

# **Exploring Trauma Through The Lens of Psychoanalysis in *The Haunting of Hill House***



**Noshin Sharmily**

**201013069**

**Department of English and Humanities**

**Spring 2024**

**Exploring Trauma Through The Lens of Psychoanalysis in *The Haunting of Hill House***

---

A Thesis Submitted to  
The Department of English and Humanities  
University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
BA in English

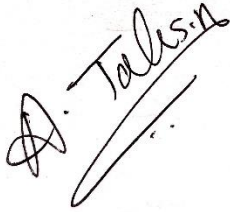
---

Noshin Sharmily  
201013069  
Thesis Supervisor: Anika Tahsin

Spring 2024

## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anika Tahsin", is written over a faint, circular, textured background. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

---

Anika Tahsin

Lecturer

Department of English and Humanities

## DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



---

Noshin Sharmily  
201013069  
Department of English and Humanities

## **Dedication**

To all those children who missed a healthy, happy childhood; who never got to grow up, but  
were forced to do so just to live on.

To those adults who never look back into their childhood or talk about it in fear of recollecting  
memories they believe they have long forgotten.

## **Acknowledgements**

My parents, who have been supportive of my needs and wishes and let me prioritize my health and education over everything. Even in the toughest days of the pandemic, or during my chaotic routine since the campus reopened, thank you for not forcing me to engage in activities beyond my limit or energy. Thank you for always being understanding whenever I chose my studies over family time. Thank you for raising me, loving me, for always worrying about me but never giving up on me.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Anika Tahsin miss for guiding me the way in the toughest three months of this academic life. Thank you miss, for all your constructive criticism as well as positive feedback, and encouragement that pushed me forward. Thank you for showing a door I could knock on anytime I needed help with my writing.

The Department of English and Humanities at ULAB. I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to all faculty members whose courses I had the honor of doing in the past four years. I would also like to mention a few honorable names, Mohammad Zaki Rezwana Sir, Qazi Mustabeen Noor Miss, Nishat Atiya Shoilee Miss, and S M Mahfuzur Rahman Sir who are no longer in ULAB. Thank you all for showing me what it is like to learn under a good educator who leads, motivates and pushes students to do their best. Thank you for making me feel seen and heard.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends who have been through thick and thin with me but never forgot to motivate me or to appreciate my work. Thank you for always believing in me and always being proud of me even when I was not. The ones I met in ULAB, you are the best prize I'm taking away from ULAB.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                                                        |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Abstract .....                                                                                                         | ii |
| Chapter 1: Introduction .....                                                                                          | 1  |
| Chapter 2: Methodology .....                                                                                           | 4  |
| Chapter 3: Literature Review .....                                                                                     | 5  |
| Chapter 4: Analysis.....                                                                                               | 13 |
| i.    A House Without Kindness: Hill House from a Psychoanalytic Lens.....                                             | 13 |
| ii.   Flashbacks and Memories: Portrayal of Nonlinear Timeline from Freudian Eyes.....                                 | 18 |
| iii.  Effects of Different Defense Mechanisms on Different Siblings.....                                               | 23 |
| iv.   Bringing the Repressed Feelings into Conscious Awareness: Confrontation of the<br>Trauma, and the Aftermath..... | 30 |
| Chapter 5: Conclusion.....                                                                                             | 34 |
| Works Cited.....                                                                                                       | 36 |

## **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to find out what impact the space had on the characters' minds in the show *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) and explore what truly haunted each of the children of the family even decades after leaving the hill house behind. In order to conduct this research with credential supporting arguments, secondary sources that cover related topics such as investigating interactions between characters, dysfunctional parenthood, comparison with the original work, the unusual nature of architectural setting, consequences of traumatizing events, examining the portrayal of disrupted time and space in relation to the characters' trauma in the series and other similar topics have been used. Moreover, it is a qualitative research that uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as the theoretical framework in order to analyze the primary text. To be more specific, Freud's ideas and arguments on "traumatic fixation" in relation to "the unconscious" of the human brain is applied to disintegrate the series and present the arguments of the current research. By the end of the paper, it is likely to be evident how more than the uncanny in the house itself, the characters' own childhood trauma regarding it was what kept on "chasing" and "haunting" them even in their adulthood due to their incapability to face it and grieve over it. This research helps explore how elements of psychoanalysis are often mixed with the horror genre through the use of personal trauma of characters in such a way that increases a sense of relativity within its audience in the modern age.

**Keywords:** psychoanalysis, childhood trauma, death, haunting, parenthood, grief, repression.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Childhood is a formative period of a person's life, where events, activities and treatment experienced during the time play the role in the establishment of one's identity, ideals, behavior and psychology. Just as how positive experiences may bring positive developments in life, the negative, or more severely, traumatic ones can impact individuals accordingly. Childhood trauma can leave scars that affect the ways an individual may pursue life or act in it. Additionally, childhood trauma is considered a critical "etiological factor" in developing several disorders or dysfunctional behavior (Terr 322). With that similar concept in mind, Mike Flanagan created the 2018 horror series *The Haunting of Hill House*, inspired by Shirley Jackson's 1959 gothic novel with the same title.

Since the modern era, many filmmakers have been taking interest in psychoanalysis and different aspects of it, to employ those in their work. Thus, psychoanalysis has become a popular tool in many films and television shows in the present day. Even so, what makes Flanagan's series significantly fascinating is how carefully he combined psychoanalysis with supernatural horror. The series follows the story of the members of the Crain family who moved into the hill house. The couple Hugh and Olivia Crain, with their five children Steven, Shirley, Theodora, Luke and Eleanor temporarily moved into the house in order to renovate it before selling. However, as the days start passing by, the family members start encountering strange incidents inside the house. Olivia became the biggest victim of it all as she lost her sanity and ended up committing suicide in the house after trying to murder her own children. From the first episode, Flanagan presents the series in a way that makes the audience perceive it as a supernatural horror series. However, as the

story progresses in each episode, the viewers slowly realize how rather than the ghostly horror, it explores the horror of one's own mind. Using supernatural as a veil, Flanagan explored how the rest of the Crain family members suffered from a generational trauma because of the house and their mother. He did so, by focusing on each of the characters' lives in adulthood with misery, constantly linking it to their past. Flanagan dived into psychoanalytic ideas by implementing different Freudian elements, which the characters developed to deal with the trauma they tried to repress.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis is the key theory applied to examine the primary text in the research. More specifically, his theory of traumatic fixation is used to understand the psyche of the characters, and the possible impact it had in their lives. Many scholarly articles have examined the text using different lenses including psychoanalysis to analyze different aspects such as the intensity of motherhood, insanity of space, nightmares, trauma, mental illness and so on. However, severity of childhood trauma in the characters' adulthood as well as its relation in the development of their personality have rarely been discussed in detail.

