's innocence in the Gothic is exactly what creates their fear factor. As Gottschalk noted regarding Stephen King's children (cf. *Gute Kinder, Böse Kinder*), as soon as the child's essence of innocence is destroyed it easily becomes a Gothic child. The assumption that children are harmless, pure, and even gullible sets them apart from other villains in Gothic fiction. In this respect, it has to be noted that Sullivan, Greenberg, as well as Gottschalk generally refer to the phenomenon of the evil child in their texts. However, the roles children assume in Gothic fiction are uncountable. The only text that has been dealt with in this thesis that touches upon the character of the evil child is Henry James's *The Innocents*. Although they might be influenced by the evil spirits that haunt Bly mansion, Miles and Flora are truly wicked children. As already mentioned, even Henry James pointed towards their evil nature (cf. Matthiessen & Murdock). They taunt their governess, play tricks on her, and eventually gain the upper hand over the adults at Bly. Nevertheless, there is no evidence whether Flora and Miles are evil by nature. At least the housekeeper Mrs Grose underscores the impact that the late employees Quint and Jessel had on the children. Thereby she implies that Flora and Miles have been corrupted by them and now do their bidding. When it comes to Stephen King's children, Gage Creed definitely falls into the category of an evil child. He becomes a bloodthirsty little monster who murders to people. However, *Pet Sematary* continuously highlights Gage's transition from childhood to the state of being a purely evil monster. Thereby, his childish disposition is taken away from him to create the possibility of depicting a vicious and dangerous beast. Danny Torrance, on the other hand, is a child with supernatural abilities who is somewhat connected to another realm. In this respect, Danny becomes the haunted child; he suffers from visions and is prone to be the target of evil and paranormal forces. Although his abilities help

him overcome the demons at the Overlook hotel, his abilities are also a blessing in disguise, similar to Cole's capability to see dead people in M. Night Shyamalan's horror film *The Sixth Sense* (1999). These haunted children are very sensitive by nature and possess a natural receptivity for ghostly energies. Both Danny and Cole are intimidated by their powers at first, but eventually capable of using them for a greater cause.

In contrast to King's children, who are often the protagonists of the story, the Gothic children in Susan Hill's novels are flat characters without agency. In most of her stories they appear as child ghosts who may be evil or friendly. Frequently, they are remnants of the protagonists' past, they are warning signals, or victimised. Hill does not only use child characters to emphasise the theme of childhood in her stories. Most commonly, the main characters in her horror stories have to dig through their own childhood in order to get to the bottom of a mysterious secret from the past. *The Woman in Black* mostly focuses on the child as victim. The gruesome town curse attacks the most vulnerable members of the village of Grythin Gifford. Thereby, the author achieves the most shocked reactions by her readers. The terror that reigns over the misty English village is characterised by the parents' grief over their lost children. This aspect is particularly highlighted in Watkins's movie adaptation. The director highlights the individual fates of the families of the town and their overwhelming sorrow. In addition, unlike Hill's source novel, Watkins includes other characteristics of Susan Hill's work by adding child ghosts to the plot.

Although these texts depict diverse interpretations and embodiments of the Gothic child, the three texts that have been dealt with in this thesis draw attention to a particular pattern. Firstly, all of these children, Miles, Flora, Danny, as well as the children in *The Woman in Black*, deal with some kind of demonic possession and, respectively, surrender to a superior paranormal

power. Miles's and Flora's ambiguous relationship to their former attachment figure leaves it unclear whether the two have actually been possessed by the ghosts of Quint and Jessel. The main issue of *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Innocents* is whether or not the children are taken over by the ghosts of the former valet and governess, although they do not directly speak or act through the children's actions. The unnamed governess, and Miss Giddens, respectively, are convinced of their possession or at least of their loss of control. Danny Torrance, on the other hand, is being taken over not only by his imaginary friend Tony, a manifestation of his so-called 'shining', but more importantly, by the Overlook hotel. It creeps into his head and tries to manipulate the boy from within. Thereby the boy becomes vulnerable to the hotel's forces, similar to Miles's and Flora's vulnerability to Quint and Jessel. Although in Susan Hill's source novel the children of the woman in black are only mentioned with regards to being her victims, however, Watkins's adaptation portrays them as her minions. On one hand they are her victims and have lost their lives because of the evil spectre, on the other they follow her and stand by her side be it in front of Eel Marsh House or at the train station observing Arthur's and Joseph's death. The children's possession by paranormal forces, or rather their vulnerability towards them, largely depends on their family structures. All three stories, as well as most of the other Gothic texts and horror films that have been discussed in this thesis, feature children coming from dysfunctional families. *The Turn of the Screw* centres around two orphans who have lost each and every caregiver in their lives – their parents, their uncle and guardian, Flora's governess, and Miles's friend the valet. Danny Torrance comes from a broken home with an abusive, alcoholic father and a submissive and obedient mother. Nathaniel in *The Woman in Black* was separated from his biological mother and thereby triggered a town curse that affects

