

# Gothic Elements in Stephen King's The Shining

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Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2015

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2021-03-09**



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**Gothic Elements in Stephen King's *The Shining***

Završni rad

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Osijek, 2015.

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## Abstract

The paper focuses on the origins of the Gothic genre and its evolution into the modern Gothic that is created by Stephen King. King uses the classic gothic elements and combines them with contemporary events in order to reformulate the genre and create a modernized version of Gothic. The motif of the haunted house, alongside its mysteries, represents the secrets of the protagonist's mind and the psyche that is beyond rational control. The ancient prophecy is delivered through a scrapbook which forms a connection between the present and the past. The Gothic villain battles his inner demons throughout the entire novel – his alcoholism, his temper, and the remembrance of his abusive, alcoholic father and the classic Gothic heroine is helpless and obedient at first but King turns her into a modernized Gothic heroine who gradually develops into a mature woman who is able to fight for survival. A particular focus is given to the forbidden power/visions and the Gothic double which stimulate and intensify the horror and the macabre. The conclusions drawn from the detailed analysis strongly suggest the intensity of the influence of the Gothic elements that King installed in the novel. The horror in the novel does not come from the monsters that are a part of the hotel, but from the monsters that people can become under just the right influence of the surroundings,

*Keywords: The Shining, Stephen King, Gothic elements, monsters*

## Introduction

Gothic literature is a genre that combines fiction, horror and the supernatural. The origin of Gothic is attributed to Horace Walpole and his 1764 novel *The Origin of Otranto*. Walpole has set the parameters for all the future Gothic novels. Stephen King can be seen as a successor of Walpole and his works. He has reformulated the genre and created a modernized version of Gothic. In his novel *The Shining*, King includes multiple Gothic features and the purpose of this paper is to analyse them individually. The supernatural aspect as a main characteristic of the Gothic is included in each chapter of the paper. In addition, the motif of the haunted house, the ancient prophecy, the Gothic villain, the Gothic heroine, the forbidden power/visions and the Gothic double as the features of Gothic are all researched in detail using secondary sources combined with a personal insight. The novel and the paper are both focused more on character development and their thought process than the actual misfortunes that find them. The aim of this paper is to analyse Stephen King's usage of the Gothic elements such as the haunted house, the prophecy, the Gothic hero, the Gothic heroine, the doppelganger and the supernatural in his novel *The Shining* with each feature being of vital influence on the development of every main character.

## 1. The Origin of Gothic and Stephen King's Gothic

Usually, the origin of the literary form cannot be precisely determined. However, in the case of the Gothic novel, we can doubtlessly say that the first real Gothic novel is Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) with a subtitle *A Gothic Story* where the word gothic was first used in the literary sense "bringing the term from domain of architecture to that of literature" (Emandi 82). Walpole's novel contains many of the features that define the core of the Gothic, for example "the feudal historical and architectural setting, the deposed noble heir and the ghostly, supernatural machinations" (Emandi 83). The most important instalment made by Walpole with the Gothic drama is "the shift in dramatic tactics towards a theatre of sensation - a direct appeal to the body (as when someone jumps out to scare the audience along with a character in the play)" which is a key to the bloom of the Gothic drama (Cox 4). According to Strengell, the term Gothic in the literary sense can be used in several cases. The first type is the traditional Gothic which includes the novels in the period between the 1760s and the 1820s in which Walpole belongs and whose focus is on "the terrifying, archaic settings, an indefinite past, the use of the supernatural, the presence of stereotypical characters, and the attempt to deploy and develop techniques of literary suspense" (222). The second is a "kind of contemporary American fiction" which deals with "psychic grotesquerie and landscapes of the mind with little or no access to an objective world" (Strengell, *The Ghost: the Gothic Melodrama in Stephen King's Fiction* 222). The third refers to the horror fiction itself and most of its features are derived from the original Gothic fiction. According to this, Stephen King's fiction "can be used in both the second and the third definition of the Gothic," and, apparently, most of the contemporary horror fiction works of the twentieth century have their roots in the traditional Gothic literature (Strengell 222).

