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Gothic Literature

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***Diving into The Gothic***

Throughout the Haunting of the Hill House, by Shirley Jackson, many terrifying moments occurred from the beginning with an ending that resulted in the death of one of the main characters, Eleanor. Even though she was trying to prove to the group that she was brave, in her inside she was scared, and she was the one that experienced the most haunting in Hill House. Throughout this piece, two major and important scenes that occurred throughout The Haunting of Hill House will be examined where their space and architecture inform the plot or character’s emotion or decisions.

While diving deeper into this novel, chapter 5 explains an event that was shocking to the group, especially Eleanor because it directly affected her the most. As Luke was asked to go into the kitchen to ask Mrs. Dudley for some coffee, he returned chilled and ask the rest of the group to follow him into the hallway where they found writings on the wall directly referring to Eleanor. According to The Haunting of Hill House, chapter 5, section 1, “Chilled by his face and his voice and his smile, they got up silently and followed him through the doorway into the dark long hallway which led back to the front hall. ‘Here,’ Luke said, and a little winding shiver of sickness went down Eleanor's back when she saw that he was holding a lighted match up to the wall”, at that moment they all followed Luke as he guides them towards the occurrence. “‘Can you read it?’ Luke asked softly, and the doctor, moving his flashlight, read slowly: HELP ELEANOR COME HOME”. At this point, Eleanor starts to panic and requested for the writings to be removed from the walls and questions the group if any of them did it and of course they did not. This specific event was a major point throughout this novel because both terror and horror were demonstrated. Firstly, the group was terrified by walking into that dark hallway. Eleanor was horrified by the surprise of her name written on the walls of Hill House which caused her to question the group's loyalty. This specific event could be described as fantastic which according to Todorov it is described as a liminal event in which we cannot decide if it is real or unreal. It can be described as fantastic because even though the Hill House is highly haunted, it is still doubly to readers. Points of horror and terror were also mentioned and according to Ann Radcliffe the difference between them is that “terror is the feeling of dread and apprehension at the possibility of something frightening, while horror is the shock and repulsion of seeing the frightening thing”, which it’s exactly what occurred in this event while the group investigated the incident. Even though this incident did happen, as the novel progresses, readers encounter death.

While the group spent their nights at Hill House, Dr. Montague explained that anyone who tries to leave Hill House eventually loses their lives. According to chapter 3, section 1 of The Haunting of Hill House, Dr. Montague explained – “The gates are locked. Hill House has a reputation for insistent hospitality; it dislikes letting its guests escape. The last person who tried to leave Hill House in darkness—it was eighteen years ago, I grant you—was killed at the turn in the driveway, where his horse bolted and crushed him against the big tree. Suppose I tell you about Hill House, and one of you wants to leave? Tomorrow, at least, we could see that you got safely to the village”. This is to demonstrate how Hill House can be both, dangerous and horrific. Dangerous meaning that there is a possibility for you to lose your life and at the same time there is this evil force that causes it if it dislikes certain actions such as leaving the property. Eighteen years was a long time ago before the group decided to visit Hill House, but its reputation was still there, and Dr. Montague knew its history. Later, leaning towards the ending of the novel, the group started to notice changes in Eleanor’s behavior which ended up in a tragic event.

Eleanor began to act differently, and the group did not want to take the risk of keeping her a day more in Hill House, so they decided to make her leave for good. Once the group told Eleanor that they want her to leave, she refused until eventually she was forced out. According to chapter 9, section 2 of The Haunting of Hill House, “The doctor shook his head. ‘It would be a mistake,’ he said slowly. ‘It would be a mistake to send one of us with her. She must be allowed to forget everything about this house as soon as she can; we cannot prolong the association. Once away from here, she will be herself again; can you find your way home?’ he asked Eleanor, and Eleanor laughed. ‘I'll go and get that packing done,’ Theodora said. ‘Luke, check her car and bring it around; she's only got one suitcase’”. Eleanor insisted that she did not have anywhere to go, but she still had to leave. Now, the interesting and tragic part was when Eleanor kills herself, according to The Haunting of Hill House chapter 9, section 3, “With what she perceived as quick cleverness she pressed her foot down hard on the accelerator; they can't run fast enough to catch me this time, she thought, but by now they must be beginning to realize; I wonder who notices first? Luke, certainly… I am really doing it, she thought, turning the wheel to send the car directly at the great tree at the curve of the driveway”, this piece proves that Hill House still has its history. The same way that guest eighteen years ago tried to leave ended up crashing into a tree, Eleanor ended up doing the same for some peculiar reason. This event could be described as Uncanny, following Todorov’s definition we know that it could be a reality, but it is just strange. This specific event with both car accidents mentioned could be real, and they did occur in the novel, but it is strange because it’s difficult to describe to others that an evil force caused them to happen. Eleanor’s death was a horrific moment for the group, just watching one of their ex-teammates killing herself is not something simple to deal with, and Dr. Montague should’ve suspected this in the beginning.

Overall, throughout this novel, many events occurred that demonstrated different concepts of Gothic literature. These two events described above were the ones that stood out the most with intense moments to death. These events were analyzed, detailing certain moments that represented concepts of horror and terror, fantastic and uncanny. To conclude, it is an incredibly written novel by Shirley Jackson, very detailed proving each point provided

**Work Cited**

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