"The Haunting of Bly Manor" as an Adaptation of Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw"

Maligec, Nikolina

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskoga jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i hrvatskoga jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer

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Nikolina Maljkić, 1311028283

ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

Abstract

The thesis is concerned with adaptation theory, mainly focusing on its definition and classification as well as its reputation within the literary and film criticism. The typology of adaptation utilised in the thesis is Kamilla Elliott's classification of six distinct types of adaptation, and it is applied onto specific examples of adaptation; namely, the comparison is drawn between Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and its adaptation *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020) created by Mike Flanagan. The aim of such comparison is to suggest that *The Haunting of Bly Manor* is a ventriloquist adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw*. The analysis is provided through the comparison of specific narratological elements, that is, the narrator, characters, and time sequence in order to examine how they contribute to the ventriloquist type of adaptation. Also, the paper examines specific elements of a ghost story both in the source text and in its adaptation, such elements being: uncertainty and lack of knowledge, the past mistakes or crimes haunting their perpetrator, the interwoven framework, and the element of revenge. Whereas James's novella is a ghost story belonging to the Gothic horror genre, Flanagan's adaptation introduces elements of romance non-existent in the source text.

Keywords: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, adaptation, ghost story, Gothic horror.

Contents

Introduction

Literature and film share a long, close-knit history. Both are a form of art, yet their execution in two distinct media makes them vastly different. Avid readers have been at war with cinephiles about the accuracy of a book's portrayal on the big screen ever since the cinematic art has taken the role of adapting books into films, and the question of faithfulness is frequently brought into discussions about the success of a certain adaptation. However, highlighting "faithfulness" as a criterion of success may not be the most appropriate choice since literature and cinema stand as separate and equally valid art forms that rely on different artistic devices in conveying their messages to the audience.

So, rather than attempting to resolve the ever-present question of whether "the book is/was better," various adaptation theorists have developed theories to evaluate and explain reasons behind certain cinematic choices. One such theory is Kamilla Elliott's classification of the types of adaptation as proposed in her *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003), which will be explained and utilized in further analysis of the source text, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and its 2020 adaptation, a 9-episode TV series *The Haunting of Bly Manor* created by Mike Flanagan. In order to analyse *The Haunting of Bly Manor* as an adaptation in terms of Elliot's typology, the series will be observed through the lens of narratology, or more precisely, it will be compared to the source text and analysed based on the narrator, characters, and time sequence. The aim of such analysis is to suggest that the series may be seen as embodying the ventriloquist type of adaptation.

The first chapter of the thesis deals with the definition of the term *adaptation* mostly based on Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*. The process of defining adaptation is closely connected to the reputation unintentionally earned in the literary and film criticism. Apart from that, Kamilla Elliott's classification of the types of adaptation is presented as a basis for the analysis of chosen works in subsequent chapters.

The second chapter briefly introduces the terms of Gothic and horror fiction, and their major elements, and then defines the classic ghost story in order situate both *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* within the genre of Gothic horror. The outlining of the elements of a ghost story is a prerequisite for demonstrating in the analytical chapter how these elements are utilized in the adapted work as opposed to the source text.

The third chapter represents the main argument of this thesis since it contains the analysis of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* as the ventriloquist type of adaptation of its source text – *The Turn of the Screw*. The claim that the series embodies the ventriloquist type will be confirmed through the utilization of narratological elements of the narrator, characters, and time sequence, while closely examining them in the context of the elements of the ghost story identified by Julia Briggs: uncertainty and lack of knowledge, past mistakes or crimes haunting their perpetrator, interwoven framework, and the element of revenge.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize all the main arguments and confirm the thesis once more before listing all the works cited necessary to support the claims and points of this thesis.

1. Literature and Film – What is Adaptation?

One of the main questions in the theory of adaptation is the definition of adaptation itself. Namely, the terms *literature* and *film* are already well-established in literary and film theory, whereas *adaptation* represents a phenomenon that combines both, and yet stands as a separate artistic manifestation. Moreover, adaptation is not merely a product, but implies a process too.

In order to find an appropriate meaning of the term, Linda Hutcheon in her *A Theory of Adaptation* reverts to the early shapes of adaptation, analyzing the process of preparing opera, a "notoriously expensive art form" as Hutcheon refers to it (5). Through such analysis it is observed that adaptation is in no case a new phenomenon, even though it found its critical acclamation and world-wide popularity in the twentieth and especially twenty-first century. In fact, it can be said that film began as adaptation, since early non-documentary films represented adaptations of literary texts, as evidenced by Georges Méliès's 1902 *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*), adapted from a novel by Jules Verne ("Méliès and Porter"). Yet, despite the adaptation's co-occurrence with film, the latter seems to have established itself as an uncontested theoretical term, probably due to *adaptation*'s complex meaning.

So, to try and put it into precise words, Hutcheon explains that the term *adaptation* has a twofold meaning or nature: *adaptation as product* and *adaptation as process* (15). The understanding of *adaptation as product* relies on its comparison to translation, where Hutcheon assimilates elements of translation theory and incorporates it into defining the phenomenon of adaptation. Hutcheon thus argues that "translation involves a transaction between texts and between languages," and adaptation behaves similarly, acting as a contract between two parties, a source text and its adapted work (16). Hutcheon, furthermore, explains the nature of adaptation using the terms from semiotic theory: "[adaptations] are translations in the form of intersemiotic transpositions from one sign system (for example, words) to another (for example, images). This is translation but in a very specific sense: as transmutation or transcoding" (16) from words, a written medium, to the audio-visual medium of film (or any other medium).

In the second part of the definition, Hutcheon focuses on *adaptation as process*. As the first step in any adaptation, Hutcheon identifies the element of *appropriation* setting it as one of the crucial parts of defining the process of adaptation itself: "what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents. Therefore, adapters are first interpreters

and then creators" (18). The process of adaptation is complex and long, and the creative choices depend on the target medium. Whether the source text is adapted into a moving picture, a ballet, an opera, or any new medium, currently unknown to the humankind, deeply influences the choice of the exact aspect of the source text that is to be adapted: "an adapter coming to a story with the idea of adapting it for a film would be attracted to different aspects of it than an opera librettist would be" (19). Like with any art form, the process is influenced by the adapter's motivation and aim, which brings into question the notion of fidelity. For general audiences, fidelity is related to their own expectations and their own ideas about the source text. Typically, a viewer will expect the director's vision to match their own, which is frequently a source of disappointment, on the one hand, and a proof of the general audience's lack of understanding of the artistic and other processes involved in adaptation, on the other. Whereas the viewer merely compares how accurately the adaptation matches their view/understanding of the source text, the adapter may react to the source text in many ways, which results in a new and different work of art. So, regardless of whether the adapter relies on financial gain or searches to enhance the aesthetic value of the chosen text, Hutcheon considers *fidelity* inadequate in criticizing the success of a certain adaptation: "As noted earlier, their aim might well be to economically and artistically supplant the prior works. They are just as likely to want to contest the aesthetic or political values of the adapted text as to pay homage. This, of course, is one of the reasons why the rhetoric of "fidelity" is less than adequate to discuss the process of adaptation" (Hutcheon 20).

The process of adaptation begins with choosing a source to be adapted, the most typical choice follows the *book-to-film* path. However, the process of adapting may seek its source text within many various types and genres: comics, games, poems, opera, and so on. Hutcheon appoints adaptations as "aesthetic objects in their own right" (6), yet they still require the connection to a certain pre-existing text in order to be identified as adaptations. In the end, even though Hutcheon confirms the necessity of such connection, she states that fidelity to the source text does not qualify as an appropriate "criterion of judgement or the focus of analysis" (6).

Further on, Hutcheon identifies specific parts of a narrative that ought to be adapted to screen: themes, characters, fabula, ending. The first and probably most important step in the early stages of adaptation is the establishment of the theme of the source text, and of whether that theme ought to be kept to honor the fidelity to the source text. Hutcheon identifies themes as "the easiest element to adapt across media" (10). It is through the entity of theme that most consumers of adaptations often measure the notorious fidelity of the mentioned adaptations to

their source texts: “themes are, in fact, of most importance to novels and plays; in TV and films, themes must always serve the story action” (Hutcheon 11).

