“This is an Overlook Where No One Can Ever Come”

A narratological analysis of the representation of the uncanny in The Shining

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Abstract
This essay is a narratological analysis of Stephen King’s *The Shining*, and employs Mieke Bal’s categorization of focalization, description and discourse with the intent of establishing their function in representing the concept of the uncanny in the narrative. By analyzing these narratological functions and their interplay, several manifestations of the ordinarily elusive uncanny become evident. The novel, through the structuring of the narrative and use of forthright descriptions as well as the insight into the characters’ minds, continually manages to represent the disturbances of the familiar that characterize the uncanny.

Keywords
Uncanny, Focalization, Description, Free Indirect Discourse, Telepathy, Anthropomorphism
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1. Introduction

_The Shining_, the third novel by author Stephen King, was published in 1977, and has since been regarded as one of the most formative works of modern horror (Ruuskanen 4). Employing the narrative figure of the Gothic haunted house (Wolfreys 5), it tells the tale of the Torrance family’s winter in the historic Overlook Hotel, where Jack Torrance has been offered a position as watchman during the hotel’s off-season. Shortly after their arrival, the Overlook begins exerting its malevolent control over the family, initially trying to possess the son, Danny. Danny’s clairvoyance, aptly named “the shining”, protects him from its influence, leading the hotel to possess Jack in his stead. The novel thus narrates the ruination of the Torrance family in the wake of the Overlook’s hauntings.

The suspenseful narrative of _The Shining_ has inspired much research into the creation of fear and the narrative techniques and themes employed in the novel, with a notable example of this being Ruuskanen’s Master’s thesis “The Appeal of Stephen King’s _The Shining_”, where the creation of suspense and fear is analyzed through both textual and psychological means. Ruuskanen states that “fear of universal themes such as alienation, the fear of the unknown, and a fear of losing one's self” (6) is a central aspect of the novel. Subsequently, these themes are closely associated with the concept of the uncanny, a concept that, although tied intrinsically to the narrative of _The Shining_, has rarely been analyzed in tandem with narrative techniques that are utilized to represent it. This essay’s conception thus rises from the lack of definite works analyzing not the invocation of fear through use of the uncanny, but the pure representation of it within the narrative itself. An analysis of the uncanny’s connection to the structure of language, and not just its literariness, would be beneficial for further research into the delineation between what is
frightening and what is specifically uncanny through use of narratological means such as
the ones presented in this paper. As such, it could prove useful to further studies of the
uncanny’s ties to the structural aspects of literature and might thus aid in tethering the
concept and providing a tangible definition of its literariness.

The concept of the uncanny, which was initially conceived in the mid 1900’s, is one
that quite readily evade definitive definition, and to attempt to define it is to “encounter
one of its decisive paradoxes, namely that ‘the uncanny’ has to do with a troubling of
definition, with a fundamental disturbance of what we think and feel” (Bennett and Royle
34). At its core, the uncanny is associated with a sense of disturbance of the familiar, the
feeling of the unhomely, and a fear of what transcends our understanding.

Fabio Camilletti’s essay “Present Perfect. Time and the Uncanny in American
Science and Horror Fiction of the 1970s (Finney, Matheson, King)” outlines the uncanny
nature of the representation of time within three American novels during the 1970’s, with
The Shining being one of them. The author writes that the Overlook’s “impersonality and
anonymity ... makes it the ideal setting for the uncanny experience” (Camilletti 31), and
argues that the setting of the novel is itself sufficient for the uncanny to impart its
influence. This point can be further strengthened by the application of Bennett and Royle’s
notion that the uncanny arises “on those occasions when the homely becomes the
unhomely” (38). The haunted house narrative figure is considered the quintessential
eexample of the uncanny (Royle 51), and at its core, The Shining, despite its psychological
foray into a broken family unit, is a story about a sinister house and its effect on its
subjects. The unhomely, signifying the opposite of the home and the familiar (Bennett and
Royle 34) is thus epitomized in the novel. Thus, there is an established opinion that there
exists an inherent affiliation with the uncanny within the narrative of *The Shining*, and this is the initial inspiration for the subject matter of this essay.

Stephen King ties the uncanny to horror literature by stating that “The Stranger makes us nervous… but we love to try on his face in secret” (Danse Macabre 10), affirming that, while the unknown and uncanny may provoke apprehension, horror literature offers a way to experience it. King’s comments about horror as an art form (10) mirror the uncanny’s transcendence of limits when he states that “it is looking for something beyond art”. There is therefore, a precedence for an analysis of the uncanny in King’s work. This precedence also stems from his position as a “modern master of horror”; such a title is not attained without creative wit and skill, and yet analyses of King’s structural approach to horror are few, despite the wealth of research dealing with movie adaptations of his works.

By analyzing the narratological aspects of one of his most notable works, this essay highlights important aspects of King’s works, and the uncanny’s connection to the literary.

The lexical aspects of the uncanny, with its transcending of limits, doubling and repetitive elements, blur the line between reality and fiction, and the uncanny’s existence as a concept of connotation (Cixous 18) renders it only fully available for analysis through fiction. Because of its ties with literature, this essay therefore aims to analyze the representation of the uncanny through the use of narrative techniques employed in *The Shining*. However, due to the wealth of manifestations of the uncanny, this essay is restricted to analyzing only a few of the most prevalent manifestations in the novel, pertaining to the representation of the Overlook hotel, as well as Danny and Jack Torrance. The narrative techniques that are to be analyzed are description, focalization and discourse, with the intention of establishing these techniques’ function in the creation of the sense of uncanniness within the novel. As Wolfrey states: “all forms of narrative are, in one way or
another, haunted” (3), and the aspiration of the essay is to analyze, through narratological means, how this sense of haunting, of the experience of the uncanny, permeates the novel the way it does. It will, additionally, bring together a selection of central concepts of the uncanny with the outlined narratological concepts in the analysis section.

The analysis of the uncanny within a narrative that, according to Ruuskanen makes use of many realist conventions instead of overtly conventional uncanny themes (12), can be further supported if one considers Royle’s notion that “the uncanny, then, is not merely an ‘aesthetic’ or ‘psychological’ matter . . . its critical elaboration is necessarily bound up with analysing, questioning and even transforming what is called ‘everyday life’” (23). The genre of *The Shining* will be a prevalent theme during the course of the essay, but it will only be delved into on a superficial level, so as to establish the genre conventions of the haunted house and how the descriptions of the Overlook tie into them, but yet ultimately keep the focus on the narratological aspect.

