

Gothicizing the Child: A Queer Approach to Torey Hayden's *Ghost Girl*

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<p>This study argues that narratives of childhood injury have become ubiquitous in TV, print and other popular media. The popularity of such narratives is ascribed to the assumed authenticity of self-revelatory narratives of extremity. The main focus of the study is on the contested issue of childhood innocence and the way it is negotiated in Torey Hayden's best-selling memoir <i>Ghost Girl</i>.</p> <p>The study highlights normative practises inherent in discourses on childhood in the light of queer theory and Freud's notion of sexual development in children. The study argues that an understanding of normative principles in society in general must take as a starting point the constructedness of the idea of childhood. As a preparation for the analysis the study presents a possibility of bringing childhood studies and queer studies together. The subgenre of 'misery memoirs' featuring sexually abused children is presented and discussed in the context of the representation of children in modern culture. The views of such theorists as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and James R. Kincaid are discussed in order to highlight the essentialist notions embedded in the idea of childhood. The study also discusses the work of Philippe Ariés whose notion of childhood has been influential to subsequent queer approaches to childhood studies.</p> <p>The study also highlights the problematic nature of genre definition in relation to Hayden's memoir. The study suggests that <i>Ghost Girl</i> is a textual hybrid that poses a problem to reading if realistic genres such as 'memoir' are regarded as too axiomatic concepts of analysis; a resolution to this problem may be a more mixed approach to the concept of genre. The study also suggests that psychoanalytic case studies of children had a particular Gothic slant to them as they objected to the notion of childhood innocence. Moreover, Freud's idea of the perversity of childhood sexuality was contemporaneous with the emergence of the Gothic child in fiction. The study argues that the critical analysis of <i>Ghost Girl</i> must take into account the parallel historical development of Gothic narratives and psychological case studies.</p> <p>The analysis of <i>Ghost Girl</i> highlights the generic ambiguity of Hayden's narrative and discusses this in relation to Freud's influential essay on Gothic tropes in fiction and reality, "The Uncanny." "The Uncanny" is particularly informative when horror narratives featuring potentially evil children are discussed. The study suggests an intertextual relationship between Henry James's Gothic story <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> and <i>Ghost Girl</i>. The former is regarded as a template for contemporary narratives of abuse in its construction of narrative of moral ambiguity where the supposed innocence of children remains a moot point. The study describes the formal features that are regarded as important in creating an atmosphere of Gothic suspicion in <i>Ghost Girl</i>.</p> <p>Finally, the study concludes by arguing that popular narratives such as <i>Ghost Girl</i> are better understood if their critical evaluation does not overlook the importance of close reading. Thus the reception of such apparently non-literary texts as <i>Ghost Girl</i> needs to take into account aesthetics and the formal features of storytelling. The study concludes by arguing that ontological concerns for the suffering of real people are not secondary. Following Sara Ahmed's analysis of the cultural logic of emotions, the study argues that emotions in narrative are predicated upon certain formal features and are thus not separate from them.</p>				
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1. Aims and Objectives: Encounter with the Cult of the Child	4
1.2. Introduction to <i>Ghost Girl</i>	9
1.3. <i>Ghost Girl</i> in Context: Critics of Popular Trauma Culture	13
2. Introduction to the Theoretical Frameworks	22
2.1. Constructing Childhood: The Legacy of Philippe Ariés	23
2.2. Bad Taste, Kitsch and Sentimentality: The Question of Authenticity	31
2.3. “This was real life, and I couldn’t get out of it”: Generic Ambiguity in <i>Ghost Girl</i>	39
2.4. The Child Queered by Freud	53
3. Analysis of <i>Ghost Girl</i>	60
3.1. <i>Ghost Girl</i> and “The Uncanny”	60
3.2. <i>Ghost Girl</i> and Jamesian Knowledge Effects	72
3.3. Narrative Closure and Reproductive Futurity in <i>Ghost Girl</i>	106
4. Conclusion	113
Bibliography	125
Finnish Summary	132