Furthermore, another crucial element of adaptation regards the transfer of characters from written texts to visual media. They present central objects in the process of adapting because they stand as a direct mediator between the work and the audience. It is the line of empathy drawn between the fictional character and the real-life consumer that keeps the attention and secures the relevance of the adapted work, thus the fidelity of the source text’s characters must be ensured with all their psychological depth: “The theater and the novel are usually considered the forms in which the human subject is central. Psychological development (and thus receiver empathy) is part of the narrative and dramatic arc when characters are the focus of adaptations” (Hutcheon 11).

The third and fourth element that play a critical role in the process of adaptation may be incorporated into one, and they both concern the notion of fabula: sequential ordering and offering a different ending. Specific changes in fabula, especially an alteration of the story’s ending, may in the final form display a completely different story from the one presented in the source text (Hutcheon 11 – 12).

Finally, an “unavoidable” aspect of adaptation as process, as Hutcheon labels it, is the notion of intertextuality. It is established as a direct effect of the viewer’s encounter with the adapted content: “For audiences, such adaptations are obviously ‘multilaminated’; they are directly and openly connected to recognizable other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity” (21).

The last aspect of adaptation to be discussed is frequently seen as “undignified” and non-artistic, namely the financial one. However, Hutcheon highlights the cruciality of the financial aspect, as it has always been almost inevitable in the process of choosing a source text to be adapted: “nineteenth-century Italian composers of that notoriously expensive art form, opera, usually chose to adapt reliable—that is, already financially successful—stage plays or novels in order to avoid financial risks, as well as trouble with the censors” (Hutcheon 6). The search for ready-made, easily available texts that will not be censored and that will be liked by the audiences is a trait of current adaptation processes too. Most notable examples would be the adaptations in the Marvel Cinematic Universe based on the comics by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and J. K. Rowling’s magical universe currently consisting of the books series, the film serial, the theatrical play as the sequel to the main story, the three film prequels set around a hundred

years before the original story, and a rumored HBO adaptation of the original book series (Tapp). Apart from the two mentioned, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* seems to be financially the most profitable universe for the process of adaptation. Even though the adapted series of the original stories has come to an end,[1] there are currently several projects in development apart from the already globally successful prequel, *House of the Dragon* (Boucher). These developments, typically perceived as being motivated solely by financial reasons, might contribute to adaptation's disreputable status depending on the quality of each individual project.

1.1. The Reputation of Adapted Works

Robert Stam in "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" identifies the long-standing perception of the alleged supremacy of the written word over moving pictures. Stam begins by saying that although many adaptations are "mediocre or misguided" (Stam 4) there are, in fact, ingrained assumptions about the relationship between literature and film (4). In order to explain the prejudice according to which literature is superior to film, Stam tries to provide reasons why film is deemed inferior in the first place, which he identifies as "sources of hostility" towards adaptations.

The first source of hostility relies upon the ultimately respected passage of time. The higher value is placed based on "historical anteriority and seniority," in the sense that "older is always better" (Stam 4). In this context, Stam uses Marshal MacLuhan's term "rear view mirror logic" (4) to illustrate the fact that literature automatically acquires higher status over cinematic art due to seniority. Following the "rear view mirror logic" Stam concludes that cinema would thus present superiority in comparison to television. The second source of hostility is, Stam suggests, the human habit of dichotomous thinking, which presumes some form of rivalry and demands that one phenomenon must always surpass the other. Since it possesses the "advanced age" as opposed to cinema, literature appears as having a higher status.

Stam identifies the third source of hostility to adaptation as iconophobia, thus connecting the inferiority of film to the Old Testament tradition and the Second Commandment that prohibits "the making of idols in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the

[1] Interestingly, Martin has contributed to finishing the series' based on his novels, even though, at the moment of writing this paper, he has not yet written the last two novels expected to round up the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novelistic saga (Ahaqir).

waters below" (5). Stam also explains iconophobia from the Platonic standpoint, where "the irresistible allure of the spectacle overwhelms reason" (5). Plato is one of the earliest known intellectuals who has dedicated his life to an "attack on contemporary visual arts" accusing it of "corrupting the audience though dangerously delusional fictions" (5). Plato, was not, however, the only one who has dedicated his teachings to such matters. Numerous eminent authors provide such opinions in their writings as well. Charles Baudelaire, for example, deemed photography to be the source of destruction of arts, while Frederic Jameson proclaims film as pornographic because it allows the world to be seen as a naked body (Stam 5).

The fourth source of hostility towards the cinematic art, logophilia, is related to the previous one, and represents the opposite of iconophobia. Here, Robert Stam highlights the so-called "valorisation of the verbal," which stems from the "religion of the book," which sees "the written word as a privileged medium of communication" (6). In that sense, one might compare the advocates of literature's superiority to religious fanatics.

The fifth source of antagonism toward adaptation is anti-corporeality, or "a distaste for the 'embodiedness' of the filmic text" (Stam 6). What the opponents of the film see as offensive is the ability of a moving picture to evoke biological reaction inside the body of the viewer: "film offends through its inescapable materiality, its incarnated, fleshy, enacted characters, its real locales and palpable props, its carnality and visceral shocks to the nervous system" (Stam 6). The response of the human organism to films is, when observed from the material perspective, much larger than that of a novel even though both are first and foremost mental experiences. Films evoke visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and other reactions, and thus Stam incorporates the claims of cognitive theory within his own argument: "as the cognitive theorists point out, films have impact on our stomach, heart, and skin, working through 'neural structures' and 'visuo-motor schemata'" (6). Slavko Vorkapich talked about filmic mimesis as motor impulses "passed through joints, muscles, and tendons so that at the end we duplicate internally whatever it is we are watching" (223); Stam calls it "contagious energy" (6) in the sense that reading about dancing does not evoke the need to dance as watching someone dance does. To put into concise words, there is too much engagement with body used within the art of cinema that its value is discredited in traditional terms due to the accepted notion of superiority of mind over body.

The sixth source Stam terms as the myth of facility. This concept refers to the popularly accepted idea of films requiring much less cognitive energy to both create and consume. Stam

creates analogy that it is in a similar way easy to simply turn the pages of a book just as it would be to sit and watch a film without thoroughly comprehending the true meaning. It takes excessive cognitive understanding to rightfully process both a novel and a film. Much like written texts, films can also carry a complexity that requires a second or third viewing for the entire picture to be properly comprehended since a large number of details might be missed the first time around. (7)

The final two sources of hostility attack the concept of adaptation on the premises of defiling either the audience or the source text itself. Firstly, there is the ever-present phenomenon of class prejudice, as the seventh source of hostility. Since adaptations are considered severely simplified versions of their source texts viewed as "vulgar spectacles," its own audience is, thus, as vulgar as the adaptation itself. The viewers of such "spectacles" are uneducated, brainwashed participants of mass enjoyment far from cultured civilization. In this direction follows the eighth source, which Stam identifies as parasitism. According to this view, adaptation enters the "body" of the source text and destroys its essence through the process of adapting it into film: "They burrow into the body of the source text and steal its vitality" (Stam 7). Simply put, the adaptation ruins the book.

After highlighting these, often unconscious, sources of hostility toward adaptations, Stam turns to another popular notion in the general understanding and assessing adaptations, namely, fidelity. He says that fidelity as a criterion of an adaptation's adequacy is theoretically discredited, yet, experientially speaking, it still stands as an important element of adaptation process. Fidelity in adaptation terms imposes questions about crucial narratological elements, such as setting, plot, characters, themes, and style. Therefore, it allows the audience to recognize the fundamental parts of the original text and perhaps call for the identification of "unfaithfulness" if, by their opinion, the adaptation has failed to integrate their own vision of the source text. Stam describes such phenomenon within the audience as their "experience" of the text not aligning with the one provided by the filmmaker: "The cliched response that 'I thought the book was better' in this sense really means that our experience, our phantasy of the book was better than the director's" (15).