The current research aims to understand the spatial effect the hill house had on its occupants, the Crains, which led to one member committing suicide and the rest being traumatized for life. After that, the research intends to investigate the severity of their trauma, and in what ways as well as to what extent it impacted the characters' lives in adulthood. In order to investigate such issues, the research thoroughly analyzed the episodes and collected evidence on Freud's idea of "Return of the Repressed" among the characters, their defense mechanisms, and the changes that occurred in their lives after they confronted their traumatic past. As the primary text is still relatively new, not many scholarly discussions with similar theoretical framework could be found, making it challenging to conduct such a research. However, articles and chapters discussing the text with

relevant themes and viewpoints have been used to back it up. Therefore, through a careful analysis, this research can help in understanding the consequences of childhood trauma in adulthood and how this concept is used and improvised in modern media.

#### Research Questions

- What role did the space of the text play in affecting the psyche of the characters?
- Who is the real ghost in *The Haunting of Hill House* that kept “haunting” the characters for decades after leaving the house?

## Chapter Two

### Methodology

This research is conducted through a qualitative analysis of *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018). Each episode of the ten-episodes series has been thoroughly evaluated in order to collect the primary data for this research. In addition to that, ten scholarly journal articles and book chapters, which explored similar themes have been used as secondary resources. These secondary resources helped examine and justify the arguments in the research, and enhance the credibility, as well as strengthen the foundation of it. Psychoanalytical theories developed by Sigmund Freud have been used as the theoretical framework of the research. In particular, the concepts of trauma in relation to the unconscious of the mind in the chapter “Traumatic Fixation—the Unconscious” from the book *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1920) have been employed in the analytical arguments. From the chapter, elements such as a variety of defense mechanisms, repression, traumatic impact on the unconscious mind and so on were used in order to identify the issues present in the discussion. Through these Freudian elements of trauma, the characters' traumatic childhood and its link to their adulthood have been carefully examined with the aim of comprehending the significance of confronting one's own trauma and importance of grieving. As the primary source of this research is considerably recent, finding and using credible secondary sources played a challenging role. However, upon close analysis and careful selection, each of the articles, as well as book chapters investigating different aspects with similar lenses contributed efficiently to demonstrate the conclusion of the current research.

## Chapter Three

### Literature Review

The current research intends to explore and discover what uncanny power house really held over the characters' mind and what truly kept haunting the members of the house so differently even decades after leaving the house and their mother behind. Using the psychoanalytic framework, secondary sources discussing relevant topics like analyzing the abject motherhood; relationships between characters; different ways of dealing with trauma; comparison with other works; fragmented narrative structure of the show; ghosts and nightmares as symbolic representations; the strangeness in architectural settings etc., will be reviewed in this literature review.

Sigmund Freud's "Traumatic Fixation—The Unconscious," a chapter from his book *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1920) explored and discussed the concept of "unconscious" in relation to trauma, along with its consequences or effects on the human psyche. He talked about how one's trauma or its experiences can become "fixed" in the unconscious mind, resulting in the development of symptoms such as hysteria and neurosis (Freud 237). He further dives into the discussion of different mechanisms which the unconscious mind adopts in order to store traumatic memories or deal with those, highlighting the role of repression in the brain's attempt to maintain psychological stability. Overall, the chapter sheds light on the complex interplay between trauma, the unconscious mind, and mental health, which will play the role of theoretical source for this research. Likewise, the book chapter "Psychoanalytic Criticism" from Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* offers an overall discussion of Freud's, as well as Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories, and how those are incorporated in literature. This chapter will further help the current research in examining how

Freud's psychoanalytical components have been distributed and used in the presentation of Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Hill House*.

The chapter titled "The Haunting of Hill House (2018)" from the book *Gothic Cinema: An Introduction* written by Katharina Rein explores Mike Flanagan's depiction of recurrent trauma through flashbacks of the past. Rein analyzed the hill house in Mike Flanagan's 2018 Netflix adaptation of Shirley Jackson's 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House* as "a haunted medium" and insisted that the Hill House had delivered the purpose of "a rogue storage medium, randomly recording events, storing them, and eventually playing them back" (Rein 145). The chapter further argued that in this way, it "interrupts the continuity of time and space" accompanied by traumatic impacts on its characters. On top of that, Rein discussed how repetitive interruption of past and its disruption in the present becomes more apparent in the non-linear timeline along with the "fragmentary narrative structure" of the series too (Rein 146). Additionally, Rein presented a comparison between the different narrative structures of the series and the book, and exhibited that Flanagan's implementation of present constantly being disrupted by events of the past in hill house, or reality being disrupted by dreams and hallucination in a repetitive manner aligned with Freud's concept of repetitive tendencies of one's unresolved traumatic past (Rein 148). Rein presented these arguments by analyzing several sequences of the show as evidence. This argument will help the current research investigate the concept of return of the repressed among the traumatized characters of the show.

On the contrary, the book *The Streaming of Hill House: Essays on the Haunting Netflix Adaption* by Kevin J. Wetmore offers what other articles lack, which is analysis of different aspects of *The Haunting of Hill House*. The book is a critical collection and compilation of several scholarly essays analyzing the series from various angles. Among these, chapter 3, titled "The

Trauma” deals with the psychological state of the characters, and the post-traumatic effects and experiences each of them had because of the death of their mother and the hill house. The chapter containing the essay “Some Things Can’t Be Told” written by Jeanette A. Laredo elaborated on their distinguished behavioral changes due to childhood trauma by applying modern theories of trauma. Laredo argued that the show used the idea of horror as a “powerful metaphor for the traumatic experience” of the characters, where it seemed to keep returning in their lives (Laredo 64). This will help support the research in arguing how the trauma shaped their adulthood. Moreover, along with other observations, it also showed comparisons between the novel and TV adaptation, and the difference in characters’ psyche between the two. Laredo discussed how Flanagan’s show took a stand of “reversal” from Jackson’s book and its ambiguity, by attempting to create a “narrative that contains the supernatural and makes rational sense,” with emphasis on confronting one’s trauma (Laredo 72).

Zachary Sheldon in his article “Hell House or Something More? Horror, Abjection and Mental Illness” investigated the portrayal of abject motherhood and its link with mental illness through the use of camerawork and surveillance in Mike Flanagan’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018). Moreover, the article offers a discussion supporting the idea that the “horrific surveillance” that the show employs on its protagonists offers a range of “discursive resources” that the viewers or audience can use to assess and take action in relation to their own experiences with mental illness like depression and abject motherhood (Sheldon 43). Sheldon used multiple film theories of surveillance to examine the interconnection between mental illness and abjection in motherhood and how it was conveyed through distinguished body languages of the characters of *Hill House* (Sheldon 44). The article analyzed the abject motherhood in Olivia Crain while also using other films as examples and claimed how this theme is often used in modern horror fictions; in addition,

it concluded its argument showing how Flanagan put notable emphasis on mental illness due to it, not only of the mother herself, but also everyone surrounding her (Sheldon 47). The in-depth examination and discussion on the “monstrous motherhood” in relation to mental illness will help support this research to argue the characters’ trauma being centered around their mother Olivia.