the children of the village. Gothic children most commonly grow up in a specific environment. Their disrupted family lives provide an excellent breeding ground for evil forces to take over.

In the last couple of decades numerous horror films have featured ghostly, possessed, or feral children, children with a connection to the afterlife or a paranormal realm as well as children with supernatural abilities. The horror film industry benefits immensely from these child characters while sequels (e.g. *Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension* 2015; dir. Gregory Plotkin; *Sinister 2* 2015; dir. Ciarán Foy), remakes (e.g. *Poltergeist* 2015; dir. Gil Kenan), and horror novelties (e.g. *Ich seh, Ich seh* 2014; dir. Severin Fiala and Veronika Franz; *The Babadook* 2014; dir. Jennifer Kent; *Welp* 2014; dir. Jonas Govaerts; *The Visit* 2015; dir. M. Night Shyamalan) continue to place children in the midst of a Gothic scenery. More importantly, the analyses of the three movie adaptations showed that the film industry even shifts the focus toward the Gothic child and makes it the main attraction of horror film.

8 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Armitt, Lucie. *Twentieth Century Gothic*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011.
- Bann, Jennifer. „Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter.” *Victorian Studies* 51.4 (2009): 663-685.
- Beidler, Peter G. *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989.
- Benton, Michael. “The Image of Childhood: Representations of the Child in Painting and Literature, 1700-1900.” *Children’s Literature in Education* 27.1 (1996): 35-60.
- Berry, Laura C. *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel*. London: UP of Virginia, 1999.
- Bruhm, Stephen. “On Stephen King’s Phallus Or The Postmodern Gothic.” *Narrative* 4.1 (1996): 55-73.
- Burkholder-Mosco, Nicole and Wendy Carse. “‘Wondrous material to play on’: Children as sites of Gothic liminality in *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents*, and *The Others*.” *Studies in the humanities* 32.2 (2005): 201-221.
- Cardwell, Sarah. “Adaptation Studies Revisited: Purposes, Perspectives, and Inspiration.” *The Literature/ Film Reader*. Ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2007. 51-64.
- Coats, Karen. “Between Horror, Humour, and Hope: Neil Gaiman and the Psychic Work of the Gothic.” *The Gothic in Children’s Literature*. Ed. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis. London: Routledge, 2008. 77-92.
- Coveney, Peter. *Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: a Study of the Theme in English Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967.
- Derry, Charles. *Dark Dreams 2.0. A Psychological History of the Modern Horror Film from the 1950s to the 21st Century*. London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009.
- Edel, Leon. *Henry James. The Treacherous Years 1895-1901*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969.

- Edwards, Justin D. and Rune Graulund. *Grotesque*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock. Introd. Hugh Haughton. London: Penguin Group, 2003.
- . *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. London: Imago Publishing Company Ltd., 2011.
- Georgieva, Margarita. *The Gothic Child*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Gottschalk, Claudia. *Gute Kinder, böse Kinder. Zerstörte Unschuld und ihre Folgen in ausgewählten Werken Stephen Kings*. Saarbrücken: Verlag Dr. Müller, 2007.
- Hill, Susan. *The Mist in the Mirror*. London: Vintage Books, 1999.
- . *The Small Hand. A Ghost Story*. London: Profile Books, 2010.
- . *The Woman in Black*. London: Vintage Books, 2007.
- Hogle, Jerrold E. "Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture". *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.
- James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*. 1898. Ed. T.J. Lustig. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Jentsch, Ernst. "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen." *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift*. 22 (1906): 194-205.
- Kavka, Misha. "The Gothic on Screen". *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 209-228.
- King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012.
- . *Pet Sematary*. London: Pocket Books, 1983.
- . *The Shining*. New York: Anchor Books, 1977.
- Lustig, T.J. Introduction. *The Turn of the Screw*. By Henry James. 1898. Ed. T.J. Lustig. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.