Furthermore, the exact target of the adaptation's fidelity presents as challenging to precisely pinpoint. Numerous difficulties arise if adaptation thoroughly follows the source text: the plot presented in full detail leads to timing issues; the choice of actors majorly influenced by the descriptions taken word for word may induce a completely inappropriate casting or acting

technique for a certain character; adhering to "the author's intentions" appears to be problematic since it cannot be precisely confirmed what the author's intention truly is (Stam 15).

Ultimately, Stam considers fidelity discourse incredibly unfair when applied to cinematic adaptations. He names all the other stances when fidelity is not brought upon at all in adapting other types of media. For example, theatrical adaptations are sometimes praised a lot more than their original texts, or when it comes to musical sampling, no one questions fidelity in such cases. Literary rewritings are almost wholeheartedly welcomed because "change is presumed to be the point!" (Stam 15). Based on the different *changes* made to the source text, there are also different types of adaptation.

1.2. Types of Adaptation

Because both the process of adaptation and the reasons for adaptation are manifold, it is difficult to provide a definite typology of adaptation. Nevertheless, various theorists have attempted to classify the types of adaptation. For example, Hutcheon defines adaptation based on three perspectives: transposition of a particular work, appropriation and salvaging (reinterpretation, recreation), and repetition with variation (7-8). Dudley Andrew talks about borrowing, intersecting and transforming (98-103), and Geoffrey Wagner puts forward three additional categories of adaptation: transposition, commentary, and analogy (222). However, this paper will rely on Kamilla Elliott's classification.

To begin with, like Stam, Kamilla Elliott, in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*, also touches upon the negative perception of adaptations. She explains the rooted animosity towards adaptations by returning to the semiotic theories. In Elliott's terms, adaptation is "the bad boy of interart criticism" (133) since it contradicts the fundamental principles of semiotic theories: adaptations demonstrate that words and images are translatable, and that form can be separated from content. On the one hand, adaptations deny structuralist principles of prohibited separation of form and content, while on the other, adaptations oppose poststructuralism, which "evaporates content altogether in favor of pure form" (134). Therefore, adaptations seem to be out of place no matter which semiotic theory stands in focus. Speaking of inappropriateness of adapting literary works into films, it is often claimed that the story can never be perfectly transferred from paper to screen, and many readers confine to that statement believing that the story frequently loses its "spirit" in the process of adapting it from book to screen. However,

an adaptation is not supposed to only be a "perfect" rendition of the source. It is also difficult to put the entirety of a text into film, and adaptation into a different medium simply demands changes. In this sense, it is possible to speak of different adapting choices made by filmmakers (directors, screenwriters, and other members of the filmmaking team) which result in the story either mimicking or completely differing from the source text. Such choices result in categorization of different types of adaptation. Elliott identifies six different types of adapting literary texts into films: psychic, ventriloquist, genetic, de(re)composing, incarnational, and trumping concept of adaptation.

The first concept of adaptation, psychic, in simplest of terms, takes the responsibility to capture the so-called spirit of the text. Using the terminology *form* and *content*, in this type of adaptation the content (that is, meaning, *spirit*, message) should remain constant, while the form (characters, events and other features) changes with the substitution of the medium. The psychic concept of adaptation builds upon the contradiction against structuralist dogmas of inseparability of form and content by introducing the concept of "spirit" or, as Elliott refers to it, "formless consciousness" (138). The aforementioned concept implies the existence of the text's spirit in the author's pretextual intent and the audience's posttextual response (138). In other words, every literary text has a certain essence which utilizes a specifically chosen group of words, images, occurrences, and other elements connected to that essence in order to convey the story. The audience responds to the processed information by obtaining the mentioned elements and capturing the essence of the literary piece in their minds. The rejection of a film adaptation arises when too large of a distance between the audience's and the filmmaker's vision of the same story occurs.

The ventriloquist adaptation treats the source text, contrary to the psychic concept, "as a dead corpse rather than a living spirit" (Elliott 143). When it comes to *form* and *content* in this type of adaptation, Elliott turns to Ferdinand de Saussure's terminology *signifier* and *signified*. In order to explain it better, Elliott introduces two separate systems: the novel's system and the film's system. The adaptation (or the adaptation's *signs*) contains the novel's *signifiers* and the film's *signifieds*. In the process of adaptation an empty space is formed between the two systems. The novel's form becomes empty and is filled with the film's content. It cannot be denied that the process of adaptation reduces the novel. Still, it adds "semiotic richness" in other forms: "moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue, and more" (Elliott 144).

The genetic concept of adaptation invokes an analogy to genetics. Elliott compares genetic adaptation to genetic material, a deep "structure" that manifests on the surface in different ways (150). Genetic adaptation differs from the source text in the way that it usually reveals an underlying element which is not quite prominent in the text. Elliott quotes Brian McFarlane in order to further illustrate the concept: "Novel and film can share the same story, the same 'raw materials', but are distinguished by means of different plot strategies" (qtd. in Elliott 150). Elliott also compares this type of adaptation to narratological concepts *syuzhet* and *fabula,* where *syuzhet* refers to what is told (the basic story, the "skeleton" of the novel), while *fabula* refers to how it is told (the choice of narrative strategies, editing choices, and so on) (150).

When it comes to the de(re)composing concept, it is important that "novel and film decompose, merge, and form a new composition" (Elliott 157). The consequence of novel and film creating a completely new arrangement manifests in the source text and the adaptation blending together in the audience's minds which may result in the inability to distinguish the source text's content from the adaptation's content.

The incarnational adaptation implies the existence of a *body* and *soul* similarly to the psychic concept, yet in a different direction. The incarnational process requires the source text to be embodied on screen, therefore implying the text to be dead until it becomes alive in the film (Elliott 161).

Finally, the trumping concept is usually the one accused of being the least faithful to the source text. Such adaptation tends towards better representation of the novel's content. In Elliott's words: "The adapting film claims to have represented [the novel's] signified better" (174).

This paper will particularly focus on the ventriloquist type of adaptation in its analysis of the chosen novella and TV series, namely, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020). Moreover, all of these types of adaptation point to the fact that adaptations use both cinematic and literary (narratological) elements to create a new work of art, but this thesis will focus solely on the narratological elements in further analysis. Because there are many such elements, the third chapter of the thesis will highlight only those that will be relevant for the analysis of the selected works. Before focusing on the series as an adaptation of the novella, the basic definition and elements of the Gothic will be provided to shortly confirm the two works – ghost stories – as representatives of the Gothic horror genre.

2. Gothic and Horror Fiction

Both Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* and its adaptation by Mike Flanagan, *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, can be said to be ghost stories, a specific subgenre within the Gothic and Horror. The two genres are closely related, as the Gothic precedes and influences much of contemporary horror, and a specific type of horror that employs elements of the Gothic is referred to as Gothic horror. In that sense, the adaptation will be compared to its source text only to confirm it as a work of Gothic horror fiction, while a more in-depth examination will be provided in the chapter on adaptation. For the time being, the focus will be placed on the origins of Gothic horror fiction to set up the tone and context to which *Bly Manor* may belong.

Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is the first story that uses the term Gothic and is the instigator of the genre. Namely, the novel introduces certain features which will be used as the basis for defining the Gothic genre: the feudal historical and architectural setting, the deposed noble heir, and the ghostly supernatural machinations (Botting 14).[2]

The Gothic elements of *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* will be analysed in more detail in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, especially how they are presented in the source text as opposed to the adaptation with the use of the Gothic elements of "the ghost story" identified by Julia Briggs: uncertainty and lack of knowledge, the past secret or crime haunting its perpetrator, interwoven episodes (inserts) and the element of revenge (176 – 180).

In order to bring structure to the attempts of defining horror fiction this thesis will use the definition proposed by Xavier Aldana Reyes as the main foundation for the analysis of both James's novella and Flanagan's adaptation and build upon it with the Gothic elements identified by the already mentioned authors: "Horror fiction…seeks to create a pervasive feeling of unease and which, consistently, although not necessarily always successfully, attempts to arouse the emotions and sensations we would normally ascribe to feeling under threat" (3). So, by combining the elements of horror in general, and of the Gothic in particular, Bly Manor can be said to belong to the genre of Gothic horror.