Parallels can be drawn between Walpole's and King's literature: "they both believe in the power of terror to awaken and sustain interest (...), both exploit the supernatural in order to amuse, (...) both have an inclination to portray excess and exaggeration, (...) and finally, expose themselves to self-parody and irony" (Strengell, *The Ghost: the Gothic Melodrama in Stephen King's Fiction* 224-225). In *The Shining*, King has brought back the haunted castle motif, which now takes a form of a hotel with a history so gruesome that it becomes a setting for a domestic tragedy. Every literary work reformulates and adapts its genre, but King has done so more profoundly than most. He "assimilated Gothic features such as mood, monsters, and, to some extent, the plot into his horror fiction and thus created modern Gothic fiction"

(Strengell, *Disecting Stephen King* 106).

The invention of the Gothic literature, and its most important contribution to the literary world, is the psychological horror. Evil exists mostly as an outcome of personal faults and oversights. Marginal claims that the implicit matter in this perspective is “the belief that what causes the person to choose evil is the presence of a personal flaw” (*The Moral Voyages of Stephen King* 15). The existence of supernatural elements in the novel is extremely present; still, the main reason for fear and anxious anticipation is found in the doings of a human being. King gets into the complexness of the human mind so the reader is included in the thought processes of most of the characters and their growth or regression. With his novel King employs ambiguity as a feature of the Gothic novel when he flirts with the idea of the supernatural. The reader does not find out until more than half of the novel is over whether the Overlook really is haunted or whether all this is happening in Jack’s head. Eventually King “clearly opts for the supernatural rationale by the end of the novel” (Bailey 92).

In *The Shining* Stephen King starts his Gothic apparatus slowly, “commencing with simple wasps that refuse to die and concluding climatically with the unmasking of the entire hotel” (Marginal, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King* 7). King does not introduce the reader to a certain event until the reader is ready to accept it unconditionally. Before every large occurrence there is an even larger buildup of highly realistic circumstances before it, so the reader fully accepts it no matter how unreal it is. The “management” of the hotel manifests itself gradually, first through the wasp’s nest, then the topiary and multiple other occurrences, and finally - a culmination at the masquerade party.

## 2. The Overlook as a Haunted House

Having a history filled with countless deaths and peculiar incidents, the Overlook Hotel plays a role of a haunted house in the Gothic novel *The Shining*. Its numerous rooms, doors and passages, alongside its mysteries, represent the secrets of the protagonist's mind and the psyche that is beyond rational control. "More important than the physical presence of the Gothic castle becomes the atmosphere of oppression and the powerlessness of the characters, manipulated by forces they cannot comprehend" (Strengell 225). The overlook becomes the centrepiece of King's novel, and despite its seemingly inanimate state, it can be analysed as yet another character in the novel, possibly even the main character. The animation of the hotel eventually leads to it influencing all the following ghost stories and haunted houses, to the point that the story of the Overlook Hotel became "the ultimate ghost story set in the ultimate haunted house" (Magistrale, *Stephen King: America's Storyteller* 92).

In order for the hotel to stay functioning, a caretaker is hired every winter to maintain it until it reopens in the spring. Jack Torrance wants to create an opportunity for himself to leave his old failed life behind him and create a fresh start for himself and his family. However, the history of the Torrance family follows them wherever they go and makes them the perfect prey for the malicious hotel. Because of Danny's clairvoyance, the hotel comes to life and does everything to win him over. This creates life-threatening situations for the child: "It seems obvious that the power of the hotel lies also in its ability to harm most of those who perceive most accurately its true nature" (Strengell 232).