Similarly, Richard Pascal analyzed the mother-daughter relationship in the article “Walking Alone Together: Family Monsters in ‘The Haunting of Hill House.’” However, unlike Sheldon who focused on the motherhood of Olivia in the series, Richard Pascal stuck to only the characters from Jackson’s *Hill House* and made an attempt to analyze the character Eleanor and her relationship with her mother. Using a psychoanalytical perspective, the author focused on Eleanor’s experience of the matriarchal system. Pascal emphasized Eleanor’s escalating immaturity as she grew older and made an effort to demonstrate how her allure to the house and silently growing hatred of her mother shaped her into the person she later became. The study of relationships will also aid in comparing and understanding Eleanor or Nell’s relationship with her mother in the adaptation.

In addition, Marine Galiné, the author of the article “The Physiology of Thresholds in Netflix’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018)” explored the theme of adolescence, as well as the absence of it presented in Flanagan’s *The Haunting of Hill House*. She did so, through the detailed study of “boundaries, thresholds and liminality.” Galiné took concepts of both space and body in account in relation to “gothic paraphernalia” of the series (Galiné 67). This means that the article first analyzed the uncanny nature of the hill house itself which breaks the “traditional understanding” of space, and then examined the characterization of the Crain children from childhood into adulthood. From such discussion, the article then explored liminality through the study of thresholds in the show. Investigating the behavioral changes of the characters, the article

observed how “the essence of adolescence permeates the whole show in its various acceptations and meanings, but also how the absence of the Crains as teenagers further exemplifies the ghostly subtext of the series” which is the significance of adolescence in terms of the characters’ “growing up” (Galiné 69). The article will help the current research in better analyzing the behavioral patterns and changes of the Crain siblings from childhood to adulthood.

Another chapter, “Walking Alone Together: Adapting Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*” written by Jeffery Andrew Weinstock focused on evaluating the different adaptations of Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) through critical comparison. Starting from the 1959 novel itself, Weinstock discussed film adaptations such *The Haunting* (1963) and *The Haunting* (1999), as well as Flanagan’s television show *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018). Analyzing from a psychoanalytic lens, Weinstock in the article argued that despite many changes each of the adaptations had added, all the versions of *Hill House* put emphasis on shut doors of the house, and the allegedly “supernatural horror that threatens from the other side” (Weinstock 251). Moreover, he suggests that doorways in fictions often work as “points of transition,” and “barriers that divide” when closed (Weinstock 252). Following this notion, Weinstock examines the locked red door of Flanagan’s hill house, asserting that he used it as a symbol of the family’s repressed past in the hill house which “held the answers within,” and only unlocked itself when the members finally chose to face their past (Weinstock 261). The article concluded its argument by discussing how unlike other versions that portrayed the other side of the shut door as something sinister, Flanagan took a different turn as he “opened the door” to show the “monster isn’t really monstrous” (Weinstock 263), which will further strengthen the current research.

Furthermore, Ljubicia Matek, the author of the article “The Architecture of Evil: H. P. Lovecraft’s ‘The Dreams in the Witch House’ and Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*”

talked about multiple contemporary gothic works including Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* centering towards the unusual architectural structure those horror novels had. Matek explored the "gothic idea of subversion" and how Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* utilized the concept through the use of setting and space (Matek 406). Using a gothic framework to analyze the literary works, Matek argued that gothic literature often tends to set a specific kind of architectural space containing "the ugly" and "the evil," or something unexplainably off that is contrasted from the "norm" or the conventional idea of home that is supposed to be "good" or "beautiful" (Matek 407). By doing so, it breaks the idea of home containing a sense of safety among characters as well as readers. The author comes to the conclusion that the houses in the works reflected the uncanny or the wellspring of evil, causing the protagonists to be both metaphorically and literally lost. The paper did a fairly good job at exploring and inspecting the architectural setting and its mysterious as well as bizarre traits of the space and its effect. With the elaborated evaluation of the hill house, this article will serve as a useful resource for the current research in understanding the impact of uncanny on the characters of *The Haunting of Hill House*.

To add more to the understanding of mental illness and trauma disguised as ghosts and horror, the journal article "Nightmare and The Horror Film: The Symbolic Biology of Fantastic Beings" written by Noel Carroll was explored for this research. In the article, Carroll examines the symbolic significance and structures of characters from medieval beliefs as well as the use of nightmare imagery in different horror films. He remarked that psychoanalysis is a "critical tool" when it comes to the horror genre due to its ties with use of nightmares and dreams (Carroll 17). Carroll explores the conflicting meaning of nightmares through a psychoanalytic lens, and expands on it in this article with examples of nightmare scenes from various ghost stories and horror films. Supporting Freud's theory of dreams, Carroll further asserted that the inspection of nightmares

quite often guides to the “earliest, most profound, and inescapable anxieties and conflicts to which human beings are subject to” (Carrol 18). This argument works as a helpful source in assessing the nightmares Olivia and other characters in *The Haunting of Hill House* started having, resulting in initial disruption of their normal lives.

Likewise, the journal article “The Haunting versus Reality: The Uncanny in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*” authored by Mona Gad Sayed Gad Ali is another article that can be helpful in investigating the mental state and stability of characters such as Eleanor in relation to the horror in the hill house. Ali used a psychoanalytic lens, specifically Sigmund Freud's theory of uncanny, “unheimlich” as a theoretical framework to examine the true haunting in Jackson's hill house, and understand if it is supernatural ghosts or mind ghosts that Eleanor made in her head (Ali 493). The article presented a detailed discussion on comparing the idea of “doubling” or “doppelganger” with Eleanor's psychic changes throughout the novel due to her desire for a sense of belonging. Ali concluded that rather than the house haunting the characters, it was Eleanor's “psychological state of repression, denial, hysteria, and sadness” that became the real ghost of the hill house (Ali 507). This discussion played a helpful role in examining the idea of “mind ghost” in Flanagan's Eleanor, and her relation to the “bent-neck-lady.”

On a different note, Jenna Ng's book chapter “(Remix) True Holograms: A Different Kind of Screen; A Different Kind of Ghost” discusses “true holograms” as “post-screen ghosts.” Ng implemented Deleuze's argument on “The brain is the screen,” along with Vilém Flusser's “point culture and linearity” theory as theoretical sources in order to conduct her research (Ng 189). The chapter argued that true holograms are “also of the post-screen which produce apparitions” (Ng 190). Thus, the chapter analyzes the use of advanced holographic technologies as a means for viewers to conceive and project realities according to their relativity, rather than the representation

of the ghosts on screen. In order to analyze this concept, Ng used multiple films and television shows including *Parasite* (2019), *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) etc. Ng offered a careful discussion on the concept of true hologram, and then investigated Flanagan's portrayal of horror in the *Hill House* in consideration to the viewers' sense of relativity. The detailed analysis on the portrayal of horror through holographic impact on the audience will help the current research in better relating the Hauntings of Hill house with psychological ghosts, rather than spiritual ones.