As usual when it comes to literary criticism, major difficulties appear with setting boundaries and definitions and placing literary works within labels and categories. It is no wonder that Fred Botting describes a certain ambivalence of the term *Gothic*. On the one hand Botting

[2] Of course, even much earlier works use some elements that will become the staple of the genre as Xavier Aldana Reyes in the introduction to his *Horror: A Literary History* suggests (5), but it was Walpole who enabled the formation of the genre.

defines *Gothic* as "a utopic mirror that preserves an imagined and ideal continuity with the past" and on the other "it also serves as an inverted reflection marking a distinct break in the progress of history" (18). Gothic, therefore, in Botting's terms, seems to be "crossing boundaries and disrupting categories as much as it serves to preserve them" (18).

To further highlight the disruptive and countering nature of the Goths, Botting introduces Michel Foucault's term *heterotopia*: "A heterotopia, in contrast to utopia, is a 'counter-site', and 'effectively enacted utopia' in which the real sites of culture are 'represented, contested, inverted'" (qtd. in Botting 19). He proposes that heterotopia is an essential feature of Gothic fiction: "the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dank labyrinths, the marvelous, supernatural events, distant times and customs are not only excluded from the Augustan social world but introduce the passions, desires, and excitements it suppressed" (Botting 19). The Foucauldian heterotopic mirror introduces new perception of the Gothic heritage. Since Gothic elements in various forms of art were judged through the neoclassical lens, it is no wonder that anything designated Gothic was deemed inappropriate and unworthy. The heterotopia thus provides a new perspective which allows the Gothic to thrive in its own right. The Romantic return to nature allows the Gothic architecture to be viewed as equally sublime as the mountains: "a great mass of rocks thrown together by the hand of nature with wildness and confusion, strike the mind with more grandeur, than if they had been adjusted to one another with the most accurate symmetry" (qtd. in Botting 21).

Because scary stories are so frequent and appear in all cultures and historical periods, horror fiction encountered a number of obstacles when it comes to finding an appropriate definition. Clive Bloom in "Horror Fiction: In Search of a Definition" finds concerns regarding the definition of horror fiction since an actual system with exact definition and elements required by the genre had not been set throughout the literary history of the horror. Even though the horror developed within the Gothic fiction as its subgenre, the terms are often used interchangeably, which Bloom does not support: "there are, of course, Gothic tales that are not of horror fiction (Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a good example) and horror tales that contain no real Gothic elements (Elizabeth Bowen's 'The Cat Jumps')" (211). So, it can be concluded that whereas the Gothic and the horror are similar but separate genres, there is a specific type of horror that combines both – Gothic horror.

One of the major elements in Gothic horror is the presence of ghosts. Different stories represent different ghost-characters, so they can be malevolent and benevolent, some can speak, and

others cannot. To classify ghosts, Bloom turns to Lafcadio Hearn and his distribution of ghosts into two types, the primitive and the common. Primitive ghosts find the primary source in myths and legends where "men [are] torn asunder by phantoms…imagined as capable of tearing and devouring" (216). These primitive ghosts are material and very violent. On the other hand, a more "common idea," as Hearn names it, is that ghosts should be "intangible and imponderable", and "the common fear is the fear of being touched" (qtd. in Bloom 216). In other words, primitive ghosts possess the ability to inflict physical damage to the living, whether to hurt them superficially or fatally, while "common" ghosts intimidate the living simply by existing. Hearn emphasizes this "modern" view where ghosts are not meant to "wound or kill", the living are only afraid of being touched by them: "For Hearn it is not cosmic annihilation that is fearful but demonic *contact* itself, for such contact annuls identity boundaries…[that] contact confuses the animate and inanimate, the human and the nonhuman, the living and *the dead*. It brings about that which must not be" (qtd. in Bloom 216).

Another important feature, according to Bloom, that frequently finds its place in the Gothic/horror stories is the distinction of the urban and the rural, where *urban* represents the inescapable monotony of everyday life, while *rural* stands for the meditative, restful nature, the idyllic escape from the prison of metropolitan rat race: "To an *urban* mind it is the importance of the nostalgically *rural*, conditioned by a nascent tourism, that is the central message of these tales" (218).

Ultimately, Bloom identifies one final substantial component necessary for horror fiction, the acclaimed element of Faustian contract: "What lingers in these stories is the atmosphere of the Faustian contract, between the scholar and the demonic" (219). The centuries old concept of selling one's soul to the devil finds its rightful place among other elements determining both Gothic stories and horror fiction. The Faustian contract induces emotions of fear and anxiety since such concept implies the presence of a demonic figure, which may be a fearsome concept in itself, but it usually also includes elements of manipulation, mind control, and immoral offerings in exchange for a questionably better life. The danger of Faustian contract is also found in raising the question of moral and ethics regarding the acceptance of offerings from the demonic figure.

Furthermore, regarding the ghost story as a subgenre or type of Gothic horror fiction, Julia Briggs proposes in her chapter "The Ghost Story" the following: "The development of the Gothic, and the ghost story within it, was itself part of a wider reaction against the rationalism

and growing secularization of the Enlightenment" (179). The Gothic movement takes on the role to express anxieties and fears following the changes of the present moment (the growing trend of rationality, which rejects even a slight image of faith, sensitivity or emotionality) as well as any concerns when it comes to terrors of the past, or when it comes to losing the idealized image of that same past (the famous chivalry of the medieval times). The Gothic subverts the eighteenth century "mores and values" through the "inverted, mirror image of the present" (Botting 15).

Furthermore, Briggs tries to establish a means of setting some formality and definition. In accordance with Bloom's reliance on Freud's theory of the subconscious mind and its connection to the pleasantness of horror, Briggs offers a similar explanation regarding the popularity of ghost stories, which Briggs explains through Virginia Woolf's description: "we enjoy being frightened, so long as it is under circumstances that we can control" (qtd. in Briggs 177), thus, the terror of the mind encompasses Freudian animistic way of thinking: "thought itself is a mode of power, in which wishes or fears can actually benefit or do harm – ways of thinking that are characteristic of very small children who haven't yet defined their own limits" (Briggs 178). In other words, the feeling of horror exists within the imagination; it is the mind itself, the phenomenon of not knowing what exists "out there" that brings the fear: "The ambivalence or tension is between certainty and doubt, between the familiar and the feared, between rational occurrence and the inexplicable – and perhaps is the ghost story's chief source of power" (Briggs 176). Therefore, the following definition of the ghost story is offered: "a story about the spirits of the returning dead…ghost-like in appearance…an evil spirit, an elemental, a demon who rules the winds" (Briggs 177).

In the end, one of the important features of ghost stories that cannot be omitted is "the fact that their supernatural events remain unexplained" (Briggs 177). In that sense, Briggs claims that the ghost stories can hold such content where "the supernatural is not explained away but offers its own pseudo-explanation according to some kind of spiritual law of action and reaction; an unburied corpse, a murder victim or some other secret apparently buried safely in the past returns to haunt the perpetrator" (177). The connection to the fantastic is introduced through the sublime, an important, almost unavoidable element of fantastic/Gothic fiction. The sublime relates to the simultaneous feeling of fear and fascination. In this sense the *unknown*, the *entity* greater than any human power becomes the source of fear, and also awe.

2.1. *The Haunting of Bly Manor* as a Work of Gothic Fiction

When it comes to the feudal historical and architectural setting, both works of fiction contain this element since they feature Bly Manor as the setting of both stories. In the novella, the manor is described by the governess in the following way: "it was a big, ugly, antique but convenient house, embodying a few features of a building still older, half displaced and half utilized" (James 15). Although the perspective remains the governess's, the series depicts the manor as more of a safe place in the countryside instead of a frightening, decaying building: "Her first look at Bly yielded no discomfort, no foreboding. It was exactly how Lord Wingrave had described, 'a great, good place'" (ep. 1, 00:19:52 – 00:20:02). Although the house in the series is old, it is not a decaying place until the very end of the series.