The application of a narratological method of analysis arises from the general convention of more thematic approaches to the analysis of the concept of the uncanny, and allows for a more delimited examination of it without venturing into markedly psychoanalytical territory, which is outside of the scope of this essay. The uncanny is haunted by literature (Royle 52) in that it is the medium used to express the experience of the uncanny, and analyzing narrative techniques allows for a tentative explanation of its aesthetical representation within a certain narrative such as this one. Furthermore, this essay will not only lend itself to an analysis of the representation of the uncanny through narratological means, it will also analyze the way in which the interplay between these narratological functions - such as the ways in which descriptive passages work to add effect
to the uncanniness of the subsequent passages of free indirect discourse - can amplify the
effect of the uncanny in the narrative.

An analysis of the uncanny’s presence in a narrative such as this reveals the
intricacies of *The Shining*’s commentary on selfhood, agency and even the perception of
reality. It manages to illustrate how the uncanny is bound up with the familiarity of realism,
but becomes the more evident when presented using the selected narratological tools.

2. The uncanny and narratology

2.1 The Uncanny as a literary phenomenon

The uncanny, at its core, is “intimately entwined in language” (Royle 2) and deals
with both what we perceive and how it is represented. As such, the uncanny is
simultaneously both a literary genre and *not* a literary genre: it is liminal and exists at the
borders of other genres such as the fantastic (Royle 19) and haunts that which is
non-literary with its literariness. Todorov, however, argues that the uncanny is indeed a
genre: that of the supernatural explained (42). Works that belong to this genre of the
uncanny harbor events that may be extraordinary, shocking or disturbing, and evoke in the
reader a sense of disconnect from that which is familiar. As such, horror literature in its
purest of states is intrinsically tied to the concept of the uncanny (Todorov 47), as it
realizes the transcendence of limits and the disturbance of the familiar. In Royle’s words,
the uncanny is about “everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has
come to light . . . but it is also, at the same time, about what is elusive, cryptic, still to come
(back)” (51). The uncanny also deals with uncertainty and what is considered foreign; one
need only turn to its derivation from the German word *unheimlich*, to confirm that it is but
a translation of a word that means ‘unhomely’ (Freud 418). Freud tries to establish the uncanny as a delimited zone, within which that which is fearful exists (Svenæus 239), while arguing that not everything responsible for the creation of fear can be considered uncanny. This rather confusing definition can be supplemented by Bennett and Royle’s statement that the uncanny customarily resists definition (34), which is itself quite an uncanny feature. The paradoxical features of the uncanny rest on its intercourse with the disturbance of the familiar; the sense that all is not as it appears, and that our familiarity may be haunted by that which is unfamiliar. Freud heeds the reader not to simply equate the uncanny with what is fearful:

The subject of the ‘uncanny’ is a province of this kind. It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as ‘uncanny’ certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening. (218)

There is therefore, somewhat uncannily, a disconnect between the uncanny and its relation to things that are frightening.

Reject it as he may, Freud also introduces the concept of intellectual uncertainty as a central concept to the formation of the uncanny, particularly in regards to the uncertainty of whether an animate being is really alive, or if an inanimate object is actually animate (Freud 226). This uncertainty of the reality of our experiences is a foundational aspect of the uncanny. It could therefore be considered reductive to try to fully define a concept that deals with the very transcendence of concepts. However, the uncanny can be defined as a process of trying to unify the signifier with the signified - that is, the sign and the concept
which it denotes (Masschelein 116). In the ambivalence created in the space between the two, the uncanny resides.

The uncanny’s relation to literature is evident in that literature itself can be defined as “the discourse of the uncanny: literature is the kind of writing which most persistently and most provocatively engages with the uncanny aspects of experience, thought and feeling” (Bennett and Royle 35). The defamiliarizing power of literature lies in its capacity to alienate the reader as it is also inviting the reader to identify with and categorize the experiences of the text (36). Julian Wolfreys writes that what is uncanny about narrative is the act of telling (5), and that the textual traces of a text’s continuous retelling are an uncanny phenomenon of literature. The uncanny’s literary nature can be further gleaned by harking to Cixous when she states that the uncanny as a concept is built on connotations to other concepts, and therefore does not exist in reality (Masschelein 114). It can only be comprehensively rendered in fiction. Because fiction deals with limits, paradoxes and the representation of the unpresentable (120), it fills much the same function as the uncanny. Even Freud deigns to employ literature as a means to categorize the uncanny (226) in his analysis of The Sand-Man. The uncanniness of this story is by Freud ultimately attributed to the castration complex, as well as the double acting as a fundamental destruction of the ego (231, 243), both of which are psychoanalytical concepts. Thus, the uncanny is, as mentioned previously, tied up with fiction and literature, and as such the application of an analysis of the representation of it within a narrative is justified by even Freud himself.

Despite its resistance to definition, there are certain forms that the uncanny may take, which is especially evident in literature. Freud introduces two central forms of the uncanny in his essay; the concept of the automata and the double (226, 233). The automata is evident when what appears human is perceived as being mechanical, such as
sleepwalking or trancelike states (Bennett and Royle 36), both of which are prevalent states in *The Shining*. The concept of automatism can be further related to the concepts of animism and anthropomorphism; animism referring to the inanimate being given lifelike attributes or qualities, and anthropomorphism referring to the attribution of specifically human characteristics to an inanimate object (36), akin to those attributed to the Overlook hotel in the novel.

The concept of the double “narrates the disturbing loss of the familiar ground of the self” (Lydenberg 1080); that is, the fundamental loss of one’s selfhood. The double as a concept is linked inexorably to another uncanny occurrence: telepathy, by way of mental processes being transferred between these ‘doubles’. Telepathy, in the uncanny sense, implies that your thoughts are not only your own, or perhaps yours at all (Bennett and Royle 38). Telepathy is further connected to another uncanny manifestation; predestination. Predestination includes odd repetitions, and the sense that some instances are fated to take place (36). Freud states that the double is created by identifying with someone else to the point where the self’s existence and agency comes into doubt (233), or where one possesses feeling, thought or experiences that are not their own. Furthermore, an aspect of the double that applies most readily to *The Shining*, is the concept of the immortal soul as the first double of the body (Freud 234). The double is, at once, both the promise of immortality, as well as the omen of the death of the self (Bennett and Royle 39).