1. Introduction

1.1. Aims of the Study: Encounter with the Cult of the Child

The focus of this study will be on the image of troubled childhood and the way in which childhood is represented in contemporary culture. The idealized nature of the narratives of childhood is often emphasized in contemporary criticism. Hence, as distinct from real historical children, the sentimental representation of children is often referred to as the cult of the *Child*. The Child with a capital C in queer studies may be thought as a reference to the ritual practices of religion. In Christianity ideas of simplicity and innocence are traditionally associated with childhood, and also validated and even celebrated by the application of such phrases as the Infant Jesus and the Holy Family (Ariés, 118). The Child, understood in this way, is a rhetorical construction that suggests a relationship between the worshipper and the object of worship. Arguably, the cult of the Child demands a strict adherence to set of norms that are reminiscent of a religious protocol. In his essay “The Future is Kid Stuff” Lee Edelman has outlined the normative practices inherent in the contemporary cult of the Child (2-3). The governing principle in this is what Edelman describes as “reproductive futurism” (2). The discourse that sees future as a children’s domain permeates the society as whole; it functions as an ideology that organizes our thinking and operates through such binaries as innocence /experience, knowledge/ignorance. The culture of the Child requires, Edelman argues, that we value the Child as long as issues concerning children and sexuality, for example, are demystified by the liberal left (27). It is not allowed, for example to show that children enjoy sexual pleasure. Eventually, the culture of the Child is a normalizing principle in society. When the narrative of the Child becomes the norm, it functions as a template that

precludes aspects of our culture that do not fit in. Hence, as Edelman argues, it is the task of queer theory to resist the dominant culture of the Child and the master narrative inherent in it. For Edelman the Child is essentially *anti-queer* and a marker of what Edelman describes as a pro-procreative ideology (12). It is a construction that lacks any real potential for opposition, “a repository of sentimentalized cultural identifications“(11). Against this epitome of social order Edelman places the figure of the queer. Edelman associates the oppositional politics of queerness with death and with the denial of essential identities (19). Edelman argues that in our culture children can never be queer: as soon as this possibility appears childhood is brought to an end (19). What this means in Edelman’s view is that queerness and childhood are mutually exclusive ideas. There is no future for the queer child since queerness in a child marks the end of innocence and also the end of childhood (19).

Edelman’s analysis of the cult of the Child suggests that childhood is highly contested issue in contemporary society. On the one hand, there is the notion that children are somehow more authentic than adults. The readers of traumatic stories of childhood abuse often turn to such stories precisely because of their purported authenticity (Rothe, 84). Arguably, there is an interesting change to the regular pattern of autobiography here. According to Susanna Egan, autobiographical writing tends to depict the past experience as a utopia, a Shangri-La: it is a condition of childish innocence (qtd. in Mitchell, 25). However, as Mitchell points out, there is a two-fold approach to the horrors of the past. Not only is writing regarded here as a cure which heals the trauma, but at the same time fascination with misery seems to have an uncanny curiosity towards the representation of misfortunes (25). One explanation for this slightly odd love for misery is provided by Mitchell:

Winning the bragging contest of having survived the worst childhood has ironically become proof of authenticity in American culture that has supplanted the cult of the hero with that of the victim. (15)

On the other hand, as Edelman's example reveals, cultural critics also argue that this authenticity is a form of politically biased performance, characterized by repetition and falsity. When we talk about children, it is not clear whether we talk about real children or ideas. The real child is closely entwined with its representation. One of the spiritual forefathers of Edelman, Philippe Ariés, wrote his constructivist approach to modern childhood in the 1960s and observed that the stress on the contemptible or "fake" aspects of childhood was a reaction to the birth of modern childhood. Antipathy towards children, Ariés wrote, is closely related to its opposite, to the novel importance that family and childhood had gained in modern society (109).

In this thesis I will try to deconstruct aspects of these often contradictory images of childhood as they manifest themselves in Torey Hayden's writing. My reading of Hayden's memoir *Ghost Girl* is an illustration of how the idea of queer childhood may be used in popular culture. However, the narrative is ambivalent in its portrayal of childish innocence, to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to judge whether the child is the victim or the victimizer. Thus, rather than earlier scholarship on memoirs of childhood misery (e.g. Rothe), I want to argue that *Ghost Girl* is a narrative that represents the child as a conundrum; the child becomes a possible candidate for social danger. In my thesis I will try to outline the historical development of the dangerous child. This potentially paranoid child representation emerged in the late 19th century when the bourgeois myth of innocent childhood was contested. Freud's

theories in particular associated children with perversions. My argument is that the futurity of the Child is inscribed in the closure of the story of the *Ghost Girl*: the ending of the story undermines these queer possibilities inscribed in the story proper. In this way, the narrative of abuse becomes, in Kathryn Bond Stockton's words, an "ingenious solution to the problem of children lacking the privilege of weakness and innocence" (298). This means, paradoxically, that in order to represent worldly, sophisticated and street-wise children in contemporary culture the child must be in danger and hence in need of protection. Moreover, I want to argue that the portrayal of victimized children in contemporary society is a part of a continuum that has its origins in modernity.