Focusing on the economic connotation of a big house, that is, an aristocratic mansion, Botting states that there is a certain "value of this relic of a feudal past within the commercial world of the eighteenth century: rather than inheriting wealth in an aristocratic manner, the merchant has bought his property from the profits of trade, and along with it the ruin of feudal practices as well" (15). In that sense, the governesses from both works (the unnamed narrator in the novella and Dani Clayton in the television series) could be the metaphorical merchant that Botting identifies as an essential part of the feudal setting. The character of the governess in the series, Dani Clayton, saves the aristocratic family from the ghost and thus takes over the responsibility for the manor as its new "owner" or, as named in the series, "the new Lady of the Lake" the moment she allows Viola's ghost to possess her. Once Dani achieves triumph over the ghost haunting the manor, the family is no longer the main target, but the manor turns to metaphorical ruins because the family leaves it after the fatal summer, never to return to it afterwards. After "the final battle" with the ghost, Dani is granted a limited time of freedom until the moment she must pay debt to the ghost for sparing the family, and return to the manor for eternity.

The governess's merchant role is somewhat less conspicuous in the novella because the novella is much more ambiguous than the series. Its effects rely on the lack of one potential interpretation or understanding. Nevertheless, it is clear that the governess "appropriates" Bly and begins to feel it as its own from her own reaction to it since after denoting it as "ugly," she immediately identifies herself as a household leader: "Well, I was strangely at the helm" (James 15). Furthermore, the next sentence begins with the governess referring to Bly as "home" (James 16), which further indicates her adjustment to the manor and her acceptance as the true member of the rural community.

To continue, the deposed noble heir appears in the novella through the character of Miles Wingrave, who is represented as a mysteriously disgraced boy because of certain unexplained events that took place in the boarding school: "They simply express their regret that it should be impossible to keep him. That can have but one meaning…that he's an injury to the others" (James 17). In the series, however, Miles's behaviour is more explicitly destructive, whereupon he lies to Dani and locks her in the closet on her second night at Bly (ep. 1, 00:46:41 – 00:47:32), that being only one of the numerous examples throughout the show. In both cases, Miles seems like a boy who is not meant or adequate to inherit the manor.

But the main example of the deposed noble heir is the children's uncle, Henry Wingrave. Although Miles, as the eldest son of the Wingrave family, is the legal heir to Bly Manor after the parents' death, he is still underage and thus not yet eligible to take over the responsibilities of the owner; so, the uncle is the one to take the responsibility for the financial issues. Miles could be considered "deposed" due to his problematic behaviour which resulted in school expulsion and frustrating conduct towards the new governess, which happens to be the case in both the novella and the television series, but it is Henry whose personality categorizes him as truly "deposed," since he was not the one under the possession of ghosts, unlike Miles. Both the novella and the series point to the possibility that the uncle moved to the city and severed contact with the manor and its inhabitants because he wanted to avoid the ghostly haunting, leaving thus Miles unprotected. Henry's role as a deposed noble hero will be examined more thoroughly in the subsequent chapters because it contributes to the viability of the thesis, namely that the series represents a ventriloquist type of adaptation.

As for the ghostly supernatural machinations, the third Gothic element as per Botting (14), it can be stated that ghosts appear both in the source text and in its adaptation. However, James's novella conveys anxieties of the supernatural through a sense of uncertainty since the existence of ghosts is never confirmed. In the end, the ghosts may be explained as the figments of narrator's imagination or her troubled mind since the story is narrated from the first-person point of view, and the governess's claims seem to be unreliable. This creates the novella's famous ambiguity: "On the one hand, many have found the governess completely untrustworthy – even to the point of denying the reality of the ghosts whose evil workings she reports to us… on the other hand, from the very beginning there have been many readers who…would take the [governess] at her word" (Booth 313). Flanagan's adaptation, however, is rid of such uncertainty. The series clearly confirms the existence of ghosts and openly introduces their motivations and intentions. They are no longer a (possible) product of the

narrator’s mind, but they exist as equally important characters as the living ones. Still, the adaptation creates anxiety and uncertainty in a different way, namely, through its complex narrative structure, which will be investigated in more detail in the upcoming chapters.

3. *The Haunting of Bly Manor* as the Ventriloquist Adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw*

Out of all the adaptation types identified by Kamila Elliot, Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Bly Manor* qualifies predominantly as the ventriloquist type of adaptation. This type of adaptation will be investigated firstly through the Gothic elements identified in the previous chapter to examine how the traditional elements of a ghost story are wielded to fit the director's vision, and, secondly, through the narratological elements of the narrator, characters, and time sequence to investigate how the directorial interventions into the source text influence the overall result, that is, in what way the series can be considered a ventriloquist type of adaptation. More specifically, although Flanagan retains the basic Gothic elements and atmosphere of the source, his adaptation fully lacks the ambiguity that is the most distinctive feature of James's novella, which still defies interpretation, so much so that it is referred to by Ernest Tuveson as a "palimpsest" (783) upon which multiple layers of meaning are inscribed. Contrary to that, a lack of ambiguity in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* results in a ghost series that resembles a (scary) romance mystery, or even a fairy tale.

To begin with, a ventriloquist adaptation "empties out the novel's signs and fills them with filmic spirits" (Elliott 143). So, although both *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor* are ghost stories, matching Julia Briggs's qualifications (namely, uncertainty and lack of knowledge, mind manipulation, the past haunting its perpetrator, the interwoven framework, and the element of revenge), the latter fills the skeleton of a ghost story with romance, mystery, and drama.

Unlike visual media, written text must encroach the field of the terror of the mind. The horror of the literary texts relies heavily on the imagination of the reader, therefore in *The Turn of the Screw* many seemingly supernatural events do, in fact, remain unexplained and the horror is created through the feeling of not knowing: "the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel followed the patterns of inactivity in the 'psychical' ghosts described by James in the Preface, although the Preface pretended that they were active and therefore supernatural" (Ives 189). The uncertainty heightens the reader's anxiety and ends with the desired effect: confusion and fear.

Contrary to that, *The Haunting of Bly Manor* encompasses the elements of the ghost story to fulfil the criterion of the "skeleton," while executing them differently than the source text to produce a new meaning, as the creator of the adaptation himself confirmed: "it was about opening up the book, going through it line by line, and picking out the moments and the

characters and the themes and even lines of prayers that really spoke to me in trying to take all those pieces and put them together in a new order and build out around them" (Flanagan qtd. in Stack). The adaptation thus empties out the novella's *signs* and fills it with filmic *content*, whereupon the *form* is kept through the maintenance of a classic ghost story with new *content* of a fairytale-like love story: "intermingling of a ghost story and a love story is really impactful…by the end of the season the line between the two is pretty much obliterated entirely" (Flanagan qtd. in Huff). The following chapters will be dedicated to the analysis of major elements of the classic ghost story to illustrate how distinctively the elements of the ghost story are used in the adaptation as compared to the source text. The analysis will begin with the point of view, that is, the narrator.

3.1. The Narrator

The novel's *form* within the adaptation is retained through the presence of two narrators, which as narratological entities exist also in the source text. In order to examine the narrators' roles within the adaptation, Mieke Bal's narratological terminology will be briefly explained and further utilised in the analysis. The analysis of the narrator in the adaptation will also illustrate its close relation to Julia Briggs's *uncertainty* and *lack of knowledge.*

Mieke Bal differentiates between two main categories of the narrator, incorporating her own terms within the concepts of the first-person and the third-person narrator. Bal identifies the notion of a narrator never referring directly to itself, only to the characters participating in the story as an external narrator. In narratological terms, the external narrator is equivalent to the third-person narrator. The external narrator, thus, never participates in the story as an actual character, but only serves as an abstract voice retelling the story to the audience, in, what is considered, unbiased measure, although that is not always the case, even though the narrator is external (21).

The second category, traditionally named the "first-person" narrator, is identified by Bal as the "character-bound narrator," focusing thus on its role as an actor within the story: "if the 'I' is to be identified with a character, hence, also an actor in the fabula, we speak of a character-bound narrator, a CN" (21). What appears as a direct consequence of such narration is the famous phenomenon of unreliability since the narrator acts as one of the characters and creates a retelling following their own perspective, proclaiming it the true and only one: "A CN usually proclaims that it recounts true facts about her- or himself. 'It' pretends to be writing 'her'

autobiography, even if the fabula is blatantly implausible, fantastic, absurd, metaphysical" (Bal 21).