2.2 Focalization

Focalization is, in Genette’s words, a “narrative perspective … [A] restrictive point of view” (185). Genette initially distinguished between three types of focalization: internal focalization, external focalization and zero focalization (189-191). However, Genette
notes, the application of a strict internal focalization, which is the relaying of the focalized
carer’s thoughts and perceptions, is rarely ever realized. Focalization is, in his words, a restriction. Therefore, internal focalization is usually correlated with aspects of external components. Internal focalization in its purest state is only realized in the narrative of the interior monologue (Genette 193). Genette further characterizes focalization as a “focus of narration” (189), a notion that can be seen to be further expanded by Bal’s division of the vision through which elements are presented, and whose voice is articulating it (Bal 143).

The events of a narrative are invariably told through the perception of a narrator and are, despite at times claiming objectivity, perceived in a subjective manner (Bal 145). Focalization is the relationship between the events unfolding and the vision of the focalizor (143). Bal makes a further distinction when she stresses the distinction between what is actually perceived and who is narrating it (146). The act of narrating what is perceived, remembered or thought is disconnected from that which is being told. It is therefore futile to assume objectivity of the focalization, since the act of focalizing and perceiving is inherently a subjective process (Bal 145). As such, focalization exists in the layer between the fabula, a series of chronological events experienced by actors (Bal 5), and the linguistic text, because it belongs in the story but is perceived outside of it. This distinction of focalization as a subjective process is especially useful in analyzing The Shining, due to the novel’s general theme of questioning reality and perceptions.

Bal identifies two types of focalization; character-bound focalization and external focalization (151-152). Character-bound focalization makes clear the distinction between narrator and focalizor, as the focalization can travel between characters while the narrator may remain constant. The perspective regarding the events perceived are focalized through the eyes of certain characters. This technique, though neutral towards the
characters, usually allows for the sympathising with certain characters based on the distribution of the focalization, and may be internal or external in nature. When an actor is immersed in the fabula, it is customarily regarded as internally focalized; an external, anonymous actor situated outside the fabula and functioning as a focalizor denotes an external focalization (Bal 152). These modes however, are not fixed. A narrative may employ a fluid nature of focalization, where the shift from internal to external focalization is seamless and almost imperceptible, and such is the case with a great deal of literature (159). Consequently, this dynamic, that is presented quite transparently to the reader, is rather opaque to the characters within the narrative. The power structures, relationships or conflicts might not be presented to the actors, and as such, focalization as a technique has manipulative properties (Bal 157). The reader is privy to knowledge that is presented in between dialogue, and is often not aware that this is not objective fact.

The different modes of focalization are determining factors in the creation of suspense. The focalizor’s perception of events, their knowledge or even omniscience, arm the reader with knowledge that certain characters may not have acquired yet. The opposite may also be true: the focalizor might be unaware of events that have transpired in the fabula that the reader may have experienced. Through focalization, the events of the fabula may be presented gradually or all at once, and this indeterminacy presents the formation of suspense (Bal 160-161)

The uncertain nature of *The Shining*’s narrative, as well as Danny’s supernatural knowledge that is relayed to the reader, distinctly showcases this suspense, both in terms of its effect on the narrative, as well as the reader. The interplay between these different modes of focalization and their subsequent role in the description of the events in *The Shining* is also significant to the representation of the uncanny within the narrative.
2.3 Description

Description as a narrative tool is connected to focalization; Bal designates it as a “privileged form of focalization” (35) that adds aesthetic form and is omni-present throughout the narrative. Description exists so as to add logic to the text, as well as to qualify characters and events. Elements of the fabula need to be presented so that their functions become concrete, and to add vitality to the imagined world of the fabula. Description becomes evident, and thus significant, when it functions as an attribution of features to an object (Bal 36). The distinction between description and narration is often a fine line, with description taking precedence when the dominant function of a textual fragment is *descriptive*. The narrative of *The Shining* is reliant on the description of elements that are perceived by the characters, and the uncanny is presented through the objects and experiences within the novel. It is therefore necessary to analyze the descriptive functions in the text, as they are the chief representations of the uncanny and the characters’ relation to it.

Description’s function in narrative is a point of contention. It is ‘othered’ from narrative even as it remains an integral part of it. It is an interruption of the fabula in the sense that it “comments on the coherence within narrative as an altogether different kind of narrative” (Bal 41). Genette even introduces the concept of description in terms of its detraction from the pace of the narrative. He further argues that there are no instances of ‘pure narration’ or ‘pure description’, as these two are intrinsically connected to the narrative discourse (Genette 94, 99). To justify the existence of descriptive elements in the narrative, Bal addresses the function of motivation as a precursor to description. The naturalization of description within the fabula necessitates motivation, as the descriptive interruptions are made to seem natural and necessary (Bal 41). The concept of motivation
is especially central in realist novels, or novels employing realist conventions, such as *The Shining*. Motivation is predicated on the notion of the three forms of narrative agency defined by Bal: looking, speaking and acting. These three forms facilitate the integration of not only motivation, but description as well, into the narrative and thus add to the realistic representation of the imagined world of the fabula. (41-43) Motivation as such is therefore an element of focalization, and functions as a way to make the relationships between different elements of the fabula evident. Description’s ties to the constraints of the focalizor is made evident by Genette when he states that “[t]he demands of exposition constrain us to this unavoidable violence simply by the fact that critical discourse, like any other discourse, cannot say everything at once” (215).