Magistrale, Tony. *Hollywood's Stephen King*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Massé, Michelle A. "Gothic Repetition: Husbands, Horrors, and Things That Go Bump in the Night." *Signs* 15.4 (1990): 679-709.

Morgan, Jack. *The Biology of Horror. Gothic Literature and Film*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

Matthiessen, F.O. and Kenneth B. Murdock. *The Notebooks of Henry James*. New York: Oxford UP, 1947.

McFarlane, Brian. "It Wasn't Like That in the Book... ." *The Literature/ Film Reader*. Ed. James M. Welsh and Peter Lev. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2007. 3-14.

-----, *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

McGillis, Roderick. "The Night Side of Nature: Gothic Spaces, Fearful Times." *The Gothic in Children's Literature*. Ed. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis. London: Routledge, 2008. 227-242.

Milam, Jennifer. "Sex education and the child: gendering erotic response in eighteenth-century France." *Picturing Children. Constructions of childhood between Rousseau and Freud*. Ed. Marilyn R. Brown. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. 45-58.

Morgan, Jack. *The biology of horror: Gothic literature and film*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002.

Pinedo, Isabel Christina. "Postmodern Elements of the Contemporary Horror Film." *The Horror Film*. Ed. Stephen Prince. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004. 85-118.

Prince, Stephen. "Dread, Taboo, and *The Thing*: Toward a Social Theory of the Horror Film." *The Horror Film*. Ed. Stephen Prince. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004. 118-130.

Renner, Karen J. (Ed.) *The 'Evil Child' in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 2013.

- , "Evil Children in Film and Literature." *The 'Evil Child' in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*. Ed. Karen J. Renner. London: Routledge, 2013. 1-27.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile or Education*. Trans. Barbara Foxley. E.P. Dutton & Co.: London, 1911.
- Sinyard, Neil. *Jack Clayton*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.
- Smith, Anna. "The Scary Tale Looks for a Family: Gary Crew's *Gothic Hospital* and Sonya Hartnett's *The Devil Latch*." *The Gothic in Children's Literature*. Ed. Anna Jackson, Karen Coats, and Roderick McGillis. London: Routledge, 2008. 131-144.
- Stam, Robert. "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation." *Literature and Film. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*. Ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo. Malden: Blackwell, 2005. 1-52.
- Stegemeier, Henri. "The Dance of Death in Folk-Song, with an Introduction on the History of the Dance of Death." Diss. U of Chicago, 1939.
- The Innocents*. Screenplay by William Archibald and Truman Capote. Dir. Jack Clayton. 1961. DVD. Capelight Pictures, 2012.
- The Shining*. Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. 1980. DVD. Warner Bros Entertainment Inc., 2008.
- The Woman in Black*. Screenplay by Jane Goldman. Dir. James Watkins. 2012. DVD. Concorde Home Entertainment, 2012.
- Wandless, William. "Spoil the Child: Unsettling Ethics and the Representation of Evil." *The 'Evil Child' in Literature, Film and Popular Culture*. Ed. Karen J. Renner. London: Routledge, 2013. 66-86.
- Wordsworth, William. "The Two-Part Prelude". *Romanticism. An Antology*. Ed. Duncan Wu. 4th ed. Chichester: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2012. 457-483.

Abstract (English)

The stock characters in Gothic Fiction – evil guardians, madmen, damsels in distress, monsters, monks, and heroes – have been described, analysed, and evaluated well enough in the last decades. Nowadays, numerous works also focus on Gender relations and family structures in the Horror Genre. However, the role of the child in the Gothic world has been notoriously overlooked by scholars, even though in a great number of novels, short stories, and – even more so – horror films of the past decades the child takes centre stage.