When it comes to focalization, Bal adds two terms to describe the narrator's role within the text regarding the chosen focalized perspective. The perceptible narrator stands as an actual character within the text. Such a narrator plays the participating role of an actor inside the very action of the storyline instead of standing aside as a passive onlooker. On the other hand, the non-perceptible type presents the first-person narrator as a witness to the story. Even though it seems that the non-perceptible narrator plays the role of an observer never actively joining the actual story nor adding anything valuable, but merely connecting the abstract world to the real one by transferring the narrative to the readers, such type of a narrator still stands a chance of leaving a large impact on the story itself, but especially on the way the story is perceived and understood by the audience: "Witnesses can convey compassion, irony, or other affective responses to the reader. They can also influence the veracity of the narrative. Hence, neither the quantitative presence nor the participation in the fabula a priori determine the importance of a particular type of narrator" (Bal 28).

James's novella is a frame story with three levels of narration: the frame is told by an unnamed narrator, who tells the readers of how Douglas once told a scary story. The first narrator of the source text is at the same time an external narrator and a character-bound narrator, that is, the first-person narrator: "The story had held us round the fire…" (James 3). However, when it comes to retelling the story of Bly Manor, the first-person narrator, Douglas, becomes an external narrator telling a ghost story to other people gathered in front of a fireplace. The figure of the narrator in James's novella further transgresses into another character-bound narrator because Douglas is actually reading the manuscript that contains the story as told by the governess from the first-person perspective: "I remember the whole beginning as a succession of flights and drops, a little see-saw of the right throbs and the wrong" (James 13). Therefore, the governess very clearly belongs to the category of a perceptible narrator because the story being narrated is the story of her own life.

When it comes to the adapted series, the first narrator would be an external narrator according to Bal's terminology because the narrator repeats several times that she is retelling someone else's story: "I have a story. Well, it isn't really my story. It belongs to someone I knew" (ep. 1, 00:04:49 – 00:04:56). However, when it is confirmed in the final episode that the narrator is Jamie, the gardener, the situation is a bit more complicated because she is an external narrator

that participates in the story without the focalization being placed onto her. It is the absence of focalization onto her character that makes her an external narrator instead of a character-bound one. This confirms Jamie as a non-perceptible narrator who mostly observes the story without actively participating in it.

To honour the source text, the form of a frame story is retained, although the narrator's unreliability is cancelled out by the fact that Jamie tells the story from the point of view of an observer, making it much more reliable than if it were told by the governess, Dani, herself. So, content-wise, the series offers a new, more reliable narration. Whereas the unreliability in the source text is maintained through the governess' insecurity in her own testimony due to inability to firmly certify the presence of ghosts in the manor, the narrator in the adapted version strictly confirms the existence of the ghosts. However, a sense of mystery is created by the fact that, for a long time, viewers do not know who the narrator is, and due to certain questions which may be constructed regarding the narrator's testimony in the adapted series. For example, if the story is presumed true, how is it possible that the narrator, later confirmed as the gardener in the story itself, is familiar with all (everyone's) the perspectives and the backstories?

The question of how reliable the narrator is may be explained through several aspects. Firstly, it may simply be explained through the idea of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* retaining the elements of a classic horror story. For example, one of the most important horror story elements in *Bly Manor* is demonstrated as a scene where the story is told to a crowd gathered in front of a fireplace, which metaphorically depicts a sense of security and protection from the world of the dead, that is, the story told in the midst of the frame: "The telling of tales around the fireside makes explicit a particular aspect of the ghost story which depends upon a tension between the cosy familiar world of life…and the mysterious and unknowable world of death" (Briggs 180). It is also a nod to the source text, in which the governess's story is told to the audience in front of a fireplace.

Another possibility to explain the narrator's reliability is the implication that Dani told all the details of her story to Jamie during the ten-year period they spent together in the epilogue: "I don't know how much time we have left, but however much it is, I want to spend it with you" (ep. 9, 00:26:15 – 00:26:20). It is also possible that during those ten years they occasionally contacted other participants of the story, who told them their perspective on the past events: "'Have you heard from Henry recently?' 'I check in every now and then'" (ep. 9, 00:28:13 –

00:28:17). As for the ghosts, since Dani and Viola continued co-existing in one body, it is likely that she saw all the stories of the dead through Viola's eyes and told Jamie all about their destinies: "I feel her. In here. She's so quiet, she's in here, and this part of her that's in here, it isn't peaceful" (00:16:41 – 00:17:15).

3.2. Characters

To illustrate the difference in portrayal of the characters in the novella and the series, the analysis will focus on characters that exist in James's source text, which is a Gothic ghost story, as well as the new ones, added for a certain effect created within the story, that is, the effect of romance, mystery, and fairy-tale. Specifically, in the analysis of *Bly Manor*'s characters, they will be investigated based on Julia Briggs's elements of a classic ghost story: the past mistakes or crimes haunting the perpetrator, and the element of revenge.

Apart from the already presented element of narrator in the previous chapter, another element that leans into the ventriloquist type of adaptation is the addition of background stories of the characters, which literally fills out the mentioned space opened by such type of adaptation with new/additional content. Each character receives an episode focused entirely or partly on their personal story, bringing them to the present point within the main storyline.

As opposed to James's novella, the existence of ghosts in the series is confirmed and their origin is explained through the story of Viola Willoughby, the ghost who wants vengeance because of her family's betrayal, and who yearns for her daughter, who she believes was unwillingly taken from her. By rejecting the ambiguity that exists in James's novella due to the fact that the readers do not know why Miles and Flora's parents died, who killed Peter Quint and Mrs Jessel, and even if the hosts are real or not, the adaptation opens up space for the adaptation to add filmic content, which is carried out by providing backstories to all characters, as well as clear motivation for the ghost's behaviour (revenge). Viola's full history is depicted in the eighth episode, where the audience also receives a full explanation concerning the specific path on which the ghost appears. Namely, that is her pathway from the lake through the manor to the bedroom in which she used to sleep during her living years. The mentioned pathway serves as a crucial source of terror due to Viola's fatal grip that kills anyone who crosses her way: "a fate that befell anyone unfortunate enough to step into her habitual path" (ep. 9, 00:52:10).

The main descriptor used for Viola's character is "rage," which ultimately holds not only her, but also other victims trapped at Bly after death, causing them to eventually *fade* into oblivion. The *fading* mentioned perpetually in the context of Bly's ghosts is explained as a notion which causes her and all the other ghosts possessing the manor to lose their identity and their memories, and is symbolized through the literal fading of their facial features: "The oldest of Willoughby's daughters, once Lady Lloyd of Bly, now just a thought, just a feeling. Not a woman at all, not a person at all, not a name or a face, just need, need… And loneliness… And rage. Her fate was a nightmare" (ep. 8, 00:51:37 – 00:52:26). Viola's only motivation comes from hope to reunite with her own daughter, but the motive of hope inadvertently expands into a vengeance towards the generations of Bly's inhabitants because now the whole manor represents the betrayal she suffered; hence, the curse is bestowed upon the entire property: "Her fate that befell all trapped at Bly…a fate that befell even those who died of other causes at Bly" (ep. 8, 00:52:27). Importantly, upon learning the motivation of both the ghost and Dani the governess, the reader no longer feels fear, but sadness and understanding, as opposed to a sense of perplexity one feels at the end of James's novella.

Secondly, the character of a governess is transferred onto screen as more of a material personality than in the source text. In the novella, the governess appears as an unreliable narrator who is simultaneously a nameless character both participating in the story and being the main focal point, but who is construed in twice-removed discourse: she appears in the manuscript and is brought to life through the voice of Douglas who reads it, but who never knew her. In the adapted series she is given her own name, Danielle (Dani) Clayton, as well as her own background story which turns her into a rounded character instead of simply serving as the children's au pair questioning whether the manor is being haunted. In fact, the fourth episode is devoted entirely to Dani's past, which provides the audience with an explanation for her own unusual behaviour. Namely, she covers every mirror within her eyesight to avoid seeing a scary figure with blinding lights for eyes. In fact, she seems to be haunted by another apparition: the ghost of her deceased fiancé Eddie, which is not a ghost in the true sense. It is not tied to a specific location and follows Dani everywhere, because it stands as a product of her feeling of guilt for his death. In this way, the painful memory of Eddie's death represents the element of a past mistake or crime haunting its perpetrator in classic ghost stories. Dani's conscience is put to rest once she finally decides to face her fiancé's death and the guilt surrounding its circumstances: "It's just you and me, then" (ep. 4, 00:50:09). The act of throwing his glasses in the fire (ep. 4, 00:49:33) finally allows her to let go and find peace. Her

troubled mind is an echo of Viola's, which may explain why Dani was the one who is ultimately able to stop the curse/haunting.