To mask the arbitrary nature of motivation in regards to description, the writer turns to rhetoric (Bal 42). Description constitutes an overarching theme, with the components consisting of predicates that either denote a feature of the object, or its function. The relation between the theme of the descriptor and its components can be differentiated into six different types of description (Bal 42). However, due to the constraints of this essay, the relevant subsection of description for this essay is *The Referential, Encyclopaedic Description*, due to its nature of describing elements in an effort to convey knowledge (42), and *The Metaphoric Metonymy*, which deals with the metaphoric elements of what is described (42). The descriptions affiliated with *The Referential, Encyclopaedic Description* are of particular interest in the analysis of *The Shining*, due to its realist conventions and representation of what is frightful using familiar and forthright language.
2.4 Discourse

The representation of speech in narrative is a troublesome subject, at times. Genette writes that the narrative of words can be deemed only to be an imitation, or a reduplication of events in the world (169). Discourse does not entail only the reporting of a character’s speech, but also the narration of it. In narratized discourse, the act of speaking becomes an action, indistinguishable from the events surrounding the act (170). The intermediary between these two poles of discourse is, by Genette, dubbed transposed speech. Genette distinguishes three aspects of characters’ speech in relation to narrative distance: reported speech, narratized speech, and transposed speech (171-173) Reported speech, which is pure relaying of the character’s act of speaking, is not narrative in nature, as it is simply a recopying of what has been said (169). Narratized speech is the intertwining of speech and thought with the events presented, and is the most reduced form of discourse, reproducing not the speech of the character but instead presenting their thoughts as part of the narrative. Transposed speech allows for a little less distance from the actual utterance of a character by use of a declarative verb, yet still does not provide the reader with a sense of fidelity to what was “really” uttered; Genette states that “the narrator's presence is still too perceptible in the very syntax of the sentence for the speech to impose itself with the documentary autonomy of a quotation” (171).

Bal coins her categorizations of discourse direct discourse, free indirect discourse, and indirect discourse, respectively (Bal 48-49). Bal’s definition of direct discourse follows the same classification as Genette’s reported speech, although she shifts the weight of its inclusion in the narrative by discussing how the emotive function of omitting the customary declarative verb at times gives voice to the narrator (50). Indirect and free indirect discourse exist at the level of the narrative, whereas direct discourse is, much the same as Genette’s
reported speech, not narrative in nature. In the instances of indirect and free indirect discourse, Bal writes that “the two narrative situations are to be distinguished on the basis of references in the text to personal or impersonal language situations” (52), and further introduces the function of the narrator in the discourse. Indirect discourse is the instance of the narrator adopting the discourse of the character who supposedly uttered something. This merging of narrative levels still retains ties to the fidelity of the original utterance, but stresses the interpretative act of it (52-54) The further the accuracy of reporting the thoughts or utterances of a certain character is from the actual reported speech, the closer it moves towards indirect, and later free indirect, discourse. The distinction between pure narrator’s text and free indirect discourse is at times difficult to determine, but the only distinction between the two is when there is a definitive indication that there exists a representation of the words of a character; highly emotive and personal language, most likely attributable to a character, and the extension of information that is not necessary for the progression of the narrative (Bal 54-55) Bal’s categorization of the different discourses are the definitions that are to be employed in the analysis due to their specific focus on the relationship between the narrator’s words and the actors’. Her categorization of free indirect discourse in particular is of interest because of its connection to emotive language, as much of the discourse of *The Shining* and the subsequent representation of the uncanny relies on the insight into the actors’ thought processes and their feelings.
3. Analysis of the uncanny in *The Shining*

3.1 Focalization and Description

3.1.1 The unhomely and telepathy

*The Shining* is, employing Bal’s terminology, a character-bound focalized narrative (151), with the focalization shifting between the four main characters; the Torrance family, consisting of Jack and Wendy, and their son Danny, as well as the Overlook’s chef Dick Hallorann. Because of the characters’ immersion in the fabula, the focalization is internalized (152), and features insight into the inner machinations of the characters’ minds. The novel’s employment of interior monologues and stream of consciousness - which will be further expanded on later in the analysis - are responsible for the first, overarching uncanny feature of the narrative; telepathy (Bennett and Royle 38). On a general level, the insight into the characters’ minds provides the reader with the feeling that what is perceived by the characters is not always condensed to the focalizor themselves, but is mediated by what the Overlook deigns to show them. This is especially evident with Danny, who, if one applies Bal’s notion of the creation of suspense through focalization (Bal 160), functions precisely as a tool for creating suspense through it because of his shining. This idea that their perception is not purely their own is evident when Danny is the only character to initially be able to see the dead woman in room 217 (King 319). This perception is the result of the Overlook imparting its sinister influence on Danny, and showcases the uncanny telepathic nature of his perceptions, as she is no longer visible to him later on. The uncanniness of the telepathy in this instance is reinforced by the fact that Danny is not in control of his own perceptions, and by how it remains unclear whether he truly did perceive
her or not. This analysis of the representation of telepathy rests on the indication that the hotel is continuously affecting the characters’ minds throughout the narrative.

Furthermore, Danny’s *shine* forcefully imparts knowledge to him, such as when he has “one of those flashes of understanding that frightened him most of all; it was like a sudden glimpse of some incomprehensible machine that might be safe or might be deadly dangerous” (King 119-120). These thoughts are decidedly not the thoughts of a five year old boy, as they are undeniably complex to the point where they are incomprehensible to Danny himself, and due to the character-bound internal focalization, the notion of telepathy is once again reinforced. Danny also becomes a central figure in the creation of the sense of unhomeliness in the novel because of his pseudo-omniscience. Because of his supranatural ability, his role as the focalizor leads him to impart knowledge of the events of the fabula before they have yet to pass; in the fourth chapter, Danny has a vision of “[a]nother room. He knew (would know) this one … More hollow booming noises, steady, rhythmic, horrible. Smashing glass. Approaching destruction. A hoarse voice, the voice of a madman, made the more terrible by its familiarity” (King 46). This passage is directly followed by Jack returning from work as Danny wakes up from his trance, and as Danny inspects his car he notices the same mallet present in his vision, clotted with blood (King 49) right before it turns back into a bag of groceries. Thus, when these events in Danny’s vision actually come to pass close to the end of the novel, they are not identical but clearly distinguishable, and because of the previous knowledge of them, the reader is left with a sense of unhomeliness, of feeling like there has been a disturbance of what was once made familiar and is now both novel and well-known. As such, the focalization has created not only the formation of suspense, but has managed to establish that there is an uncanny sense permeating the novel.
3.1.2 Animism and anthropomorphism