Many researchers may claim that feminism or gender theory is a more constructive theoretical framework than psychoanalysis to examine *The Haunting of Hill House* for its "feminine gothic" essence. While it may be true in the case of Jackson's novel that focused mostly on Eleanor's experiences including her growing hatred for her mother, it may not be the case in Flanagan's *Hill House*. By choosing to shift the narrative focus from one character's struggles to an entire family who could not move on from the death of their mother and dealt with it differently, Flanagan subtly but visibly intended to offer a piece of work that explored variety in human psychology more than anything. Thus, in order to fully explore the "Hill House" of Mike Flanagan, a psychoanalytical framework would be most effective; and all these articles and chapters discussed above are concerned with some aspects required to proficiently conduct this research.

## Chapter Four

### Analysis

#### 4.1 A House Without Kindness: Hill House from a Psychoanalytic Lens

Haunted house tropes in the gothic and horror genre are not uncommon. Gothic is often set in a specific sort of architectural space. Ones that intend to turn the concept of home, something safe and homely into something that traps its own inhabitants. The impact of horror from a haunted house typically starts through the shattered distinction of outside and inside, as the evil invades the supposed safe space. American gothic and horror literature adapted such settings in a way where rather than previously common settings like castles or monasteries etc., the residential houses became the link between events and evil in the modern horror genre (Matek 407). On another hand, the concept of “haunted” in terms of houses is sometimes used as a metaphor where “wise fathers” turn into “overbearing tyrants,” “affectionate nurturing mothers” into “smotheringly manipulative moms” and “adorably lively children” into “egocentric little monsters” (Pascal 464). Yet, what makes the haunted house of Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* as well as Mike Flanagan’s representation of it in the Netflix series with the same title is the strange nature of the house itself. Needless to say, before any other possible connotations of ghosts in both the novel and the show, it offers horror in literal forms of ghost and uncanny to its audience. However, what makes the hill house stand out is its own unexplainable nature of being able to haunt even before the ghosts in it. The strange construction of the house, the unexplainable paranormal presence inside the house, and the house’s tendency to subtly manipulate its residents’ thoughts according to their desires are some of the notable aspects of the hill house making it different from typical haunted houses in the horror genre.

First of all, the design and construction of the house is in a way a mystery to its occupiers. As Jackson started the introduction of the hill house calling it “not sane” that “stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within,” stating to the readers that “whatever walked there, walked alone;” all of which was followed by Flanagan’s series as well, as a voice-over monologue for the opening scene of the first episode. Here, the built structure of the house is one of the primary aspects to consider in terms of horror. Along with it, the psyche of the builder of the hill house also needs to be observed. Following Sigmund Freud’s sublimation theory in psychoanalysis, where he suggested that humans tend to sublimate their inner emotions and desires which may not be accepted in the society and utilize and present it in a more acceptable way such as art, work etc. According to Matek, design and architecture is a form of art that requires very precise mathematical and technical knowledge, and the skill to translate geometrical variables into an aesthetically pleasing and functional space (412). It means it cannot just be constructed out of miscalculation or misjudgment. Yet, from both the novel and the show, hill house was portrayed as faulty, or rather mysterious construction with maze-like traits making the people in it perplexed following the directions inside. The “disjointed” nature of the house is explained by Dr. Montague in the book as he calls it a “masterpiece of architectural misdirection” where everything is “off centre” (Jackson 68). The people inside the house would often get lost and fail to keep tracks through the rooms. First in the novel, Montague instructs them to never wander around alone, warning that they might get lost forever due to its mysterious nature.

“Every angle is slightly wrong. Hugh Crain must have detested other people and their sensible squared-away houses, because he made his house to suit his mind. Angles which you assume are the right angles you are accustomed to, and have every right to expect are true, are actually a fraction of a degree off in one direction or another.” (Jackson 68). The hill house is a

work of art by Hugh Crain in the novel that hinted at his psyche, his detest for other people and desire for isolation from people. The house is so disproportionate from the inside that the members sometimes even had trouble maintaining balance as due to the structure, it's hard to keep walking straight. It became evident when Eleanor almost felt dizzy in the verandah trying to walk straight (Jackson 72). In Flanagan's hill house as well, members often felt lost inside the house and started discovering things they did not know existed. Hugh and Olivia did not know there was a basement in the house when Luke told them about it, as it was not even in the blueprint of the house ("Touch" 27:30). Additionally, the intro of the series shows the hill house as a maze, implying more towards Flanagan's intention of portraying the bizarre pattern of the hill house and its capability to deceive its people (*The Haunting of Hill House*). As it held the traits of its builder's state of mind, the house also turned itself into a reflection of its other occupants' mental image, which only attracted psychologically distressed people. "The incidents that take place in the house can be taken both as realities fostered on the protagonists through her supernatural relation to the evil house, or mere projections created through mind abilities" (Ali 493). Thus, both in the novel and the show, the house is like a representation of the mess inside the people's mind who were living in it, such as Eleanor in the book and Olivia in the show.

The presence of paranormal beings, or in other words, actual ghosts is also felt throughout the book and the series. The paranormal experience for the members in books started through the bangings on the doors of Eleanor and Theodor's rooms, as Eleanor described it as the sound hitting with "iron bar." (Jackson 81). Similar scenes are included in the series as well, as two of the children, Shirley and Theodora witness the loud thuds on their doors to walls and closets which none of their parents, or rest of the siblings seemed to have heard ("Open Casket" 19:41). Just like how Dr. Montague and Luke in the book saw and chased after a beast-like creature in the hallway

that mysteriously appeared and disappeared, four of the Crain children in the series were also faced with the same creature that disappeared without a trace (“Two Storms” 45:50). All members of the family in Flanagan’s hill house experienced ghost activities during or after their time in the house one way or another. Olivia in the show finding a certain spot in the nursery to be noticeably colder than the other parts of the room, but the caretaker Mrs. Dudley not agreeing is similar to Luke and others experiencing the same in Jackson’s version, despite the thermometer showing it had the exact temperature as the rest of the house. Six years old Luke from the series was met with a ghost which even ripped his shirt in the basement. Theo felt a pair of hands grabbing her which she initially thought to be younger sister Eleanor’s, only to realize she was alone in the room (“Touch” 1:08). All five of the Crain children often heard dogs barking at night although there was no dog in the area (“Steven Sees a Ghost” 19:00). The audience also gets to see several different ghosts together who once lived in the house as they appear in front of Olivia before her final breakdown in episode nine. (“Screaming Meemies” 47:17). However, what’s different about the ghosts in the show is that the house takes their souls in and nurtures it. Flanagan suggested in his show that whoever dies inside the house, lives there forever. This is particularly evident as through the deaths of Abigail whom Olivia killed by poisoning, Olivia herself, Eleanor, and Hugh- all who died in the house and their souls remained there forever (“Silence Lay Steadily” 1:01:34). In the end, showing how it’s not the ghosts themselves, but rather the house having control over them and keeping them forever, unlike other conventional gothic literature.