The present thesis seeks to analyse the role and function of the child in Gothic fiction. Especially the horror film industry provides uncountable examples of evil children, ghostly children, or children with a special connection to the supernatural world. Therefore, this text determines whether the focus shifts from adult to child characters (or the other way round) when changing the medium. For this purpose, three Gothic novels and novellas, respectively, were evaluated regarding the function of the child and were also compared to their cinematic counterparts in the same respect: Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and Jack Clayton's adaptation *The Innocents*, Stephen King's *The Shining* and Stanley Kubrick's film version of the same name, as well as Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* and the same-titled adaptation by James Watkins. In order to explain the context of the primary sources, this thesis provides an overview of the numerous roles the child occupies in (Gothic) literature and horror film. Moreover, to establish the child's fear factor, Ernst Jentsch's and Sigmund Freud's theories of the *uncanny* were used for analysis.

The outcome of this thesis does not only explain the different functions of children in Gothic literature, but also demonstrates the current trend in the horror film industry to place young children in the mysterious, dark, and bleak realm of the Gothic.

Abstract (German)

Klassische Charaktere der Gruselwelt – böse Vormunde, Wahnsinnige, Jungfrauen in Nöten, Monster, Mönche und Helden – sind im literarischen Bereich zur Genüge thematisiert worden. In den letzten Jahren befassten sich zahlreiche Studien auch mit der Thematik Gender Strukturen bzw. Familienverhältnisse im Gothic Genre. Obwohl unzählige literarische Werke und, vor allem, Horrorfilme Kinder ins Rampenlicht rücken gibt es kaum Studien die sich mit der Rolle des Kindes in der Gothic-Welt auseinander setzen.

Die vorliegende MA-Thesis versucht die unterschiedlichen Rollen und Funktionen des Kindes im Horror Genre zu analysieren. Vor allem die Horrorfilm-Industrie versorgt Zuseher regelmäßig mit bösen Kindern, Kindergeistern und Kindern mit einem Draht zum Übernatürlichen. Daher untersucht diese Arbeit nicht nur die unterschiedlichen Darstellungen von Kindern in der Horror-Literatur, sondern auch wie sich diese Darstellungen im Medium Film verändern. Zu diesem Zweck werden drei Texte und ihre jeweiligen Filmadaptionen mit einem speziellen Fokus auf die Charakteranalyse des Kindes untersucht: Henry James *The Turn of the Screw* und Jack Claytons Adaption *The Innocents*, Stephen Kings *The Shining* im Vergleich zu Stanley Kubricks Filmversion mit gleichem Namen, sowie Susan Hills *The Woman in Black* und die gleichnamige Verfilmung von James Watkins. Um den Kontext dieser Primärquellen zu erläutern enthält diese Arbeit auch einen Überblick über die Darstellungen des Kindes in der (Horror-) Literatur und dem Bereich Horrorfilm im Allgemeinen. Ernst Jentschs und Sigmund Freuds Theorien zum *Unheimlichen* werden herangezogen um den Gruselfaktor des Kindes und der präsentierten Werke zu beschreiben.

Das Ergebnis dieser MA-Thesis erläutert nicht nur die unterschiedlichsten Rollen, welche Kinder in der Gothic Welt annehmen, sondern zeigt auch einen aktuellen Trend im Horrorfilm Genre, welches das Kind vermehrt in der düsteren Welt des Grusels platziert.

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Profile

Name: Stefanie Nicole Valerie Weilingner
Date of Birth: Nov. 14th, 1988
Place of Birth: Vienna
Nationality: Austria

Education

2009 – 2012 BA English & American Studies (University of Vienna)
Theses: Transfer Features in the Pronunciation of Austrian Learners
John Dryden's All for Love or The World Well Lost. An Analysis of the Play Regarding Historical Background, Gender Roles, the Clash of East and West, and William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra
since 2012 MA Anglophone Literatures and Cultures (University of Vienna)
MA Geschichtsforschung, Historische Hilfswissenschaften und Archivwissenschaft (University of Vienna)
Sept. 2013 – Feb. 2014 Erasmus, University of Aberdeen

Employment History

2008 – 2010 Barbara Mucha Media
since 2012 Bürgerservice, Österreichischer Verfassungsgerichtshof