Through the focalizors there arise several forms of the uncanny, represented by the employment of description. The analysis of these descriptive elements adds further substance to the aforementioned focalization as it delves even deeper into the characters’ perceptions of the events and their effect. Description, as Bal mentions, is a “privileged form of focalization” (35) and is dependant on the characters’ perceptions. It is through the descriptions of events, and more importantly, the Overlook as a haunted house, and its effect on its inhabitants, that the uncanny influence becomes evident. Because of the internally character-bound focalization, each character perceives the events of the fabula differently, and as such the forms of the uncanny are reiterated and presented differently, particularly in regards to the evolution of the Overlook’s malicious presentation. Bal’s notion of motivation in regards to description is worthy to note in *The Shining*, as well. The function of motivation is generally facilitated by looking, speaking or acting (Bal 41), and while these are all obviously present in the novel, there is also the notion of the unreality connected to the characters’ perceptions and actions by virtue of the supernatural influence from the Overlook. Thus, despite the motivation for the descriptions being present, one can not be certain that they are objective, or even truthful, due to the Overlook’s uncanny influence over the characters’ perceptions of the events.

The forms of the uncanny that are represented in relation to the sinister hotel are mostly related to the notions of animism and anthropomorphism, as outlined in the theory section 2.1, as well as the general uncanny sense of unhomeliness. This unhomely feeling becomes evident to Jack the very first time he enters the hotel, when the rooms are described as “stretch[ing] for miles” (King 28). The disturbance of the familiar continues as Jack considers the Overlook and its previous caretaker’s fate as he “looked back over his
shoulder once into the impenetrable, musty darkness” of his surroundings (King 35). The Overlook, even in the initial stages of the novel, symbolizes the unfamiliarity of the uncanny, as it never quite manages to present itself as the average hotel, and is as such the very manifestation of the unhomely, which according to Freud is characterized by the dissonance between the familiar and the unfamiliar (Freud 218). This is further established when Danny, who at this point has yet to enter the Overlook, has a vision of it: “[a]nother shape, looming, rearing. Huge and rectangular. A sloping roof. Whiteness that was blurred in the stormy darkness. Many windows. A long building with a shingled roof …” (King 45). Although this passage is described using Referential, Encyclopaedic Description (Bal 46), and ostensibly does not belie any supernatural aspects of the Overlook, the context of Danny having a vision provides ample opportunity for the disturbance of familiarity, as it defamiliarizes what ought at this point be homely, and alienates the reader despite the forthright description. The Overlook’s uncanny transcendence of the limits of the familiar is made the more evident by the description of it towards the end of the novel:

It wasn’t a perception of sight or sound, although it was very near to those things, separated from those senses by the flimsiest of perceptual curtains. It was as if another Overlook now lay scant inches beyond this one, separated from the real world … but gradually coming into balance with it. (King 503)

This description alone manages to represent the base characteristics of the uncanny’s depiction in literature, which according to Royle are the image of the new home disturbing the homely, the existence of liminality and the indissociable bond to the familiar (Royle 136). Once again, the familiarity of the language employed in the description is central in the representation of the uncanny, and it is made all the more profound because of the description of the literal movement of the two hotels into one another.
As the novel progresses, the instances of animism and anthropomorphism become more and more prominent in the descriptions of the Overlook. The descriptions of the hotel’s animism and anthropomorphism almost exclusively employ Referential, Encyclopaedic Description, and this in turn may display the interplay between the textuality of the uncanny and description’s function as its representation. Because the uncanny exists as a connotation to other concepts (Masschelein 114), forthright and ordinary descriptions of uncanny events create a delimited zone where the fearful exists within the ordinary, and thus heightens the uncanny sense of uncertainty and unfamiliarity. As such, Bal’s categorization of description is decidedly useful for analysing the manifestation of the uncanny, as it highlights the utilization of common wording to convey knowledge (Bal 46). In fact, as Bennett and Royle state, “the more familiar a word, the more uncanny it can become” (40; emphasis original).

As the Torrance family inspects the rooms of the hotel, Danny notes that the wallpaper of the Presidential Suite is littered with “[g]reat splashes of dried blood, flecked with tiny bits of grayish-white tissue … It was like a crazy picture drawn in blood, a surrealistic etching of a man’s face drawn back in pain and terror” (King 134). This description distinctly follows the rhetoric of anthropomorphism (Bennett and Royle 36), and is the incipient description heralding the following descriptions that illustrate the uncannily human characteristics of the hotel. The description of a face created from splatters of blood is an overt example of the attribution of human features to the nonhuman, as it does not just hint at humanity, but even creates an imitation of it. The hotel’s lifelike attributes are described again when the family are the only people left at its site, as it gives them the curious feeling that it has “doubled in size and become sinister, dwarfing them with sullen, inanimate power” (King 145). Worthy to note is the “inanimate power” that
would suggest a distinct lack of lifelikeness, but the hotel’s sinister aura implies the trace of
life within the hotel. The sounds of the Overlook also seem to suggest traces of life, being
described as having a “. . . living sound, but not voices, not breath. A man of philosophical
bent might have called it the sound of souls” (King 481-482) These lifelike qualities are not
only contained to the hotel itself, but also expand beyond it, and are represented by the
description of the environment around it. The wind is said to be awake “prying at the hotel
and hooting” (King 292). These qualities of the hotel and its environment are all implied to
have traces of life, as the hotel is said to grow, and speak with the sound of countless souls.
The same is implied with the description of the wind. Because these qualities commonly
require an actor, they are all manifestations of animism (Bennett and Royle 36). Further, the
added ambiguity of their status as animate or inanimate only serves to add to the sense of
uncanniness, as it leaves the reader questioning the reality of the events described in the
narrative. Thus, time and again, the descriptions illustrate the uncanny trace of life that is
connected to hotel using familiar language, and represents the unfamiliar employing
ordinary conventions, and as such highlights the way in which the uncanny intwines itself
in language (Royle 2). Consequently, it is precisely because of the ordinary language that
the uncanny becomes evident. The familiarity should ordinarily alleviate the textual
anxiety, but it does not, due to the uncanny’s entwinement with that which is familiar.