As soon as Jack enters the Overlook, "the 'management' of the hotel slowly creates a steady erosion of Jack's identity" which he is unable to resist (Magistrale, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King* 17). He starts losing his grip on reality and continues to isolate himself from the rest of his family which was the hotel's intention all along. The entire story and "personality" of the hotel is based on a sentence that is repeated several times throughout the novel: "*This inhuman place makes human monsters.*" This statement is a foreshadowing of the monster Jack Torrance will become under the influence of the hotel, which acts upon the devils that already exist in Jack, but are keeping still for the time being (King 156).

As far as the outside of the hotel, the topiary plays a major role in the development of the plot. The topiary, or the collection of the hedge animals, can also be seen as a foreshadowing of the psychological changes that Jack will gradually undergo. It has been



witnessed by both Jack and Danny that the topiary animals can move and therefore put the characters in immediate danger just like the rest of the hotel. Towards the end of the novel, aside from the personality change, the change of physical nature also arises when Jack turns into an unrecognizable inhuman character: “He was up on his hands and knees now, his hair hanging in his eyes, like some heavy animal. A large dog... or a lion” (King 416). Jack becomes an animal, just like the ones in the topiary, which shows his complete identification with the hotel – Jack is now a part of the Overlook.

“Built at the turn of the twentieth century and beset by scandal and financial problems ever since, the resort hotel remains bound to its past, by repeating the same events night after night” making the Overlook’s story a tragic one (Strengell 231). By repeating the events continuously, the hotel will eventually find another victim, and by doing so, the history of the Overlook will expand by one more fatal story which will again repeat itself without stopping. Therefore, the only way to stop the tragic story of the hotel is to destroy it, which eventually is done by Danny, Wendy and, arguably, Jack himself. The irony in the novel is that “just as the Overlook’s owners in turn became owned by the Overlook, the hotel eventually becomes Jack Torrance’s personal caretaker, representing a composite of his darkest motivations and further subverting his tenuous familial bonds” (Magistrale, *Landscape of Fear* 68).

### 3. The Ancient prophecy

In the traditional Gothic novel, the prophecy directly refers to the characters and is usually obscure and confusing. In King's modern Gothic, however, the prophecy is delivered through a scrapbook which contains the history of the hotel, making Jack increasingly more aware of his role as its caretaker. The role of the scrapbook is to form a connection between the present and the past: "This temporal affiliation tends to cloud the thinking of the main character, putting him in a position where it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish his plane of reality from the one embodied in the scrapbook" (Magistrale, *Discovering Stephen King's The Shining* 43). Jack eventually cannot distinguish between his reality and the reality of the hotel and is, therefore, trapped in the mind game that the Overlook is playing with him.

The scrapbook was revealed to Jack at the onset of winter, which was the exact intent of the hotel – to wait until the roads were closed so that the Torrances could not escape. The scrapbook, seemingly unimportant, plays a significant role in the novel as it is "the first evidence of the hotel's ability to seduce Jack, and likewise, of Jack's susceptibility to being seduced" (Magistrale, *Stephen King: America's Storyteller* 104). The more Jack is fascinated by the story that the scrapbook is telling, the more his bond with the Overlook deepens. Jack does not at any point suspect the devious plan that the hotel has by presenting him with the scrapbook. As far as he knows, the scrapbook is an opportunity for him to write a book. The reader, however, is aware of the seduction that is being performed by the hotel, which leads to further anticipation of the events, and, with that, the scrapbook has played its part. Jack gets absorbed into the history of the scrapbook to the extent that while looking at the photograph of the decayed Overlook in the 1950s it "wrenched at Jack's heart" and at that moment he "understood the breadth of his responsibility to the Overlook. It was almost like having a responsibility to history" (King 175). That was the point where the hotel had decided that Jack was worthy of its task and the prophecy and he is allowed to see the obscure history of the Overlook and, in a way, his own future.