The dreadful pleasure of consuming such narratives is associated, firstly with the trope of the Gothic child. This trope is a modern creation that is paralleled with 19th century science and with the attempt to redefine humanity and childhood in particular. Caroline F. Levander has stressed the difficulties in keeping separate science and sentimental fiction that feature children (30-31). Firstly, scientific narratives, for all their purported objectivity were inspired by sentimental representations in Victorian literature (30). Secondly, the modern project of objective hard science had, after all, a central role reserved to sympathy; it was seen as an essential part of the animal experience (31). Furthermore, the new scientific discourse on childhood suggested that children are more closely related with the category of nature. Thus they were considered being less human than adults. I want to suggest that this new concept of childhood that stressed the uncultured aspects of children also rendered children potentially dangerous. Similarly, Freud's theories concerning childhood sexuality were a significant modern contribution to this new concept of childhood. David Wagenknecht has suggested that psychoanalytic case histories had a major role in the Gothic portrayals of children (423). Many

of Freud's case histories were named after a child. Wagenknecht's reading of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* contrasts the novella with Freud's *Dora*. My intention is to show that contemporary stories of traumatic children have many parallels with Gothic narratives featuring potentially dangerous children. Eventually my reading of *Ghost Girl* is inspired by queer theory that has recently paid attention to the politicized nature of the representations of childhood. The purported ignorance of children for example raises questions about power: how are narratives of childhood constructed in our society and for what purposes? My thesis suggests that simple stories of childhood are not as simple as they appear. Rather, they constitute a nexus of ideas that are central to Western thinking more generally, since in these stories knowledge, sexuality and innocence are played out and negotiated. My reading of *Ghost Girl* suggests that this narrative is essentially a drama of ignorance and knowledge; when reading it, we are invited to join in an atmosphere of suspicion where the narrative either nullifies or/and affirms our misgivings. This drama is closely associated with yet another binary doppelgänger, that of innocence and experience. These themes are explored more thoroughly in the third section of my thesis.

The contemporary memoir is a rare instance of popular culture embracing the child's point of view. Arguably, the history of literature has often relegated the child into its margins. (Bussing, xiii). When I first encountered the genre of the misery memoir at local supermarket in London I paid attention to the clear cut manner in which the genre presented itself. Each cover of a paperback featured a face of a crying child. I felt that there was something queer about these distorted angelic faces. A part of my astonishment was due to the fact that children, an often marginal phenomenon in popular culture, now seemed to be everywhere. The people whom I talked with were ready to regard the readers of such books with derision.

In an article published in *Daily Mail*, Danuta Kean dubbed this “latest craze of the publishing industry” as an example of “titillating popcorn” abounding with bestial fathers, pedophilia and incest (par. 1). Overwhelmed by the deluge of these tormented faces in an everyday setting, the supermarket, I formed immediately a provisional theory about the attractiveness of the genre. Like so many other popular branches of literature, these books wanted the reader to respond in a particular way. I was concerned about the possible double standards involved in the issue: even as we are quick to condemn everything connected with illicit child-loving we are obviously in love with being outraged about it. In a context characterized by an ever increasing paranoia about children, sexual abuse and pedophilia, these books seemed to cash in on our fears about children and sexuality. Simultaneously they seemed to offer a kind of *queer pleasure* for the reading public that is not easy to come to terms with. Somehow the question of *pleasure* in connection with these books makes us feel uncomfortable. In order to fully understand the meaning of these emotions and the tropes that make *Ghost Girl* meaningful I would like to explore some of the basic tenets of sentimental literature in general. In this thesis I will compare *Ghost Girl* with other genres such as Gothic and melodrama that are unabashedly emotional in their content. The blurb of *Ghost Girl* describes the story as a tear-jerker: arguably this story of childhood trauma follows the logic of sensationalist writing, horror and pornography in its preoccupation by eliciting a gut reaction.

1.2. Introduction to *Ghost Girl*

Torey Hayden’s *Ghost Girl* is the author’s first-person account that features Hayden herself as a professional child psychologist put in charge of a class of disabled children. Hayden’s narrative focuses on her encounter with one of her pupils, the eight-year-old Jadie Ekdahl, and

discusses the problems inherent in testifying publicly to a potential case of sexual abuse of a child. The story starts to unfold as the narrator leaves her home in the city, in order to become a teacher in a distant rural school for exceptional children. The children have difficulties in learning skills and some of them are seriously disabled. The narrator forms a fatal curiosity towards one her protégés, eight-year old girl named Jadie. Jadie is not able to talk and her whole body is suffering from painful contortions. The narrator develops a close relationship with this child and at the end, saves her from the apparently corruptive influence of her biological parents. The plot of the story consists of the narrator's interviews with the girl as she suddenly on his own accord comes to see her after school. The narrative foregrounds the private nature of these encounters which take place in the locked cloakroom of the school building. Jadie's visitations are not official appointments with the teacher as they are not planned beforehand. Gradually the narrator becomes aware that Jadie has a message to her, and that for reason that is not specified she wants to disclose a secret to her. There is a sense in which the girl is deeply troubled. The teacher also understands that she has a special effect to the girl's behavior since during their meetings Jadie is able to discard her seemingly incurable disabilities. She often refers to her teacher as "God". In her presence she is able to stand straight and speak aloud which she hardly ever does in public.