The hotel even takes on several animal forms in the form of the topiary animals
present outside, as well as the wasps brought back from death to harm Danny. The
descriptions of the topiary animals succinctly represent not only the prevailing animism, but
also the very essence of the disturbance of the familiar; Jack notes as he first sets out to trim
the animals that “there was something different. In the topiary. And it was so simple, so
easy to see, that he just wasn’t picking it up” (King 305). As the hedge animals start to
move and prowl the area, the movement is only perceived by Jack when he's not looking, and their animal features become more pronounced every time he turns his gaze back to them (King 306). Thus, the description of animism in this sequence also serves to heighten the sense of the unhomely, as the changes in their looks and demeanor are so miniscule that they only hint at the disruption of the familiar of the disturbances within Jack’s mind.

The epitome of the representation of the hotel’s animism is when the Torrance family get snowed in for the winter; in the storm:

The Overlook faced it as it had for nearly three-quarters of a century, its darkened windows now bearded with snow, indifferent to the fact it was now cut off from the world. Or possibly it was pleased with the prospect. Inside its shell the three of them went about their early evening routine, like microbes trapped in the intestine of a monster. (King 310)

This description not only ascribes animate characteristics to a decidedly inanimate object, it also deliberately integrates the intellectual uncertainty pertaining to the concept of animism, as it leaves the reader uncertain whether the hotel is truly animate or not. Since none of the three focalizors are perceiving this particular sequence, one may assume that this is the narrator’s outward perspective, and thus this description epitomizes the uncertainty related to the Overlook’s status as animate, and cements the uncanny effect of said uncertainty as it is not made evident who is witnessing this scene. Therefore, it is impossible to ascertain whether the Overlook is a living being, or not. The juxtaposition of the descriptions of animism and anthropomorphism present in the novel creates a dichotomy that further establishes the uncanny’s presence in it. Worthy to note in regards to this description of the hotel is Bal’s categorization of description itself; while a general definition of description characterizes it as absorbed into narration and thus tied in with the
narrator (Genette 105), Bal’s categorization of description places it within the perspectives of the characters (35). Because of this, the uncanniness of the sequence just described becomes all the more prominent, due to the description falling outside the characters’ perspectives and thus heightening the effect of the uncanny nature of the Overlook’s lifelikeness.

3.1.3 Automatism

Description is further a central instrument in the representation of automatism, outlined in section 2.1, in the novel. The novel is ripe with instances of automatism, particularly in regards to Danny’s trancelike states he enters as he shines, and Jack’s deteriorating mental state. As Danny enters his first trance in the Overlook he is described as:

[j]itting on the rim of the bathtub across the room, his toothbrush clasped limply in his left hand, a thin foam of toothpaste around his mouth. He was staring, trancelike, into the mirror on the front of the medicine cabinet above the washbasin. The expression on his face was one of drugged horror, and her first thought was that he was having some sort of epileptic seizure, that he might have swallowed his tongue. (King 180)

This instance undoubtedly mirrors Freud’s characterization of automatism, as it even illustrates the trancelike nature that is so closely associated with automata. Danny’s automatic behavior is not restricted to pure trancelike states, however. Perhaps more uncanny are his actions that seem to be compelled from some outside force while he still retains some awareness of his actions; this inbetween state is described in detail when Danny is forced to enter room 217 against his wishes. Entering the room, Danny walks towards the bathroom “... dreamily, as if propelled from outside himself, as if this whole
thing were one of the dreams Tony had brought him . . .” (King 319). While this passage does not portray the uncertainty regarding whether he is human or not that is customarily necessary to represent the manifestation of automatism (Freud 226), the preceding passage describes the otherworldly, uncertain nature of Danny’s compulsions. As he stands outside the room, Danny remarks that “[h]e hadn’t wanted to come here … He had wanted to come here. Curiosity (killed the cat; satisfaction brought him back) was like a constant fishhook in his brain, a kind of nagging siren song that would not be appeased” (King 315; emphasis original). This employment of Metaphoric Metonymy (Bal 42) gives the description of his curiosity an unreal aspect because of its metaphorical nature, and adds to the uncertainty of whether Danny’s compulsion is automatic or his own. As such, the description of Danny’s automatic behavior is uncanny not only by virtue of its representation, but also by its movement between certainty and uncertainty. The deviation from the prevailing Referential, Encyclopaedic Description into a more metaphorical approach creates a representation of the uncanny that mirrors the ambivalence of automatism itself; as Cixous states, the power of the uncanny’s influence resides in its connotation to other concepts and the subsequent ambiguity that is created as a result (Masschelein 114).

Jack also falls victim to automatism, as is represented by the descriptions of his escalating madness. The progression of his automatic behavior is evident in the way the descriptive nature of the descriptions evolve from implying automatic behaviors to depicting his fully fledged madness, as well as his evolved monstrous appearance. The representation of automatism in regards to Jack is initially more aligned towards the state of madness and loss of agency rather than the ambiguity of whether he is human or not, as is made evident when Jack is continually compelled to go down into the basement to pour over the records of the old hotel, and is described as being “possessed by a frantic feeling
that time was getting short and he would have to hurry” (King 483). These descriptions of compelled actions quickly make way for descriptions pertaining to the uncanny manifestation of his madness, such as when Wendy remarks towards the end that the Jack chasing them down the corridors of the Overlook is “. . . Jack and yet not Jack. His eyes were lit with a vacant, murderous glow; his familiar mouth now wore a quivering, joyless grin” (King 586). Thus, Jack’s progression from uncanny automatic behavior to a monstrous being embodies the successive feeling of unfamiliarity that pervades the novel; what was once familiar is now no longer. The progression of Jack’s madness puts the novel’s portrayal of selfhood and reality into focus, as Jack’s descent into insanity brings to light the uncertain nature of the reality of what is experienced and perceived.