Later disruption of his reading of the scrapbook by Wendy depicts his rapid alienation from his family. As soon as he hears his name called from the top of the stairs, he starts acting mysteriously and he "started, almost guiltily, as if he had been drinking secretly and she would smell the fumes on him" (King 181). The comparison between the scrapbook and alcoholism is important to emphasize because "both acts are done in secret, both produce high levels of excitement and guilt in Jack, both chronicle habits of violent and destructive

behaviour, and both deliberately exclude Wendy” (Magistrale, *Stephen King: America’s Storyteller* 113). Throughout the entire novel Jack progressively shows all the signs of alcoholism except for, of course, the drinking itself. The reason for that is that he has no need for alcohol when he has his new addiction – his scrapbook, thus “he has already joined the ranks of the hotel’s ghosts, though he doesn’t yet know it, making the Overlook (...) his psychological home” (Perry and Sedelholm 156). Jack is willing to play any role to protect his secret, including the disrespecting of his wife by faking sexual arousal in order to prevent her from discovering the scrapbook:

He slipped a hand over her taut, jeand-clad bottom with counterfeit lechery (...). As they went through the arch, he threw one glance back at the box where the scrapbook was hidden. With the light out it was only a shadow. He was relieved he had gotten Wendy away. His lust became less acted, more natural, as they approached the stairs. (King 182)

By revealing the commitment of the previous owners and caretakers of the Overlook, its “management” wants to inspire the same devotion in Jack. As history repeats itself, Jack is increasingly willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the hotel, as those other men had done. However, the prophecy eventually is not fulfilled, as the hotel, along with the scrapbook and its history, burns to the ground and its obscure story is finally put to an end.

#### 4. Jack Torrance as the Gothic Villain

The hero in Gothic literature is usually also a villain. The search for the forbidden power leads the character to his isolation from the others and transformation to a monster, and, consequently, to his fall and destruction. Stephen King introduces us into the life of Jack Torrance who perfectly fits the description of a Gothic villain since he “both engages our sympathies and terrifies us in his gradual descent into madness” (Bailey 92). The Gothic villain makes conscious choices that contribute to his self-destruction. King describes the tragedy of the Torrances “by implying that the decision Jack has to make is one that illustrates free will, that he has to articulate what is wrong at the hotel and leave it, or to succumb to evil” (Strengell, 234).

Many of King’s characters are created by an influence of the outside forces that exploit already existing weaknesses of the character. One of the clearest examples of that is Jack, a writer who takes a job as a caretaker of the Overlook hotel. Jack battles his inner demons throughout the entire novel – his alcoholism, his temper, and the remembrance of his abusive, alcoholic father. The hotel slowly turns Jack from the novel’s protagonist to its antagonist by intensifying his demons that were somewhat hidden before he became the caretaker.

The story starts by describing the interview for the job of caretaker. From the beginning, Jack takes a defensive attitude towards Mr. Ullman even though he is the one who makes the decision of whether or not to give Jack the job. After being fired from his job as a teacher, his abuse of his family, his struggle with alcoholism, and overall failure in his life so far, all Jack had left was his pride. However, “pride equals sin in the Gothic world and inevitably leads to disaster. Like a true Gothic character, Jack, full of hubris, directs himself towards his own doom” (Strengell 232).

As with the hotel, history repeats itself in the life of the Torrances. “So perfectly circular is the history of the Overlook that Jack becomes almost indistinguishable from his own father” (Magistrale, *Discovering Stephen King’s The Shining* 60). In the novel’s retrospective the reader can learn about Jack’s childhood that was “clouded by his father’s drunken viciousness, which included wife and child abuse” (Strengell 98). In spite of his father’s personality, little Jack had always impatiently waited for his father daily and loved him even when nobody did anymore. In the cases of child abuse, Jack’s mother corroborates his father’s stories. The resemblance is obvious when compared to the life of the adult Jack

when he is the one who is a drunk whose personality tears his family apart. Also, as Jack's mother had done, Wendy affirms Jack's story about breaking Danny's arm, and thus, the spirit of Jack's father continues to live in Jack.