But Jadie's habit of communication is not straightforward, and this becomes the mainstay of narrative tension in the story. Jadie often alludes to characters that are either imagined, dead or absent. Jadie tells her confidant about her friend, Tashee who is six years old with whom she likes to play ghosts. From her story we get the impression that Tashee is in fact already dead, a victim of brutal ritual murder. Jadie also makes reference to spiders and to a dead cat. Initially these fantastic objects seem like random references to the child's imagination. However, as

Jadie's premature awareness of sexual and occult things provides the narrator for subsequent suspicions that some of the scenes depicted by Jadie in private are associated with her abnormal behavior in public. The teacher/narrator thus makes a frantic effort to interpret the stories Jadie is telling her and starts to think that they could be re-enactments of satanic rituals where animals and children are dismembered. As the story goes on and more fantastic narrative evidence is brought about by the teacher's secret encounters with her pupil, the narrator is caught between Jadie's ambiguous disclosures and her own attempts to translate this secret knowledge into an officially acknowledged fact. There also appears a possibility that none of the dreadful things has actually happened. There appears the possibility that this is not a story of a disturbed child but a case history of a paranoid woman. Even worse, the story suggests that the narrator is in fact duped by her notions of childish innocence. The innately evil child, the story suggests, is in fact a part of a plot to kill the teacher since she has gained too much information on the alleged satanic rituals. Eventually, Jadie is taken into custody and her family members go through investigations but none of the suspicions are actually confirmed. It remains a moot point what had actually happened and whether Jadie's reports were factual accounts or something which she had imagined.

It may be worth mentioning some of the responses to Hayden's book as they illustrate the centrality of affect in the process of interpretation. The reviews on the *Amazon* website often stress the reader's empathy to the point where reading becomes a form of suffering. An entry, entitled "Scarred for Life", claims that *Ghost Girl* differs from the rest of the Hayden's oeuvre by its "polished writing" (par. 1). The reviewer is, however, cautious in recommending the book because its reading has caused her physical nausea:

I consider myself to have a strong stomach, but this book has scarred me for life. There are some parts of the book, that when i was finished reading, i felt physically ill and regretted exposing myself to such horror. Don't get me wrong, i [sic] LOVE Torey Hayden, and it is not her fault that this story has happened, but what this little girl describes makes David Pelzer's "A Child Called "It" seem like a walk in the park. I'm hoping i will forget the things i have read in this book, and in result regret reading it completely. (Kitty, par. 1; spelling and orthography original)

The reference to Pelzer's book is important since *The Child Called It* is often mentioned as the first commercially successful misery memoir that helped to usher in the genre (Rothe, 90). The review is emblematic since it does not dwell on the specifics of Hayden's narrative; rather it focuses on testifying how the story has affected the reader. In this way the review becomes a form of testimony, attesting to the reader's ability to suffer together with the alleged victim of the story. The review strives to efface the fact that the narrative is made, focusing instead on its existence as an object of reality. Thus it claims that the author is simply a disinterested transmitter of the story: "it is not her fault that the story has happened". Though the reviewer is not satisfied with the lack of closure in the story (par.1) she is informed by another reader that this indeterminacy testifies to the authenticity of the narrative:

I cannot fault Torey Hayden for never uncovering the real "truth" behind it all. It is unrealistic to expect her to know all and to provide us with the happy ending we all long for. That would make her work untrue and unbelievable. The reality is, in the real world there are sometimes no answers. All we can hope for is that

whatever did happen never happened again so that this child would not have to endure any more suffering than she already had. (Shannon, par. 1)

Similarly, earlier scholarly work on Hayden's writing often stresses the de facto nature of her narratives. Marlowe and Disney, for example, discuss *Ghost Girl* and other books from the vantage point of pedagogy and they regard Hayden's books as helpful material for teachers who wish to learn how to cope with exceptional children. According to them, Hayden's books "provide an honest look into the mind and heart of a caring teacher who teaches her children to care" (303). I have mentioned these different, often uncritical responses to Hayden's writing in order to identify the supposed central preoccupations in the reception of Hayden's books. Instead of following this realistic line of interpretation outlined above my analysis of *Ghost Girl* will draw attention to the genealogy of the narrative genre of Hayden's *Ghost Girl* and to its literary aspects. Prior to that, I will discuss briefly the type of criticism that, as a contrast to the compassionate or affective readings of Hayden's books, is more critical; it is concerned with the possible unethical features of narratives of injury.