The biggest mystery of Flanagan’s version of hill house however, remains in the concept of “red room” of the house. A concept not really found in Jackson’s novel, the red room was a red-doored and only locked room which none of the members could unlock, nor break into even with an ax. Yet at the last episode of the show, it is revealed that all of the members had been in the red

room without realizing. Even more than the ghosts, the house carefully executed the terror among the family members through the red room. Like how in episode two Olivia compared a house with a person's body, saying it had bones, veins, eyes, a heart ("Open Casket" 4:58); like it was alive, the hill house opened its heart, aka the red room according to each of the members' desires. The house manipulated each of them by presenting the room differently in different places according to their desires, like appearing as a game room for Steven, family room for Shirley, dance studio for Theodora, treehouse for Luke and a toy room for Eleanor- none of which actually existed in the house ("Silence Lay Steadily" 39:55). The more time they spent in the red room, in other words, the more they gave into their desire, the more the house gripped control over them and fed into their inner fears. It did that through a series of nightmares consisting of their worst fears. Freud, who put great emphasis on dreams in discussions of psychoanalysis, urged that they often contained meanings somehow related to one's subconscious mind. Dreams and nightmares have often been closely tied to modern gothic or horror literature as a key element. Things seen in nightmares are frightening because it is often linked with an underlined wish that is not allowed in its "naked form" (Carroll 17). Thus, In the process of the house's manipulation, Olivia, who spent the most time in the red room as a reading room, became the first and worst victim, repeatedly dreaming about the early death and misery of her twins, Luke and Eleanor. Whilst her worst fear remained losing them, and biggest wish to protect them from it, she ended up attempting to kill them, or "wake them up" from the "nightmare" that was life. With her submission to her deepest desire and darkest fear, Olivia was driven insane to the point where murdering her own children occurred as the best way to protect them from any harm that the future could possibly bring. As she failed to do so, she took her own life wishing to wake her from that very nightmare, leaving her whole family traumatized for life.

## 4.2 Flashbacks and Memories: Looking into The Portrayal of Nonlinear Timeline Through Freudian Eyes

From the first episode, the audience of Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Hill House* is offered a journey of the characters' past and present simultaneously. Many of these events in the scenes from present are followed by scenes of the past with similar events experienced by the characters. This gave the viewers the opportunity to compare between the past and present, and distinguish how the characters responded to such situations at different points of their lives. Moreover, it also helped the viewers observe the possible traumas of the characters regarding the experiences. Using the non-linear timeline of emergence of past and present simultaneously, Flanagan explored the concept of trauma; and he did so, by portraying its repressive state and repetitive nature, underlined by Sigmund Freud in his psychoanalytic theory of repetition compulsion, as well as hinting at the characters' unstable mental state. "Repetition of past occurrences, a basic figure of psychoanalysis, shapes both the main characters and the structure of the entire series" (Rein 149). Moreover, psychoanalysis considers the meaning of trauma as "psychic injury" caused by "emotional shock" which can return in "unconscious repetition" (Laredo 62). Freud suggested that individuals own the tendency to try to repeat the events of their past experiences that are specifically traumatic, with the intention of outdoing or mastering them this time. Following Freud's words on repressed memory as something "buried alive," that only comes back in "uglier ways," overlapping of past and present among the Crain siblings can be noticed (Barry 97).

The first one in the discussion is Steven, who in his adulthood shocked the audience, as they witnessed his broken relationship with his father Hugh, and could not but wonder, why?

Steven, who as the younger version of himself would spend most of his time with his father Hugh, helping him out in remodeling the house, grew up to be the most distant and resentful towards him out of all the siblings. As the story unfolds, it is then revealed that he started to hate his father Hugh for never telling him about anything of what had happened regarding the house and his mother, causing him to feel neglected. This implies his feeling of abandonment, which got more evident when his dad forcibly joined him to look for Luke as Steven strongly protested against it. (“Witness Marks” 5:31). As Hugh insisted and said “I just want to help” to Steven, a scene from the past with Steven uttering the same line to his dad followed. Steven’s past experience is reflected in his current rejection where he was seen desperately wanting to be a part of his father’s work and life, but got let down by him as Hugh believed Steven made a mistake in work previously; and no longer trusted him with it despite Steven insisting otherwise (“Witness Marks” 5:39). In this parallel occurrence of something that hurt him in the past, Steven now replayed the past in his head and played the role of his father in present, rejecting any possible help from him, and hoping to outsmart its trauma.

Shirley first experienced trauma from the death of her kittens, and then being lied about their death by her mother. The signs of repressed memories and trauma not only reflects on their behavior or reaction towards certain incidents, but also one’s way of life, profession, parenting and so on. The eldest sister, Shirley, is another prime example of it. From the first episode, it is revealed that Shirley in now owns a funeral business with her husband (“Steven Sees a Ghost” 17:00). This at first may not appear to be a significant aspect regarding her trauma; however, as the audience learn that she’s a mortician who expertizes in autopsying, and grooming or “fixing” dead bodies, its relation with Shirley’s childhood trauma becomes more noticeable. As Flanagan presents the loop of past and present of Shirley’s life in episode two, the audience travels back in her childhood

in the hill house when she found five kittens and decided to raise them, all of which soon started to die one by one for unknown reasons. The death of the first kitten played as the beginning of her trauma regarding death where she sees movements in the kitten's mouth, expecting it to be alive, but only to encounter insects coming out of the dead kitten's mouth ("Open Casket" 27:28). Flanagan used this memory as the core of her repressed trauma with a tendency to keep coming back, by showing how in her adulthood she imagined the same spider coming out of deceased Eleanor's mouth before Shirley could "fix" her ("Open Casket" 45:41). This aspect also helps observe the connection between her childhood trauma and adulthood effort to repeat the death scenarios where she can now fix them unlike her past. Another incident that did not appear to be as consequential, but did impact Shirley's life and her parenthood was her mother Olivia lying about the death of the last remaining kitten. The scene portrayed the young Shirley screaming at her mother in agony for lying and "giving away" the cat without telling her, which was followed by a scene in present, where Shirley recalls that memory before facing her own children about Eleanor's death, assuring them with "I won't lie to you" ("Open Casket" 39:59).

Another sibling, Luke on the other hand started building unconscious issues for not being believed or taken solemnly in childhood. Being a six years old child in his time in the hill house, many of Luke's experiences were considered imaginary by his parents as well as elder siblings, which later affected his ways of interacting with others. At first, the rest of the Crain family believed the little girl Abigail (whom Luke claimed was his friend from the woods) to be his imagination, despite him constantly telling them that she's real ("Steven Sees a Ghost" 52:46). Later, due to not being in the blueprint, both Hugh and Olivia failed to believe him regarding the existence of a basement in the house where he saw a ghost after momentarily getting stuck, leaving Luke dejected ("Touch" 27:27). The significance of these events is portrayed when later in his

adulthood, he faced hardship communicating as well as sharing his feelings with anyone, and often mentioning “they never believe me” (“The Twin Thing” 44:24). The gravity of his trauma and unconscious resentment could be further noticed when Luke reminded his father how “Big boys know the difference between what’s real and imaginary,” the exact remark of distrust that his father gave him in the hill house regarding Abigail and ghosts (“Eulogy” 47:29). As a result, the adult Luke now disregards his father’s effort to communicate as well as reassure him that he acknowledges Luke’s ghostly experiences, by offering his father only what Luke himself was given in his childhood.