Primarily, Jack's main interest is the play he wants to write and the key reason for applying for the job is to finish it in peace without any disturbance. However, that changes when he discovers the scrapbook and the history of the Overlook. The hotel undermines Jack's psyche and redirects his energies away from the play and towards himself, thus reopening the door inhabiting the roomful of monsters (Magistrale, *Stephen King: America's Storyteller* 108). By trying to win him over, the first thing the hotel does with its invasion to Jack's personality is take away his art. He is separated from it as the hotel tries to draw his attention from the play to the scrapbook. As the novel progresses so does Jack's interest in the scrapbook, and, by the end of the story, Jack completely abandons his role of a writer and fully accepts the part of a caretaker of the hotel. By doing that, he simultaneously rejects his role as a father and a husband as he neglects his son and moves away from his affection for his wife and approaches and refines "the meanness that has always been a part of the darker side of his personality" (Magistrale, *Landscape of Fear* 68). "As cabin fever sets in, Jack Torrance, who is in a very suggestible state, is haunted by his past, haunted by hotel's past and haunted by his present, with fears of inadequacy compounded by his inability to write, which further reinforces his growing fears" (Beahm 190). The more the reality slips away from him, the stronger the hotel's influence is on Jack, and this eventually leads to his attempts to kill his family. Danny and Wendy, who were at one point the people closest to him and loved him unconditionally, become a nuisance to him, an obstacle to his plan of becoming a devoted caretaker and a part of the hotel. Still, at the peak of his monstrous self-indulgence, we can see a trace of humanity left in him: "At the last moment, the raging monster which has subsumed Danny Torrance's much loved father, the voice of Jack Torrance, Danny's still much loved father, speaks out--over the voice of the Overlook, and the voice of Grady and the voice of Jack's father and the voice of alcohol and his own destructive impulses--and tells his son to run" (Bakhtin 7). With that, he manages to save his son from a tragic ending, but not himself from the calling of the Overlook.

## 5. Wendy Torrance as a Gothic Heroine

As he did with all the other aspects of the Gothic, King gives a modernized version of a Gothic heroine which is embodied in Wendy Torrance, a loving mother and a devoted wife who “has been raised in the shadow of her voracious mother” (Strangell 98). She is “affectionate, cheerful, emotional, stupid, and curious—all the traits that the conduct book sought to temper, and all those required for the Gothic heroine to get herself into a mess and cede to the male authority” (Shollenberger). As convention dictates, she is “blond, beautiful, and imprisoned by the labyrinthine bowels of a gothic castle,” has childlike traits and loves her husband and shows obedience towards him (Bailey 92). She has multiple reasons for leaving her husband, including the arm-breaking incident of her son and the numerous outbursts of anger, and still she does not leave him and “unwaveringly but hesitantly follows her husband to the Overlook” (Strengell 98). As Wendy’s Gothic predecessors, she too had a weakness for her husband’s wishes, as when she says: “If that’s what your father wants, it’s what I want,” a sentence thought by countless Gothic heroines before her (King 30). The reason she stays in an almost loveless marriage is her sense of duty. She constantly feels guilty for her parents’ divorce, but also, Jack had been very supportive in her relationship with her mother, and he was the one who had made her realize that she is better off away from her. In spite of her troubles with Jack, he had been there for her when she was having problems, and she felt obligated to return the favour and not abandon Jack during his time of need. Even though she does decide to leave him after his violent outburst, she still reconsiders after Jack’s sudden improved behaviour. Her indecisiveness almost costs her son his life. Although she is aware of his flaws, she “ignores Jack’s erratic behaviour, his inability to write, and even her growing suspicion that he is drinking again” (Raymond 262). So, in a way, she also is guilty for her own misfortune.