1.3 *Ghost Girl* in Context: Critics of Popular Trauma Culture

Earlier scholarship on Torey Hayden's *Ghost Girl* is included in Anne Rothe's general overview of popular trauma culture. Rothe locates Hayden's work in a clearly defined context, what she calls "trauma culture zeitgeist" (85). This includes daytime talk shows that feature holocaust survivors and other "campy re-enactments of suffering" such as terminal illness, child abuse and addiction. (82). Rothe regards the hollowness of this cultural phenomenon and

considers it as a form of political anesthetics, where the life of the individual seems to be dominated by “constant but ineffable threat of extreme danger” (82). In Rothe’s analysis there is a link to politics, as trauma culture is oblivious to the real problems of the capitalist society (82). Day time television survivor speech and misery memoirs are essentially conservative because they do not want to seek solution to the sufferings they represent. The “pornography of personal pain” requires that people develop an obsession with these narratives without necessarily reflecting on real inequalities in society (87). Rather, by consuming such stories people turn these narratives into artifacts that further alienate them from the real problems that surround them.

For Rothe the popularity of such stories is partly due to the erosion of clear generic boundaries in contemporary culture. Such genres as auto-fiction and the TV-series *Survivor* challenge traditional binaries between fact and fiction (84). Similarly “postmodern affinity for generic ambiguity” has resulted in the fact that audiences have become prone to consuming narratives that claim to offer a higher or deeper reality than the traditional modes of representation. The audience’s “naïve faith in nonfiction narratives” (84) has resulted in a situation where fiction has become associated with falsehood. According to Rothe, the dichotomy of mediatedness and unmediatedness has been associated with ideas of authenticity and inauthenticity, and finally “superimposed to the categories of fiction and autobiographic non-fiction” (85). Thus the cultural dominance of memoir form over novelistic representations is a result of the novel’s alleged status as an inauthentic mode of representation. In fiction, no one truly suffers (87).

One of the arguments presented in this thesis is that the reception of misery narratives such as *Ghost Girl* can be more complicated than it appears. Rather than framing the text in contemporary culture of trauma trash, my approach to Hayden's book is aesthetic and cultural. This will, I think, help us to see *Ghost Girl* not merely as an example of sentimental kitsch but as a particular type of text that has more a specific, historical origin. In my view *Ghost Girl* is a re-enactment of a very specific form of narrative which I call the *governess and orphan girl formula*. This type of story will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. As a contrast to Rothe's emphasizing postmodern generic erosion I would like to suggest that the question of a pure genre has never been a simple one. Such allegedly unambiguous narratives as *Ghost Girl* can be fascinating since they do not obey the law of the genre in the way Rothe suggests. Rather than offering a salvation from the "postmodern generic ambiguity", *Ghost Girl* will be read in this thesis as an exercise of such ambiguity. To ask whether the ambiguity is intended or not is perhaps futile, since it can be argued that the reason why we enjoy reading in general is based on such ambiguity.

For Rothe, the problematic nature of misery narratives lies in the "encroachment of the private sphere" (46). According to Rothe, privacy and self-disclosure are based on the tradition of testimony. Revelations of personal atrocities are justified since "the gospel of trauma culture" (89) is based on the assumption that knowledge of the victim's story will shield him/her from similar experiences (89). Rothe's argument that these stories are characterized by "coy exhibitionism" (89) is arguably part of the wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure in our society. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick the questions of "coming out" are always "politically charged lines of representation" (71). In Sedgwick's view the image of the closet includes a double bind between secrecy and disclosure, and this dyad has become widespread in Western

societies since the advent of the category of homosexual (92). However, it has not lost its sexual meaning and historical gay specificity, as Sedgwick points out (72). Sedgwick argues that the pairing of homo/hererosexual has affected many other epistemological categories of Western thinking. Any compulsions in a pairing such as private/public, for example are bound to be related to homo/heterosexual binary (Sedgwick, 73).