### 4.3 Effects of Different Defense Mechanisms on Different Siblings

By keeping the similar gothic horror essence from Jackson's *hill house* but portraying it remarkably differently that focuses more on the characters' 'life after hill house', Flanagan attempted to convey that, rather than the ghosts or the house itself, the Crain family were constantly chased by their own experience in it. "We can also think about ghosts in another sense: one deriving not from the dead (nor even from the living) but as an entirely different creed, namely, the ghosts via which the human mind ideates, describes, apprehends, beholds and projects their realities" (Ng 200). This includes not only the paranormal encounters but also the tragedy of losing their mother in it. Being children unable to rationalize what they went through, and never receiving an explanation for what had happened to their mother during their last days in hill house resulted in their inability to grieve accordingly. The series used the occurrence of hauntings as a "powerful metaphor" for the "traumatic experience" which never ended and kept coming back to them later in life (Laredo 64). As this traumatic experience of losing their mother along with the trauma in the house remained unresolved, the two combined together forcing the kids to build defense mechanisms attempting to block it all together. Additionally, Sigmund Freud described defense mechanisms as psychological strategies applied by an individual's ego to protect itself from any possible anxiety increasing from the unconscious (Freud 46). The central defense mechanisms theorized by Sigmund Freud include repression, denial, displacement, regression, rationalization, sublimation and so on, two of which (sublimation, repression) have already been discussed in the previous chapters. As Weinstock described, "All of the family exhibits symptoms of trauma (although it manifests differently in each case) and, through a sequence of flashbacks" (260). All five of the children repressed their traumatic memories from their childhood leaving them to roam

in their unconscious mind; but each of them adopted a different Freudian defense mechanism as they grew up as adults. By examining these defense mechanisms in the characters through a psychoanalytical lens two things can be explored. First, how those impacted their personality development as per Freud suggested; second, how the siblings subtly represented different stages of grief (denial, anger, bargain, depression, acceptance) through those mechanisms.

The eldest Crain sibling Steven developed denial as his core defense mechanism, due to his constant denial of any of the horror experienced in the hill house, and only believing that they were all mentally unstable. In Freudian theory of defense mechanisms, which was later popularized with details by his daughter Anna Freud in 1936, denial is a way in which ego protects itself by forcibly keeping any threatening or stress-provoking thoughts or memories out of conscious awareness which had previously caused distress. Despite Steven being the eldest and closest to his teenage years during their time in the hill house, Steven rarely expressed signs of experiencing hauntings. However, despite his little horror encounters, Steven as an adult was seen to completely dismiss any possibilities uncanny existence, and only believed that their mother was “crazy,” as he explained how even after “all those years in the hill house” one thing he “never found” was “a reason” (“Steven Sees a Ghost” 13:37). Staying in denial, even in his book “The Haunting of Hill House,” he portrayed all of the events in the hill house as their imaginations, indicating a genetic mental disorder. Yet, he obsessively explored ghosts, or the idea of it by becoming a ghost-story writer, meeting and talking to people with ghost experiences in order to write their stories in his books. His obsession with ghost stories of others while constantly rejecting his own implies that he still believed it all in his subconscious (“Steven Sees a Ghost” 20:00).

Shirley, the second sibling developed projection as her defense mechanism. Projection refers to allocating one's own unpleasant or unacceptable emotions and thoughts in others. Projecting

such qualities in others, an individual tends to avoid acknowledging those feelings within themselves. Shirley used this mechanism through her anger, and her tendency to control others. Being the first sibling to experience trauma regarding death when she lost all five of her kittens as she failed to protect them, Shirley projected her feelings onto her mother Olivia and blamed her for taking her kittens away from her ("Open Casket" 36:25). When her mother died, she started feeling resentment towards her father Hugh, blaming him for Olivia's condition like Steven. When Eleanor passed away, she then started blaming her death on Steven for not checking up on her or picking up her call, while she did the same ("Open Casket" 23:40). Later when she found her husband with Theodora in a misleading state together, she assumed he wasn't faithful to her without talking to him, or giving him a chance to explain himself. While she expressed her anger by refusing to talk to them, it is later revealed that she was constantly haunted by her past when she betrayed her husband by being disloyal years ago, which she was now projecting onto him ("Silence Lay Steadily" 24:14). Another way Shirley's anger was released was when she could not control things and people around her. As her trauma began with deaths of her loved ones one after another, she became obsessed with the concept of controlling everything and "fixing" the dead by becoming a funeral director as she couldn't control death itself; thus she tried to fix her unconscious trauma by at least making them look how they did when alive (Laredo 67). She actively tried to control different aspects of other people's life including speaking for all the siblings when she refused to take profits from Steven's book on the hill house and their experience, and later got angry upon finding out that most of the siblings, as well as her husband took the money in secret ("Two Storms" 36:17). She secretly did not let Luke attend the wedding of Eleanor, telling him that nobody expected him there because he ran away from rehab center, while being fully aware that Eleanor did indeed expect him at the wedding ("Open Casket" 44:15).

Theodora, the third sibling, adopted reaction formation as her mechanism. Reaction formation is a way of an individual adopting behaviors, attitudes and reactions which are often opposite of their true feelings and emotions. “The primary identification of the ego is not with the id, but with the external world” (Freud 77). Being a child with a special ability to feel others emotions and see memories, Theo has been the most sensitive out of all the siblings. However, in order to mask that sensitivity in fear of exposing vulnerability, Theo appeared to be the most apathetic to situations as well as trauma as she built “walls” around her to protect herself (“Touch” 4:48). Laredo explains, “As the middle child, Theo is predictably torn between her older siblings who rationalize their mother's haunting as mental illness and the younger twins who acknowledge the supernatural as the source of their trauma” (68). Theo is constantly bargaining choices in her life in order to protect herself from any vulnerability. This bargaining aligned with reaction formation is further indicated when Flanagan shows how despite building walls around herself that lets nobody in or develop emotional intimacy with, she still wished to save others of the same pain as she became a child psychiatrist; understanding and helping children who are unable to open up “just like her,” contradicting her apathetic persona (“Touch” 6:22).

Luke, one of the twins, developed regression as a defense mechanism, which in Freudian analysis involves ego's retreat to an earlier stage of psychological development in reaction to stress or anxiety caused by any traumatic experience (Freud 295). Behaviors might include temper tantrums, loss of morality, dependency on providers etc.; As discussed in the previous chapter, Luke's initial trauma started from the dismissal of his experiences by most of his family members as none of them believed him. In addition to seeing paranormal beings in the house, the mysterious death of his mother left him with a great sense of loss in the unconscious mind from a very young age (“The Twin Thing” 42:25). Seeing ghosts but not being able to tell anyone, neither being able

to mourn his mother's death in a healthy state, Luke's depression resulted in dependency on drugs, and habit of stealing and running away; along with his dependency on anyone who offered him affection. This includes his sister Eleanor, and later his friend Joey in his rehab center. Luke became so lonely not having Eleanor by his side who always believed him, that he became dependent on Joey for being friendly and ended up following her out of the center to bring her back even though she chose to betray him ("The Twin Thing" 23:55).