3.2 Discourse

3.2.1 Telepathy, predestination and the double

_The Shining_ is a narrative heavily dependant on the utilization of discourse - particularly free indirect discourse - for its representation of the manifestation of the uncanny, particularly the double and the instance of telepathy and predestination, outlined in section 2.1. Camilletti harkens to the concept of predestination in his analysis of the disjointed flow of time in the novel. He states that the flow of time “is primarily felt, rather than seen” (33), which is made evident especially through Danny’s autohypnosis and _shining_. The free indirect discourse employed in regards to Danny’s predestination makes this feeling of experiencing time obvious, but through the previously mentioned descriptions of Danny’s trances, it can be argued that it is just as much seen as it is felt. Thus, the effect of Danny’s feelings of predestination in this section is supplemented by the previously analyzed descriptive passages of Danny’s hypnotic trances.
Through the use of free indirect discourse, most often identified by its personal language and emotive function (Bal 54-55), it is possible not only to ascertain its function in presenting the uncanny, but also attribute these instances to certain characters. As mentioned previously, the telepathic nature of *The Shining*’s narrative is established through focalization due to the existence of Danny and his shine, and discourse is tantamount in expanding on the hauntingly self-reflexive nature of the novel’s telepathy. Danny’s telepathy is inexorably connected to another uncanny manifestation; predestination. Because of his supernatural powers, most of the telepathy that Danny experiences- that is, the feeling that your thoughts are not your own (Bennett and Royle 38) - is actually a phenomenon of predestination, because most of the intrusive thoughts are words uttered by his father in the culmination of the novel, or the hotel itself. Most notable are the telepathic instances where, in thinking of his father, the words “*Come out! Come out, you little shit! Take your medicine!*” (King 46; emphasis original) enter his mind unbidden, and foreshadow the eventual showdown between father and son.

Telepathy is continually made evident through the employment of free indirect discourse when the hotel itself starts to invade the minds of Danny and Jack. As Danny is in a trance brought upon by his shining, the narration is interrupted by the following sequence

“(This inhuman place makes human monsters. This inhuman place) … (makes human monsters.) … (Come out) (This inhuman place) (and take your medicine) (makes human monsters.)” (King 208; emphasis original). Although this sequence of narration is attributed to Danny, it is made evident by the interrupting and alternating sentences that these thoughts are not his own, as they are intruding upon his mind. Similarly, as Danny tries to read his father’s mind close to the novel’s climax, a voice enters his mind, telling him

“(GET OUT OF HIS MIND, YOU LITTLE SHIT?)” (King 492). Thus, by evoking a
telepathic manifestation through the use of free indirect discourse attributed to a certain character, the truly uncanny nature of the intrusion of thoughts is invoked; they exist within Danny, but they are not his. The disconnect between Danny’s inner machinations and the thoughts that pervade his mind continues to evolve as the novel progresses and the hotel gains power. At times, the free indirect discourse revolving around Danny is interrupted by discourse that belongs to the hotel, but is only brought to life through him. Such is the case when he laments Dick Hallorann’s promise that nothing can hurt him in the hotel: “(You promised.) (Promises were meant to be broken.) He jumped at that. It was as if that thought had come from outside, insectile, buzzing, softly cajoling. (Promises were made to be broken my dear redrum, to be broken. splintered. shattered. hammered apart. FORE!)” (King 316; emphasis original). The instance of telepathy is undeniable here as it seems to have come to him from outside of his mind, and it is amplified by the forceful entry into Danny’s mind, and yet skirts the boundaries of true telepathy as it mingles with what is represented as Danny’s inner monologue. An instance of transcendence from pure uncanny telepathy happens just moments later, as Danny finally enters room 217:

(Curiosity killed the cat my dear redrum, redrum my dear, satisfaction brought him back safe and sound, from toes to crown; from head to ground he was safe and sound. He knew that those things)  
(are like scary pictures, they can’t hurt you, but oh my god)  
(what big teeth you have Grandma and is that a wolf in a BLUEBEARD suit or a BLUEBEARD in a wolf suit and i’m so)  
(glad you asked because curiosity killed the cat and it was the HOPE of satisfaction that brought him). (King 316-317; emphasis original)

This section of stream of consciousness nonsense seamlessly traverses between the voice of the hotel and Danny’s own and manages to represent not only the telepathic manifestation
of the uncanny, but also manages to add aspects of the double into it. As the concept of the
double “narrates the disturbing loss of the familiar ground of the self” (Lydenberg 1080),
this sequence illustrates how the aspect of telepathy is entwined with the double, and how
these aspects may interact and amplify the manifestation of the uncanny.

Predestination also continues to be represented by Danny’s words, both explicitly
expressed and indirectly. Through direct discourse, Danny touches upon the fated aspect of
the events of the narrative, saying that “. . . It wants all of us. It’s tricking Daddy, it’s
fooling him, trying to make him think it wants him the most. It wants me the most, but it
will take all of us” (King 479). Furthermore, Danny continues to predict the possible events
of the novel as he ponders the unnamed voice that enters his mind time and again: “What
then, when they were shut in and at the mercy of whatever might have only been toying
with them before? (Come out here and take your medicine!) What then? REDRUM” (King
291; emphasis original). What Danny predicts, that is, murder at the hands of his crazed
father, does not actually come to pass, but the sense that this murder is fated to happen is a
foundational aspect of predestination (Bennett and Royle 36). Additionally, the
ambivalence of Danny’s ability to predict possible future events only serves to reinforce the
overarching uncanny sense of uncertainty permeating the novel. The narrative becomes
haunted, in a sense, by the textual anxiety brought upon by the intrusion of unknown voices
through use of free indirect discourse, and its own subversion of the realist thematic
properties of its own genre.