Thus it can be argued that Rothe's criticism of self-exposure and exhibitionism in contemporary culture (90) merely repeats the homophobic argument that sexuality is a private issue. As Segwick has pointed out the questions concerning knowledge and ignorance are of supreme importance when the epistemology of the closet is discussed (73). I want to suggest that the problems inherent in Anne Rothe's analysis of the genre of misery literature relate to deliberate ignorance or snobbery of her analysis which leads to a certain inconsistency of her approach. Thinking back to what Robert Solomon has written about politics and art, that there is a tendency among critics of popular culture to despise their object of study and defend the audiences that consume popular culture (3), one could argue that Rothe's study is an apt illustration of an approach that is political rather than aesthetic. The starting point for Rothe's analysis is to show how misery narratives have become an important aspect of what she calls "popular trauma culture" (83). She praises herself of not sharing the high cultural bias of her fellow critics in cultural studies who mainly analyze canonical or aesthetically superior texts while discussing trauma culture (83). She also regrets the fact that virtually no mention has been made about autobiographical "narratives of extremity" (83), which have become ubiquitous in popular culture and that the task of her book is to explore the representations of extremity in popular texts in a genre that is currently most widely read (83).

Rothe's seemingly liberal approach to popular texts is however counterbalanced by her patronizing attitude towards audiences that consume such texts. Readers of misery memoirs, according to Rothe, share a "fallacious presupposition" (84) concerning the genre that renders them incapable of appreciating the problems of representation (84). Readers regard these texts as realistic because they have been obfuscated by popular culture that sells victimization as entertainment (88). Thus Rothe's task is to offer a critical corrective to such readers who have been duped by Americanization and cultural imperialism (89). In so doing, Rothe aligns herself with such conservative critics as Christopher Lasch who argued in the 1970s that revelatory memoirs of famous people were predicated on the salacious curiosity of the masses (89). The debilitating nature of mass culture in Rothe's analysis is accompanied by assumption that popular cultural texts are aesthetically inferior (91):

The aesthetic quality, or rather lack thereof, of most mis lit, however, reflects its popular literature status since the idea that you are close to real suffering is the selling point, not the writing. Although misery memoirs also depict both addiction and potentially terminal illness, their primary subject matter is physical and sexual child abuse. Torey Hayden's *Ghost Girl*, which sold some twenty – five million copies worldwide for instance, tells the story of a child so chronically abused that she seemed half-dead.(91)

The notion that popular texts are inferior and that writing itself is not worthy of inspection ironically leads Rothe's analysis to a direction that avoids close readings of such texts. There is a sense in which "trauma kitsch" (88) is disdained because it is cheap and not well made. For Rothe *trauma kitsch* evokes Gothic melodrama, clausturation, and the fear of being buried

alive (46). I will further discuss the importance of Gothic representations in misery narratives later on in this thesis. Because the texts are characterized by lack, they do not deserve to be examined in depth. Hayden's narrative is written off in a few sentences. Arguably, Rothe's analysis exemplifies a rationalization of snobbery, discussed by Robert Solomon in his article on kitsch and sentimentality (3). In my study I want to show, that it is not as straightforward as one may assume to disentangle "aesthetically superior forms" mentioned by Rothe (91) from popular cultural texts.

This thesis suggests that such canonized writers as Henry James have had a decisive role in creating a paradigm for narratives of sexual child abuse. As Ellis Hanson has pointed out in her analysis of *The Turn of the Screw*, such narratives alternate between "perverse pleasure and disavowal of queer erotics of children" (368). My study is informed by a close reading of James's novella, it pays close attention to the intertextual relations between James's Gothic storytelling and Hayden's misery narrative. I will also argue that misery narratives take part in wider cultural context than merely contemporary popular trauma culture. I will locate such narratives in their historical context, in the birth of modern child psychology and subsequent re-evaluations of childhood sexuality.

Freud's theories of child sexuality played a decisive role in constructing an image of a child that is a pervert. By locating perversions in childhood Freud also helped to create a figure of child that is potentially dangerous. In my reading of *Ghost Girl* these ideas are played out and negotiated. They are not necessarily explicitly mentioned but, nevertheless, my thesis will attempt to unpack these often implicit assumptions. It is argued that *Ghost Girl* is not simply a narrative of victimization, but includes also a possibility where the victim may turn into an

aggressor. Moreover, this study is informed by the idea that notions of sexuality are closely entwined with the concepts of knowledge and epistemology. The politically charged concept of innocence is particularly pertinent here, as Eve Sedgwick has shown (4). The question of innocence is, once again, repeated when the potential reader is asked to explain to others her motive for reading such stories of traumatic experiences. In this case, the only possible answer seems to be that the person is ignorant and innocent, merely feeling sympathy towards young tormented children.