However, Wendy cannot be characterized as a typical Gothic heroine, because “she gradually develops from an independent girl into a mature woman” (Strengell 99). In spite of her initially being one of the culprits for the misfortunes in the hotel, eventually she not only fights for her own survival, but for the survival of her son, and she finishes triumphantly. Despite her fate that has been predetermined from the beginning, with her being the Gothic heroine, she shows the reader that “succumbing to evil is not the only possible response to evil” (Strengell 99). Even though she begins as a gullible and helpless damsel in distress, it is her motherhood that encourages her to fight the obstacles that slow her down on her way to

survival. She has no one else to help her as the only person that she should be able to rely on is the person trying to harm both her and her son. While Jack progressively identifies himself with the Overlook and his obsession grows, Wendy “actively rejects the hotel’s domination” (Marginale, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King* 96). After all is finished and Wendy and Danny are finally safe, Dick Halloran shares his thoughts regarding Wendy:

She looked older, and some of the laughter had gone out of her face. Now, as she sat reading her book, Halloran saw a grave sort of beauty there that had been missing on the day he had first met her, some nine months ago. Then she had still been mostly a girl. Now she was a woman, a human who had been dragged around to the dark side of the moon and had come back able to put the pieces back together. (King 493)

## 6. Danny Torrance and the Shining

The most emphasized characteristic of the Gothic novel is the stimulation and display of the fear, the eerie, the horrifying and the sinister which is mostly conducted via the supernatural and sublime elements. King has accomplished that feature of the novel mainly through the character of Danny Torrance, a five year old boy who has the ability to shine; in other words, he is able to read minds, see the future and communicate telepathically with those who shine as well. King uses Danny's ability to foresee the future to keep the reader in anticipation of the upcoming events which stimulates and intensifies the horror and the macabre.

Danny's ability to shine determine his destiny and, "accordingly, he receives intimations of his coming ordeal long before reaching the Overlook" (Magistrale, *Discovering Stephen King's the Shining* 319). He does not quite understand his visions, but he does sense the malevolence of their meaning and is from the beginning reluctant about going to the hotel. Danny can be seen more as an observer rather than participant of the story. He is told mostly nothing about the happenings surrounding him. Although he can read minds and "glimpse the future," he cannot understand it, and even when he does understand, he cannot act upon it (Strengell 96). He does, however, call Dick Halloran to the rescue through their common ability to shine at the end, which is the only time Danny steps up and does something to change the course of the plot.

In addition, Danny's presence at the Overlook is the main reason why the hotel is suddenly more alive than ever: it wants his power to increase its own. With this in mind, Danny is forced to grow up more quickly than intended. He is tempted to face the evil lurking in the Overlook and "these temptations get him into trouble and also help him identify with his father's own demons – perhaps the most dangerous test of his journey" (Perry and Sedelholm 171). Eventually, when Jack tells him to run after trying to kill him, he is the only one able to reach his real father from inside the monster that the hotel has turned him into. With the realization of all the misadventures that await him, Danny's adulthood suddenly arrives:

Danny stood without moving. There was no place he could run where the Overlook was not. He recognized it suddenly, fully, painlessly. For the first time in his life he had an adult thought, and adult feeling, an essence of his



experience in this bad place - a sorrowful distillation: (*Mommy and Daddy can't help me and I'm all alone.*) (King 476)

Danny does grow up during the novel, but to his parents he is still a five year old son whose opinion is not equal to the judgement of the adults. Therefore, his visions of the gruesome future are not taken seriously and he is trapped in the Overlook against his will. Alongside that, the reader is also sympathetic toward him because all the events that eventually drive his family to madness. Danny's fears are gradually replaced by universal fears with which the reader can identify: "the fear of the father, the unknown, and especially the misshapen grotesque freak that, since Jekyll and Hyde, exists in each person's most feared doppelgänger" (Hoppenstand and Broadus Browne 60).