Lastly, Luke's twin Eleanor adopted rationalization as her defense mechanism. Rationalization in psychoanalysis refers to attempts to justify conflicts or traumatic situations through plausible explanation. Along with the loss of her mother, Eleanor suffered her whole life from trauma of a "bent-neck lady" that repeatedly appeared during her sleep paralysis since the hill house days, and kept coming back later in life. However, she could never fully rationalize her experiences of trauma despite seeking medical help ("Bent-Neck Lady" 30:28). Her constant efforts to accept that hill house did not have any power over her and rationalize her traumatic experiences instead of trying to confront it resulted in her going back to the hill house to prove to herself that it's just a house made of "bricks, woods and glass" where she ultimately lost her life ("Bent-Neck Lady 57:29). Failing to rationalize, she became the bent-neck lady upon her death, seeing flashbacks of her entire life from the bent-neck lady's perspective. It is then indicated to the viewers that perhaps bent-neck lady is her "traumatized other" that radically changed by the trauma that she could not be recognizable to her younger selves, trapping her in the "endless loop of trauma" from past, present and future (Laredo 69).

#### 4.4 Bringing the Repressed Feelings into Conscious Awareness: Confrontation of the Trauma, and the Aftermath

Trauma affects the ways a human brain functions; thus it needs to be faced by the conscious mind with the aim of healing the traumatic wound instead of keeping it hidden in the unconscious. As a form of therapy as well, Freud's psychoanalysis itself is about helping or curing people by "investigating" the interaction between "conscious and unconscious elements" of the mind. In this process, the "repressed fears" as well as "conflicts" which create issues in one's life are brought to conscious awareness (Barry 97). As one brings the repressed memories and emotions into consciousness as a process to heal from it, it then becomes more evident how much power it previously held over both the conscious and unconscious mind. Unlike other adaptations of the same novel, Mike Flanagan's version did not shy away from exploring the similar concept in his ten episodes' series. Taking the viewers on a journey of constant shift between past and present, Flanagan exhibited the notion of unresolved childhood trauma shaping one's adulthood. He did so, by focusing on the Crain siblings' "inability" to find closure from trauma of childhood (Galiné 78). By having the characters confront their (both collective and individual) trauma and past in the last episode, and giving the audience an ending that hinted a psychologically better future for all the characters, Flanagan delivered the message that the real ghost was not the house but their own past trauma all along. However, what makes this work of Flanagan significant is that he did not imply that all the issues in Crain family's lives that they had been struggling with all those years had magically disappeared after confronting those. Instead, he portrayed it as only the first step towards the betterment of life, delivering the message that ghosts might never completely "die" or go away but one can still heal from it (Sheldon 53). In the final episode of *The Haunting of Hill*

*House*, Flanagan gave the characters or Crain siblings their closure from three aspects that “haunted” them both literally and metaphorically. This includes the house, neglectful parenthood and the members’ individual trauma.

The hill house in *The Haunting of Hill House* is without a doubt, the originator of the hauntings or trauma in the lives of the Crain family. Flanagan therefore began as well as ended the conflict inside the house as well, by bringing the family back in the house almost thirty years after leaving. The house can be seen as the symbolic figure of each of the family members' trauma: they never looked back once they left it, yet remained obsessed with it in all stages of their lives. Additionally, one family members’ death caused them to abandon it, and another one’s death brought them back to face it. The show’s central and constant focus in the house includes the locked red room, perhaps symbolizing the division between physical and spiritual worlds, as well as the division between their past and present (Weinstock 260). Hence, despite countless efforts, the Crain kids could never “literally” unlock it, but upon their revisit as adults, all of them got locked inside the room, and finally faced their own trauma (“Silence Lay Steadily” 32:47). Weinstock added, the show’s tendency to put “repeated emphasis” on the house’s rejection to open the door indicates “the answer” that it held within (261). Therefore, after finally having been inside the room, the Crain siblings were able to face the truth they had been running from all their lives.

Lack of proper parenthood played as the root cause behind the sufferings in the Crain siblings' lives. Despite showcasing the Hugh-Olivia couple as a loving and healthy pair of parents to their five children, it soon changed for the worse under the uncanny influence of the hill house on Olivia’s mind. Sheldon denoted, the night that Olivia commits suicide in the house serves as the “catalyst” to understand the characters and how Flanagan improvised the concept of mental illness from Jackson’s novel. The show brilliantly used the idea of “monstrous motherhood” and

portrayed how a mother's struggles and/or mental illness is not limited to the individual but also to those linked with her. In this way, Flanagan subtly shifted the focus of the genre from supernatural horror to psychological horror in one's own mind (45). Traumatized by the death of their mother, the Crain children were never able to get closure from her. However, when they could not even have their father Hugh next to them while growing up with the pain of loss, it left them with more scars that stayed in adulthood. Being the only parent after Olivia's death, Hugh was presented as the one who was "supposed to accompany his children through their process of maturing" (Galiné 79). However, he failed to do so by sending them away to their aunt and never having a healthy conversation regarding anything that happened in the house, resulting in the children feeling abandoned by him. "I was holding a door closed... I held it so hard, I did not have any arms left for the kids" ("Silence Lay Steadily" 45:45). Nevertheless, Hugh was finally able to give his children resolution both from his side along with their mothers. They finally learn the reason he never talked about what happened was in order to protect them from the truth that their mother attempted to take their lives after she "lost her mind" in the house. In addition to that, the children received their final proof of their fathers' love after he sacrificed his life in exchange for the children's freedom from the house and its occupiers ("Silence Lay Steadily" 1:00:15).