The second section of my thesis deals, firstly, with the question of children and their representation in popular culture. The crucial turning point, according to the constructivist approach of Philippe Aries, took place in the Early Modern period when the child acquired its specific identity – its childness – that it now has (31-47). The appearance of modern psychology and Freud's theories about child sexuality parallel the appearance of the Gothic child in literature. I will outline this development and show the characteristics of this modern childhood. I will also offer a definition of the Gothic mode and its aesthetic principles and illustrate how they might be useful in approaching the subject. Since Freud, the concept of childhood has acquired an ominous aura as the myth of angelic innocence has been critically reviewed. The impact of this on the representations of children has been important in the last hundred years. In my thesis it is argued that the case history as a genre that translated traumatic experiences into a narrative has parallels with Gothic stories that feature disturbed children. It is also suggested that contemporary memoirs featuring troubled children sometimes follow the pattern of the psychological case study.

In the second section I will also look at queer theory, and explain how it is helpful in understanding the dynamics between the center and the margin, between a normal and a perverse childhood. My argument here is that these contemporary memoirs of suffering children are readily available for a queer interpretation. They take part in the cultural construction of sexuality and the way in which the basic categories of humanity are understood. In the third section I will offer a reading of Torey Hayden's *Ghost Girl*, and show how this contemporary narrative gothicizes the child. On the one hand, I will suggest that *Ghost Girl* challenges the normative categories of childhood; on the other that the text invites us to think whether popular culture may be incongruous in its representations, as the general discourse about children is suffused with a politics of sentimentality.

Such personal accounts of trauma are popular just now. One of the difficulties in measuring the popularity of the genre is that its characteristics are often masked if the genre is sold to the literary audience. As I have shown, the genre label "misery memoir" is often used in derogatory sense and one will not find it used in the supermarkets where these works are sold. Rather they will have to look for "tragic life stories". Arguably a new autobiography by any literary author, such as Jeanette Winterson, that will feature harrowing stories of her difficult childhood is not marketed as popular fiction or tagged as a misery memoir in the bookshop. Similarly, Frank McCourt, seen as one of the founding fathers of the misery genre, is not sold for a reading public that consumes misery memoirs knowingly by buying them from their local supermarket. Nevertheless, regardless of how these texts are branded for the reading public and what is the authorial or cultural status of the writer, there is a common denominator running through all these texts: the investment in trauma and victimhood and social suffering. Following what Sara Ahmed has written about emotions and their entanglement with "stories

of justice and injustice” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 191) it is easy to locate misery literature in the context of therapeutic culture, which stresses the importance of experiencing pain vicariously through reading and writing. In this thesis narratives of pain are not addressed as apolitical private experiences. The dynamics of desire and disgust that characterizes our reading of such stories is not a token of natural gut reactions. Rather, as Ahmed has stressed in her discussion of performativity and disgust, these gut reactions are part of the politics of emotion (92). In this way the performances of disgust and desire may be linked with other normative tendencies in society that are ostensibly apolitical.

2. Introduction to Theoretical Frameworks

In this chapter I will discuss a set of issues that are relevant to the subsequent critical evaluation of *Ghost Girl*. Firstly, I will pay attention to the concepts of innocence and knowledge, modesty and immodesty, which are crucial to Philippe Ariés's analysis of the modern idea of childhood. Ariés's analysis of history of childhood has been influential to queer studies, by showing that innocence is a category that is not simply given but can be historicized (Bond Stockton, 296). Crucial for Ariés's analysis is that the idea of childhood innocence has had a very real consequence; it has led to the separation of adults and children in society, since children must be safeguarded against any corruptive or sexual adult influence. The sentimental investment in the weakness and fragility of children, discussed by Ariés, leads to the topic of the second part of this chapter. I will offer an outline of sentimental art and argue that sentimentality is essentially linked with questions of epistemology and knowledge. The question of the real is an important one when the critic tries to grasp the various positions in a debate that revolves upon sentimentality. On the one hand, critics of sentimental art often stress the inauthenticity of sentimental art. Moreover, emotions in art are often regarded as a sign of bad art or kitsch.

The third part of this chapter discusses the topics introduced from the point of view of genre analysis. A starting point for my analysis of genre is a kind of generic ambiguity suggested by Freud in "The Uncanny." In "The Uncanny" Freud argues that a prerequisite for uncanny effects in literature is the mixing of imagination and reality (93). There is a sense in which realistic genres are most prone in producing uncanny effects (97). Rather than critics of sentimental art, such as Rothe who claim that misery memoirs offer a distorted view of reality

(46), my approach to the genre acknowledges the possibility that genres are always mixed in a fashion suggested by “The Uncanny.” Such apparently non-fiction genres as the memoir may become uncanny by offering a curious mixture of literal and factual elements. Part of the thrill of reading *Ghost Girl* is derived from such generic ambiguity. In my reading *Ghost Girl* repeats some of the features of earlier Gothic fiction. In my view, Henry James’ novella *The Turn of the Screw* is particularly important as I will demonstrate.