The third example is the character of Henry Wingrave, whose background story may be interpreted as both another example of a haunting past and through the lens of Botting's "deposed noble heir" (14). First of all, like the governess, his character is given a full name as opposed to being simply referred to as the children's "guardian" (James 8) or "uncle" (James 22). Like all characters, the character of Henry Wingrave is much more developed in the adapted version than in the original novel. Both heroic and destructive features are added to his character, which turn him into a more realistic and relatable person rather than being a mere caricature of an absent caretaker, as portrayed in the novel: "These children were, by the strangest of chances for a man in his position – a lone man without the right sort of experience or a grain of patience – very heavy on his hands" (James 8). His character in the series is introduced in such a way as to fully reflect the one in the novella: he is in charge of the financial aspects; he resides in the city, and is completely absent from the lives of the two Wingrave children (ep. 1, 00:06:26 – 00:14:02). Such behaviour may also be considered inappropriate in the novel, since he appears as a careless caretaker claiming to have more important issues in the city and leaving the children in the care of others (James 8), but, as the plot of the series develops, his actions – his absence and self-destructiveness – take on a deeper meaning.

In the sixth episode, the reason for his destructiveness is thoroughly examined; it is revealed that he had a passionate affair with his brother's wife, the mother of Miles and Flora, which resulted in Henry falling in love with her. Her death, but also guilt for betraying his brother's trust, brought on severe depression, with which he copes by means of alcoholism (another element of his misplacement). The sixth episode, thus, introduces a mental projection of "his true self" as a reflection of his own mind haunting him for the sins he had committed: "a grotesque little demon…a grinning monster" (ep. 6, 00:45:35 – 00:45:55). Furthermore, the affair resulted in the birth of their child, thus the true parentage of Flora Wingrave, the younger child, is revealed (ep. 6, 00:39:45 – 00:40:10). The role of a father adds depth to the character of Henry Wingrave because it is marked by heavy feelings of guilt and grief. He is no longer only a financial provider to the children but also someone expected to contribute to their lives in a much more complex way, even though he spends the entire series avoiding his responsibilities. He merely manages to call Bly only to immediately hang up due to the heaviness of his emotions: "Do you really think she'll answer one of these times?" (ep. 6, 00:49:00), referring to his wish to hear from Flora but being unable to execute his plan.

However weak or in the wrong he seems, the viewer is compelled to sympathize with Henry, on the one hand, and to view the whole episode as a tragic romance, rather than a ghost or horror story. Contrary to that, the uncle's removal from both Bly Manor and the children in *The Turn of the Screw* is inexplicable and strange, and his excuses not particularly persuasive, evoking some strange horror that remains unclarified until the end.

As the fourth example, there is the character of Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper. Instead of simply standing as a side character, which she is in the novella, Mrs. Grose, much like the previously analysed characters, receives a full name and an entire storyline of her own, including the focalizing fifth episode. Her behaviour is marked by several distinct features, which seem to imply the outcome of Hannah Grose's destiny: she keeps touching the back of her head claiming she has issues with sleep; she seems to appear out of nowhere or is mysteriously absent when Dani looks for her; she refuses to have any food or drink, and she keeps noticing a crack of a very specific shape in walls all around the property without any other character being able to spot the same. All the mystery behind her behaviour is resolved as the fifth episode unravels and reveals that Hannah is a ghost existing among the living after being murdered by Peter Quint, who at the time possessed Miles's body. It is also Hannah's episode that first uncovers the question of ghosts' identities and their imminent loss; namely, she keeps repeating basic facts about her current situation, in order to adhere to her memories as long as possible: "You're Hannah Grose. The year is nineteen eighty-seven. You're at Bly. Miles is ten, Flora is eight" (ep. 5, 00:51:32).

In Flanagan's attempt to create a story that gives the viewers explanations for all the supernatural occurrences as well as reasons for the characters' behaviour, he also introduces characters that do not exist in James's novella: the character of Jamie as the gardener of the manor and Owen as the cook. They both immensely contribute to the story as a regular part of the household with their special talents and charisma necessary for the story in certain parts, but mainly through their connection to the tragic destinies of Dani Clayton and Hannah Grose respectively. In particular, their romantic feelings for Dani and Hannah affect the series genre by adding distinct elements of romance and drama, which do not exist in *The Turn of the Screw*. With the addition of Jamie, Dani's fate that may be described as worse than death appears as even more intensely heartbreaking due to the fact that she willingly and selflessly gave up her own future and happiness in order to save the Wingraves and relieve other ghosts of their entrapment: "The Lady of the Lake was different now. The Lady of the Lake was also Dani.

And Dani wouldn't. Dani would never. In fact, no one would ever be taken again, and no one has been taken to this day" (ep. 9, 00:38:36 – 00:38:52).

Similarly, Owen and Hannah also represent a pair of tragic lovers. Even though Hannah did not willingly make the same choice for herself as Dani did, she coincidentally loses a chance of sharing her future with Owen by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As Owen, inside Hannah's safe place and thus being more a part of her own mind than his actual self, exclaims in a whispering remorse in the final episode: "What a life we could have had" (ep. 9, 00:03:07), the series' romantic inclinations are made indisputable.

3.3. Time Sequence

The framed composition of the series is one of the elements confirming the existence of the mentioned "skeleton" of the story. Not only does it provide the foundation onto which the more complex shall be built, but it also represents the basic story taken from the source text. Both works of fiction consist of a primary and an embedded story, as Mieke Bal identifies the terms (56 – 57). Much like the source text, the series begins with the first narrator, then introduces the embedded story focused on another character, to finally return to the first narrator and end the story with them. However, what differentiates the adaptation from the source text in this context is the use of multiple embedded stories instead of one, which will be analysed in more detail in the following text. Furthermore, it is Bal's element of distance that differentiates separate embedded stories from one another. Distance refers to the time amount between the capital fabula and the embedded story, in other words, how much time has passed between the main story and retroversion (Bal 88). While the retroversions of all the main characters are quite close to the main story and may be defined as internal retroversions (Bal 89) due to belonging to the same time span, or "the stretch of time covered by an anachrony" (Bal 91), the most distanced embedded story is the story of Viola Willoughby, dating all the way back to the seventeenth century, and thus qualifying as external retroversion (Bal 89).

Such an interwoven framework, representing the groundwork of both *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, is typical for a ghost story (Briggs 179). The novella's frame is found in the story of the first narrator telling the story of their friend/governess. The novella then shifts its focalization to the second narrator, the governess herself, who is placed inside the frame structured by the first narrator, that is, the eldest child of the family in which the governess served. *Bly Manor* also utilizes the framed narrative but in a somewhat different

manner. The story of the adaptation begins with a wedding of young woman, where her family and friends are gathered to celebrate with her. During one of the preparation evenings, one of the family friends is asked to tell a story (ep. 1, 00:05:03), which is where the story of Bly Manor begins. A similar shift in the narrative to the one in the novella may be noticed. The story begins with the first narrator who retells the story, but the narrative shifts to the first-person point of view of the main character of her story, so this main character becomes the second narrator, who is, again, the governess of the children.

After the groundwork is placed, in the next eight episodes anachrony plays a crucial role in building the new composition as opposed to the source text, in which the governess's story develops chronologically. Firstly, the achronological development of the series explains Miles's behaviour and Dani's haunting past through their respective episodes, and secondly, the anachrony is required to explain the origin of the ghosts which haunt the Bly Manor. In this manner, anachrony stands as a crucial element of building an extremely detailed composition containing several layers to what at first sight seems to be a simple ghost story. A major part of time sequence is taken to compose an appropriate storyline for the ghosts of Bly to first discover that they are dead, then to obtain an explanation of what happened to them, and finally, to find a means to deal with the new situation and discover new identity as a dead person among the living.