Finally, the changes they brought in their lives after confronting their trauma and leaving the hill house is yet another way Flanagan showed how much it had impacted them growing up, and how they were at last ready to heal from it. His first attempt to convey this notion and turn back from Jackson's work was by ending the show with the impression that the "monstrous house" was not really monstrous after all (Weinstock 263). This is evident when unlike Jackson's hill house that remained ambiguous where doors always swing shut, quoting "whatever walked there, walked alone" (Jackson 150), Flanagan opposed this idea as he changed the lines to "those who

walk there, walk together” (“Silence Lay Steadily” 1:09:03). Next, as the only remaining ghost seemed to be the members’ own trauma, Flanagan showed their process of healing through a few glimpses of their future. First, Steven, who got vasectomy surgery because he believed it was all mental disorder, had finally accepted the truth. Him undoing the vasectomy implies his effort to recognize that life might not always be “rational” but it can still be beautiful, and he too, can have his own family without the fear that consumed him for decades (Sheldon 53). For Shirley, her trauma made her a controlling perfectionist, who had to be everything her mother failed to be. Yet she ended up lying about her own integrity (Galiné 74). Flanagan showed Shirley’s acknowledgement of her trauma and acceptance of being flawed as a person, as she decided to confess to her husband about her unfaithfulness, and sincerely asked for forgiveness (“Silence Lay Steadily” 1:04:00). Next, in Theodora’s case who had always “built walls” around her to keep others away emotionally and intellectually, she finally let other people in. As shown in the final scenes of the last episode, Theodora is seen throwing away her gloves (an indicator of barrier between herself and other people), while she is happily moving in with her partner (“Silence Lay Steadily” 1:05:54). Lastly, Luke who became addicted to drugs in order to stop seeing the ghost which was the bowler hat man, or feel his trauma. Previously, his constant runaways from the rehab center indicated his tendency to run away from his responsibilities, his family or facing his trauma (Galiné 75). However, the time jump of two years into the future showed Luke, surrounded by his family members, joyfully celebrating two years free from drugs (“Silence Lay Steadily” 1:08:10); suggesting he no longer runs away from his troubles, but is determined to face them instead.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

Childhood trauma, if left unhealed can influence a child's life in such a way that haunts her even in adulthood; hence it is no surprise that the concept of psychoanalysis, especially one of its core element, trauma, is becoming a more and more popular theme in media and literature with each passing year. The more people are learning about their unconscious trauma and psyche, the more significant these psychoanalytic films and literature are appearing to its' audience; likewise, the more these films are impacting the audience, the more the directors are using the theme in their work. Therefore, the work of Mike Flanagan left a notable remark for its audience by portraying different ways individuals deal with trauma and its different outcomes.

Flanagan brilliantly depicted how an untreated psychological wound in childhood impacts a child not only in the young age, but also later in life that one way or another affects the way they develop their personality negatively. The research examined how the characters of *Hill House* each suffered from a similar trauma of losing their mother in the house, and were unable to grieve properly as they repressed all their wounds. First, the research analyzed the characteristics of the hill house and how it manipulated the members' thoughts through dreams and nightmares. Second, it studied how Mike Flanagan used a non-linear timeline and constant flashbacks of the past after occurrence of similar events in the present, in order to exhibit the Crain family members' tendency to keep going back to their traumatic past which aligned with Freud's repetition compulsion theory. After that, the research scrutinized the behavioral traits and changes in the members from childhood to adulthood through their connection with different Freudian defense mechanisms. This illuminated two things. One, although the members suffered from similar trauma, each acquired a

different type of Freudian mechanism to go on with their lives. Two, these mechanisms partially shaped them into the people they became, aligning those personalities with different stages of grief they were psychologically trapped in. At last, by examining and comparing the noticeable changes in their lives after they finally confronted their past trauma, the research concluded its findings. This current research demonstrated that Flanagan used the idea of supernatural horror mostly as a metaphor for their traumatic wounds which they kept trying to run from until the end. This became especially evident when the members finally faced their trauma, and only then they got to move towards living a happier life.

With increasing implication of psychoanalytic elements like trauma in horror films and television shows, the current research will be beneficial in better understanding how trauma is being portrayed in current media. Furthermore, it will emphasize the threats of childhood trauma as well as the importance of healing from it. Moreover, the primary text not having an adequate number of articles on its portrayal of trauma will bring in scopes to conduct more research on relevant aspects in the future.

### Works Cited

- Ali, Mona, Gad, Sayed, Gad. "The Haunting versus Reality: The Uncanny in Shirley Jackson's The Haunting of Hill House". *Delta University Scientific Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 493-509, <https://doi.org/10.21608/dusj.2022.275558>.
- Barry, Peter. "Psychoanalytic Criticism." *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 4th Ed., Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. 97-120.
- Carroll, Noel. "Nightmare and the Horror Film: The Symbolic Biology of Fantastic Beings." *Film Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1981, pp. 16–25, JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1212034>. Accessed 3 Mar. 2023.
- Flanagan, Mike, creator. *The Haunting of Hill House*, FlanaganFilm, 2018, Netflix, [www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com).
- Freud, Sigmund. "Traumatic Fixation—The Unconscious." *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Hall, G. Stanley, Boni and Liveright, 1920, pp. 236-247.
- Galiné, Marine. "The Physiology of Thresholds in Netflix's The Haunting of Hill House (2018)". *Gothic, Teen and Pop Culture*, no. 25, Dec. 2023, pp. 67-82, <https://doi:10.34929/imaginaires.vi25.48>.
- Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*, New York, Viking Press, 1959.
- Laredo, Jeanette, A. "Some Things Can't Be Told." *The Streaming of Hill House: Essays on the Haunting Netflix Adaptation*, edited by Kevin J. Wetmore Jr, McFarland, 2020, pp. 63-73, <https://books.google.com.bd/books?id=bGrdDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.
- Matek, Ljubica. "The Architecture of Evil: H. P. Lovecraft's 'the Dreams in the Witch House' and Shirley Jackson's the Haunting of Hill House." *CounterText*, vol. 4, no. 3, Dec. 2018, pp. 406–23, <https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/count.2018.0141>. Accessed 24 Feb. 2024.

- Ng, Jenna. “(Remix) True Holograms: A Different Kind of Screen; A Different Kind of Ghost.” *The Post-Screen Through Virtual Reality, Holograms and Light Projections: Where Screen Boundaries Lie*, Amsterdam University Press, 2021, pp. 189–206. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv23985t6.9>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2024.
- Pascal, Richard. “Walking Alone Together: Family Monsters in ‘The Haunting of Hill House.’” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2014, pp. 464–85, [www.jstor.org/stable/43151007?read-now=1&seq=5#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43151007?read-now=1&seq=5#page_scan_tab_contents). Accessed 24 Feb. 2024.
- Rein, Katharina. “The Haunting of Hill House (2018).” *Gothic Cinema: An Introduction*, Springer Link, 2023, pp. 145–162, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-40721-6\\_7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-40721-6_7).
- Sheldon, Zachary. “Hell house or something more? horror, abjection and mental illness.” *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1 Nov. 2019, pp. 43–56, [https://doi.org/10.1386/nl\\_00004\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/nl_00004_1).
- Terr, Lenore C. “Childhood Traumas: An Outline and Overview.” *FOCUS*, vol. 1, no. 3, July 2003, pp. 322–34, <https://doi.org/10.1176/foc.1.3.322>.
- Weinstock, Jeffrey. “Walking Alone Together: Adapting The Haunting of Hill House.” *Shirley Jackson: A Companion*, edited by Kristopher Woofert, Academia, 2021, pp. 251–263, [https://www.academia.edu/67067548/Walking\\_Alone\\_Together\\_Adapting\\_The\\_Haunting\\_of\\_Hill\\_House](https://www.academia.edu/67067548/Walking_Alone_Together_Adapting_The_Haunting_of_Hill_House).