The discursive representation of Jack’s connection to the uncanny ties in closer to
the instances of the double and automatism. As with Danny, these representations also
sometimes transition and meld with other manifestations of the uncanny; Jack’s doubling
identity also highlights the disturbingly telepathic nature of the Overlook’s influence over
him. A startling first instance of Jack’s budding awareness of his double identity happens when he witnesses the topiary animals roving the hotel grounds, and is represented by free indirect discourse. “What did you call it when you were cold sober? The question was meant to be rhetorical but his mind answered it (you call it insanity)” (King 306). Jack’s doubling is represented not only by the Overlook entering his mind, but through the words of his late father and mother entering unbidden into his mind as well. Thus, the representation of the double within Jack corresponds with what Freud called “a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self” (234) as a means of identifying with someone else to the point of the loss of oneself. This is made especially evident through Jack’s interior monologue as he is sleepwalking: “(Things keep getting in the way, dear Tommy…) (Medoc, are you here? I’ve been sleepwalking again, my dear. It’s the inhuman monsters that I fear…)” (King 334; emphasis original). This sequence of free indirect discourse initially represents automatism, as the words seem to happen automatically and without Jack’s conscious thought, but is followed immediately by direct discourse that encapsulates Jack’s continual loss of self. The voice of his father enters his mind through the radio, telling him to “- kill him. You have to kill him, Jacky, and her too. Because a real artist must suffer … Have a drink, Jacky, my boy … (King 335). While not representing the double on its own, this sequence portrays the splitting of Jack’s self in tandem with his reply that states “No! … You’re dead, you’re in your grave, you’re not in me at all!” (King 335). Because of the mix of direct and free indirect discourse, thus allowing for both full fidelity to the original utterance (Genette 169) as well as illustrating the emotive, subjective function of Jack’s interior monologue, the representation of Jack’s doubling can be seen as to be solidified as real; it exists both outside of him, in the events of the fabula, and within him. Jack’s doubling and loss of self to the hotel is illustrated, and can thus be further
augmented by harking to Reuber, who states that “[t]his loss of the internal object - me - implies the loss of the subject - one’s self - to the object” (Reuben 113). As Reuben argues, Jack’s loss of self becomes transposed onto the Overlook hotel, and as such, this can then be seen to illustrate the fascinating nature of Jack’s double. His double is at its core an inanimate being, but through him it is brought to life and becomes at once the promise of immortality as well as the death knell of himself.

As Jack loses more of himself to the hotel, the discourse presenting his thoughts transitions from being presented as interruptions in his mind, to being integrated into his person. He remarks that:

Maybe he was part of it now. Perhaps the Overlook, large and rambling Samuel Johnson that it was, had picked him to be its Boswell. You say the new caretaker writes? Very good, sign him on. Time we told our side. Let’s get rid of the woman and his snot-nosed kid first, however. We don’t want him to be distracted.

We don’t - (King 415-416)

By integrating the collective “we” into the free indirect discourse, Jack’s double is cemented, and it is established that the loss of his self to his double is finalized. The integration of the hotel into Jack’s mind and this representation also works to depict another facet of the double; the immortal body (Freud 234). This aspect is represented by direct discourse, as Jack converses with a ghostly Grady, the previous caretaker of the hotel. Grady remarks that “You’re the caretaker, sir … You’ve always been the caretaker. I should know, sir. I’ve always been here” (King 517). Thus, the double becomes the immortal body through Jack, seeing as he has lost himself to the hotel’s eternal soul, and it will continue to live on through him. As such, the representation of the double becomes, simultaneously, the representation of the immortal body and the omen of death, as Bennett and Royle
mentioned (39), because it signifies the transcendence of Jack’s self as well as the death of it.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this essay was to analyze the relationship between narrative techniques and the representation of the uncanny within the narrative of *The Shining*. The thesis rests on the uncanny’s connection to the literary and the novel’s employment of many uncanny manifestations as part of the structuring of its narrative. As such, *The Shining* is connected to both the concept of the uncanny, and the concept’s literary nature. The uncanny’s position as a concept that encompasses not only that which is frightful, but the horrors of the unfamiliar positions it at the intersection of the gothic and realist conventions of the novel, and thus it provides ample opportunity for an analysis of the manifestations of the uncanny. The analysis of the uncanny in *The Shining* proved that the novel’s depiction of the reality of perceptions, selfhood and agency is ultimately grounded in the familiarity of realism. These aspects are then made uncanny through employment of narratological tools that highlight the uncanny manifestations of reality.

*The Shining*’s narrative is, evidently then, inexorably tied up with the uncanny, not only because of its subject matter, but through the utilization of the aforementioned narrative techniques; focalization, description and discourse. Through use of these techniques, the uncanny emerges throughout the narrative and constructs a sense of uncanniness that permeates the novel. *The Shining*’s character-bound focalization that travels between the characters who are locked in the hotel and are at the mercy of its malevolence, provides plentiful evidence for the manifestation of the general notion of unhomeliness in the novel,
as well as the instance of telepathy. Because of the insight into the characters’ minds, and
the particular use of Danny’s shine as a tool for the representation of the questionable reality
of the events in the fabula, the focalization manages to present the persistent sense of uneasy
uncanniness tied to the narrative. Moreover, focalization’s function in representing the
uncanny is further reinforced by the subsequent use of description. The description
employed in *The Shining* was found to adhere to the notions of animism and
anthropomorphism through use of its descriptions of the Overlook hotel and its surrounding
environment, and the purposeful usage of a rhetoric of description that favors familiar
language epitomizes the way in which the uncanny entwines itself in the words of the novel.
It alienates the reader all the while as it invites them to identify with the familiarity of the
descriptive passages. Description’s affiliation with the uncanny is further evident in the
portrayal of Jack and Danny Torrance, as their ties to the Overlook’s malevolent influence
are continuously explored through descriptions that represent the aspects of automatism and
the double. Lastly, the discourse of the novel also serves to augment the uncanny’s influence
over the narrative through its application of free indirect discourse. Through it, the intricate
workings of the minds of Danny and Jack and their experiences of Overlook are explored,
leading to the concretization of the representation of the aspects of the double and telepathy.

Due to the constraints of the scope of this essay, the wealth of the uncanny’s
manifestations were not able to be analyzed at length, or even in full. Further studies could
delve deeper into the more general uncanny themes of repetition and the notion of the death
drive, as well as expand the narratological aspect to include more in depth analysis of the
interplay between the structures of the text and the uncanny’s literariness. Further studies
could also analyze the intertextual aspect of the uncanny present in more of King’s works,
and whether these are represented in a likewise manner or not, to establish the ties between his works and the concept.

Summarily, this essay’s aim to establish the association between the uncanny and its narratological representation in The Shining has been supported by the findings in the analysis. The narratological techniques and their applications were definitive in the incorporation, as well as the representation, of the uncanny in the novel. Thus, as is customary in matters dealing with the unhomely, this analysis of this literary work is finished and yet not; its culmination denotes the prospect of the expansion of the analysis of its subject.
5. Works cited

*Primary source*


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