The entire novel is a dance between the past, the present and the future. As said, the past and the present are connected through the scrapbook, it depicting the former events that are circularly repeating. On the other hand, Danny is a tie between the present and the future. His shining allows him to foreshadow the events that are yet to happen, and precisely that saves him from being stuck in the circle of time that awaits him if becoming a part of the hotel.

In the novel, the special power of the shine creates a bond that is stronger than anything else. Since Danny and Dick Halloran "share this unique talent, they are immediately drawn to each other" (Marginale, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King* 82). Initially, Danny's shining made him feel isolated and lonely, so, with Halloran's presence, he finally made a friend who understands. Halloran is the person that had given Danny a name for his ability in the first place and the one who had steered him in the right direction considering its usage. He learns "just how much his abilities could harm or help him in the coming ordeal with the modern dragon, a hotel that feeds voraciously" of all the misfortunes that happened in the hotel (Strengell 59). Halloran gives him "the knowledge to shut off his own mental 'battery' for moments at a time, just long enough to dodge the monsters in his path" (Strengell 59). His gift (or a curse) is what eventually saves both Danny and Wendy when Danny calls Halloran telepathically and since the connection between them is so strong, Halloran risks his own life to save theirs.

## 7. The Gothic Double

The Gothic double refers to a duality within a character, usually considering the battle between good and evil. The manifestation of it is commonly in the character's mind, but it can also be displayed in a physical sense. Despite it being inconspicuous in *The Shining*, the Gothic double is very much present throughout the entire novel. The duality of Jack's personality can be seen from the beginning, even if in a retrospective way, through memories and recollections. The reader is thoroughly informed of the situation concerning Jack's behavior long before the plot begins and, thus, is involved in the story almost immediately. In Jack's history of alcoholism and, consequently, violence and anger, the hotel sees an opportunity to manipulate Jack. There is no alcohol in the Overlook, but it manages to create all the symptoms that are associated by it, including the writer's block and the isolation from his family. The intentions of the Overlook trap Jack in the version of the alcoholic and violent self without even having a drink.

The hotel's deliberate usage of inconspicuous supernatural activities in the novel, at the beginning, is to confuse Jack even more, while he is susceptible to influences. His confusion, alongside his seeming alcoholism come back, makes Jack irritable and short-tempered, especially concerning Danny, whom he had not touched aggressively since the arm-breaking incident. As the Overlook gradually has more influence on Jack, he starts losing control of his actions and eventually cannot restrain himself any more. Jack becomes so unlike his former self that he is only recognizable by his physical characteristics. Wendy is the first one to notice the radical change in her husband by comparing the present situation with Jack's wrongdoings from before.

The first time the idea of a doppelgänger is introduced in the novel is when Jack returns from his rounds of drinks with his drinking buddy Al Shockley, long before the beginning of the story. However, he returns surprisingly sober which is the reason why Wendy reconsidered their divorce and stayed with him after all: "It was almost as though the Jack she had lived with for six years had never come back last night-as if he had been replaced by some unearthly doppelgänger that she would never know or be quite sure of" (King 56). At that point Wendy realized that there are no similarities between drunk and sober Jack, the same as she realized that her husband Jack and the Overlook Jack are completely dissimilar, which is why Holland-Toll says that "Jack Torrance is easily one of the most

dichotomous and terrifying characters King brings to life. He is at one and the same time a devoted father and husband and an alcoholic homicidal maniac” (131). Even a five year old Danny is able to distinguish between two personalities of Jack: “It wore many masks, but it was all one. Now, somewhere, it was coming for him. It was hiding behind Daddy’s face, it was imitating Daddy’s voice, it was wearing Daddy’s clothes. But it was not his daddy. *It was not his daddy*” (King 466).