The mentioned concept is displayed with the examples of Hannah Grose, Rebecca Jessel, and Peter Quint. The ghosts first return to one very specific memory which strongly marked them during their life, and they refer to this phenomenon as "getting tucked away" (ep. 6, 00:16:38), or "slipping away" (ep. 7, 00:06:19). Once they discover that specific memory, either their safe space or a memory of an event that seriously harmed them, they are forced to keep returning to it as they have no control over the time when they will be thrown back into that memory. Their minds, however, slightly alter the memory every subsequent time, which further illustrates these moments as mere memories instead of true events. In the end, such alterations create distorted memories without even the slightest ability to regain control over them.

In the fifth episode, Hannah Grose's death and ghostly existence is revealed through a substantial use of anachrony. A large number of parallel scenes as well as the notion of jumping from one time period to another, without proper chronology and without explanation, show how truly confused and chaotic the minds of ghosts are while trying to adjust to the new situation. They seem to point to the fact that time is irrelevant for ghosts as they keep living in

the same moment which goes on simultaneously with the time as the living people perceive it. The fifth episode refers to three separate time periods but with the use of parallel demonstration. The first time period is the years before Rebecca and Peter even arrived at the Bly Manor, and that period includes the time of the Wingrave parents visiting Bly with the very young Miles and Flora as well as the moment of Hannah originally interviewing Owen for the job after the Wingraves' deaths. The second time period incorporates the year of Peter and Rebecca spending summer in Bly, which had created incessant tension between Peter and Hannah, only to be resolved in the most unfortunate way during the third time period, the summer when Dani Clayton joins the household of Bly. Throughout the episode, Owen's interview becomes a meta-conversation in the sense that he becomes more and more aware of Hannah coming back to the memory of their conversation every time she feels overwhelmed even if she herself fails to realize it. Owen's awareness of the interview being repeated accentuates the whole scene being only a part of Hannah's consciousness since Owen tells her things from their future conversations as if he already knows they are going to happen: "We've talked about that once." "Not yet, we haven't, technically. But I thought about it for weeks after we did" (ep. 5, 00:32:20 – 00:32:30). However confusing the time sequence of the adaptation may be, it actually has the function of clarifying the causes and reasons for everything that happens at Bly, and so, paradoxically, the anachrony of the adaptation provides much more clarification than the chronology of the source text.

The furthest external retroversion, the one happening completely outside of the original time span, occurs at the end of the seventh episode and the beginning of the eighth episode. The seventh episode ends with Viola (at that moment the most dangerous ghost of Bly with her name being unknown to the audience) dragging Dani from the courtyard into the house because Dani found herself in Viola's way. With the use of external retroversion, but one that is even more intense than other character-focused retroversions, the eighth episode cuts off the main story and creates another level of embeddedness showing the audience the very beginning of the Bly Manor being haunted. The same narrator who narrates Dani's story also delivers the story of Viola Willoughby with the use of fairytale-like narration:

> Toward the middle of the seventeenth century, there lived in the province of Hampshire a widowed gentleman. His name is of little count, I shall take the liberty of calling him Mr. Willoughby…two daughters born at an interval of five years apart. The elder Viola, the younger Perdita, in memory of a little girl born between them, who had lived but a few weeks. (ep. 8, 00:02:00 – 00:02:40)

To further accentuate how far back in the past the retroversion is distanced, the entire episode is made aesthetically different from the rest of the story by means of black and white colouring. Even the element of music illustrates the distance in time, as the same melody that represents the haunting in other episodes set in contemporary times, "Oh, Willow Waly," is played in the eighth episode in a different arrangement, with rhythm in the style of a waltz appropriated for the historical period used in the episode, the seventeenth century.

All the retroversions, whether internal or external, greatly contribute to the complexity of the time sequence as presented in *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, and, in that sense, bring about another dimension to the otherwise much simpler Gothic tale. Alongside other analysed narratological elements, they represent the *content* which fills out the novella's *form* and thus confirm the adapted work as the ventriloquist type.

Conclusion

To summarise, adaptation, although no longer a relatively new form of artistic expression, still faces several difficulties. Even though many contemporary, financially and/or artistically successful films and television series exist thanks to the process of adapting, the reputation of adapted works still tends towards negativity. In order to provide more understanding about adaptation as a form of art, certain theorists have developed definitions and classifications, which present adaptations as valuable, independent works. Linda Hutcheon, for example, proposes a two-fold definition of adaptation, namely, adaptation as product and adaptation as process, while Kamilla Elliott categorizes adaptation into six types: psychic, ventriloquist, genetic, de(re)composing, incarnational, and trumping.

This thesis focuses on specific examples of adapting a text into an audio-visual piece, that is, on how Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw* was translated onto screen in the form of Mike Flanagan's television series, *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. The aim of the thesis was to present the series as a ventriloquist adaptation of the novella by analysing and comparing specific narratological elements in both works: the narrator, characters, and time sequence. The analysis was supported using Gothic elements, which Julia Briggs identifies as key components of a classic ghost story (uncertainty and lack of knowledge, the past mistakes or crimes haunting their perpetrator, the interwoven framework, and the element of revenge) due to the fact that both works belong to the Gothic horror genre.

Both works have two narrators, an external and a character-bound, but presented differently. The novella's first narrator, Douglas, is obviously external because he never participates in the story. He only reads a written testimony of an unnamed governess, who takes over the role of the narrator and becomes a character-bound perceptible narrator. The series, however, uncovers the first narrator as Jamie the gardener, who does participate in the story but does not narrate her own story. She is, thus, a character-bound non-perceptible narrator. The governess in the series, Dani Clayton, remains a character-bound perceptible narrator since the story focalizes on her character. When it comes to honouring the genre, such presence of a narrator indicates the element of uncertainty and lack of knowledge.

The second narratological element analysed in the thesis is the presence of certain characters. The addition of new characters as well as specific background stories contributes to the claim that *Bly Manor* is a ventriloquist adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw*. Viola Willoughby exists as a ghost haunting the manor and thus eliminates the uncertainty provided in the novella of

whether the manor is even being haunted. She is even provided with her own focalizing episode, which retells her life, and explains the origins of her betrayal as well as her desire for vengeance. In that sense, she represents a typical ghost haunting a place because of revenge. Furthermore, the unnamed governess in the novella is translated onto screen as the au pair named Dani Clayton. She is the second example of a character who receives their own backstory told in a full episode, thus confirming the series as a ventriloquist type. Moreover, the two characters who barely appear in the novella, or appear as minor characters, namely, the children's uncle Henry Wingrave, and the housekeeper, Mrs. Hannah Grose, are also given full background stories with the addition of their own respective focalizing episodes. Additionally, the characters of Dani Clayton and Henry Wingrave represent characters that are haunted by their past mistakes or crimes. Apart from the mentioned characters, two new characters, the gardener Jamie and the cook Owen, are added in the series to create the effect of romance, drama, and mystery.

The final narratological element, and perhaps the most significant in the series, is the time sequence. Both works contain examples of primary and embedded stories. However, the novella contains only one embedded story, while the series incorporates several embedded stories. When it comes to the use of anachrony, the novella provides only one moment of retroversion with the shift from the first narrator to the second one. Contrary to this, the series utilises achronological time sequence in the form of retroversion, some of them with the internal and some with the external perspective, multiple times to incorporate the backstories of the characters.

In conclusion, all three mentioned elements contribute to furnishing the novella's form with new content, confirming that Mike Flanagan's *The Haunting of Bly Manor* is a ventriloquist adaptation of Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw*. Flanagan constructs a different story than the one told in the source text. Yet, the difference within the storyline, as provided by the adapted work, does not result in diminished quality. Even though Flanagan eliminates ambiguity – the key feature of James's novella – by the end of the series, and introduces elements of romance, the series still remains suspenseful and scary. In fact, the series achieved success with both the audience and the critics, which might contribute to a more positive reputation of adapted works altogether.

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