The concept of duality is also depicted through Danny and his “imaginary friend” Tony. Seeing how Danny is lonely and isolated due to his special abilities, he finds Tony’s companionship more than welcome. Tony appears merely as a shadow and a distant figure and is never clearly seen by Danny. However, Danny still finds comfort in his presence, especially after being increasingly withdrawn from his own parents since they entered the Overlook. Tony keeps giving Danny clues about the future, but they are usually not understandable to the young boy. In fact, Danny receives “a special password – REDRUM – that is supposed to guide him out of the shadows, but only serves to draw him further in” (Perry and Sedelholm 171). However, as the reader (and Danny) later finds out, Tony is not only Danny’s friend, but also the representation of Danny ten years in the future:

And now Tony stood directly in front of him, and looking at Tony was looking into a magic mirror and seeing himself in ten years, the eyes widely spaced and very dark, the chin firm, the mouth handsomely molded. The hair was light blond like his mother’s, and yet the stamp on his features was that of his father, as if Tony – as if Daniel Anthony Torrance that would someday be – was a halfling caught between father and son, a ghost of both, a fusion. (King 466)

Both of the dual personalities are created in one’s mind; Jack always partly being the abusive alcoholic and Danny having his “imaginary friend” from an early age. However, differences are multiple. Danny has no choice, he cannot disconnect from his shining and from seeing Tony. Also, his doppelgänger is not malicious, even though Danny sometimes does not understand that. On the other hand, Jack’s choices are those of free will. He does not have to turn into a homicidal beast that eventually overpowers him, but when he does, the free will that was previously there disappears. He cannot control his actions and, therefore, nearly murders his family.

## Conclusion

Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* was an origin of Gothic literature. Its characteristics are used even today in numerous novels. Stephen King assimilated some of the Gothic features into his works and, thus, created the modern Gothic. For his novel *The Shining* he had brought back the haunted castle motif from Walpole's novel and modernized it into a historically rich hotel filled with ghosts and eerie events. Despite everything supernatural in the hotel, the most important unearthly attribute of the novel comes from outside the hotel, through a young boy Danny Torrance and his ability to foretell the future and read minds – the shining. His capability to shine influences all the other events in the novel and creates other Gothic features. For instance, Jack Torrance would not become a Gothic villain if the Overlook did not want Danny to be a part of it, and, similarly, Wendy Torrance would not even be in an opportunity to be the Gothic heroine. Furthermore, the hotel would not have had a reason to use the scrapbook as a prophecy if not for Danny's shining, and so on. The influence of the Gothic elements on each character is tremendous. Everything that happens in the novel happens because it is supposed to by the rules of Gothic. Each character is shaped by the features that King installed in the novel. The haunted house is, as required, a forceful influence on every character and is one of the main reasons for the way each of them changed throughout the novel. It separately manipulated the characters making them evolve (or devolve) into almost unrecognisable people. The ancient prophecy (or the scrapbook) commenced Jack's obsession with the hotel and his eventual transformation into the Gothic villain. That, combined with his past that troubles him, will, consequently, lead to his own destruction, because that is what the Gothic machinery dictates. His regression does not only cause misfortune for himself, but also for others around him. Even though the classic Gothic heroine is helpless and obedient, it is exactly that what made Wendy transform into King's heroine. Her realisation that there is no other way but to stop being submissive and start fighting is what makes her into a person that she ends up being at the end of the novel. As far as the doppelgangers go, Danny's imaginary friend Tony is, obviously, a major influence on him, since he turns out to be Danny himself trying to help him in his troubles. However, he does not only affect Danny's behaviour, but also his parents' behaviour towards him, making them approach him with caution and more protection than he probably needs. What is important is that, as the Gothic convention instructs, the focus is on the psychological development of the characters, whether it was a rise or the downfall of the

character. The supernatural feature of the novel is not the centre of the plot, even though it has an influence on it. The horror in the novel does not come from the monsters that are a part of the hotel, but from the monsters that people can become under just the right influence of the surroundings, and the fact that anyone can turn into Jack. Like Stephen King said in the introduction to *The Shining*: “Monsters are real, and ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes they win” (xiii).

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