In the fourth part I seek to show the importance of Sigmund Freud in revising our notions of childhood. The section titled “The Child Queered by Freud” refers to Bond Stockton’s argument that the aggressive, sexual child is a concept that owes its existence to Freud’s theorizing of childhood sexuality (291). I will discuss Freud’s development of his theory concerning childhood. Arguably psychoanalytically minded queer critics such as Lee Edelman have been influenced by Freud’s potentially Gothic child. My argument is that the Gothic child in *Ghost Girl* sparks our thirst for knowledge and I will offer an outline of the importance of Eve Sedgwick’s idea of the interconnectedness of sexuality and knowledge in her *Epistemology of the Closet*. In *Ghost Girl* the idea of closet is particularly important, as I will demonstrate. Such binarisms as private/public and knowledge/ignorance are relevant to my analysis of Hayden’s text.

2.1. Constructing Childhood: The Legacy of Philippe Ariés

One of the recent developments in queer theory has been an attempt to reveal how our understanding of children is produced in culture. In this section I will highlight the interconnectedness of childhood studies and queer theory. In my reading Philippe Ariés’s

seminal study *Centuries of Childhood* has been influential to queer theory by revealing the constructed nature of the idea of childhood. Aries's study focuses not on real children but rather, on the way in which the discourse of childhood has developed over time in educational and juridical systems, for example. An important aspect of Aries's analysis is his outline of the development of the idea of childish innocence. This idea is closely allied with other developmental patterns at societal level, particularly with those that have to do with the restructuring of the modern family. Aries's analysis suggests that innocence is a construct that is produced deliberately, a form of normative principle.

Similarly, queer theorists have paid attention to the contradictory nature of such normative discourse about children. Focusing on contemporary narratives of pedophilia, James R. Kincaid, for instance, has argued that the fact that we like to consume incest narratives such as *Ghost Girl* has given rise to certain double standards. On the one hand, there is the adult desire to spectacles of child-loving. On the other, this desire has to be repressed and cloaked in an act of moral outrage. Our condemnation of child molesting is, according to Kincaid, a "virus that nourishes us" (11). The reading public may consume such spectacles of pious pornography, and at the same time feel guilty about it. Thus, there emerges in the audience the need to project its guilt onto scapegoats. For Kincaid consumers of these stories are implicated in the production of apparently illegitimate desire for children (12).

Furthermore, adults who consume these stories want to be in control of what these stories and characters in them should be like. For Kincaid the genre of the child molestation narrative is a "Gothic melodrama" (7) wherein the plot is often simplified, villains are easily identifiable, and the victim is necessarily innocent. However, in order to be sexually alluring, the image of

the child has to correspond to certain expectations. The desirable face of child-molesting stories, according to Kincaid, is

Blank, washed out of color, eyes big and round and expressionless, hair blond and colorless altogether, waists, hips, feet, and minds small. The physical makeup of the child has been translated into mainstream images of the sexually and materially alluring. (10)

The tension between this inherently silent and submissive figure and its desirability lead us to consider that innocence is a form of adult desire. The image of an innocent child is clearly a projection of adult fantasy; it must be devoid of any signs of desire in itself in order to be desirable. In her book *Aliens in the Home* Sabine Bussing dedicates a whole chapter to the meaning of the child's outward appearance in Gothic narratives. Bussing argues that when children are represented as erotic objects, the *telos* of the narrative appears simultaneously, and the outcome of such desire must have a terrible ending:

The deep effect which such radiant beauty produces on other people's minds becomes obvious through the narrator's reaction to her charges. In the same measure as her conviction is growing that the children are possessed by evil spirits her attitude to their physical charms gradually changes. Those features that aroused her adoration in the beginning slowly turn into objects of suspicion, mistrust, even aversion – because of their very perfection. A human being so beautiful and pleasing must never become an ally of dark powers, if it did, its fall from grace would be ten times worse than that of the Lucifer. (1)

In *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès writes extensively about children and sexuality. Ariès analyses historical documents, novels, and pictorial representations featuring children to argue that the birth of the innocent child is a modern phenomenon. Contemporary morality requires that children are protected from too early contact with sexual issues (98). What is striking in Ariès's analysis is that the reader may find it difficult to believe in what he is describing. This theme of suspicion that hovers around childhood is an important aspect of childhood narratives, as my analysis in chapter three will reveal. However, Ariès makes his case in a very persuasive manner:

This semi-innocence which strikes us as corrupt or naïve explains the popularity of the urinating child as from the fifteenth century. The theme is treated in the illustrations of books of hours and in church pictures. (103)

For Ariès, the popularity of images of children showing their private parts simply reflects the general opinion in the early modern period (99-124). Because people generally accepted the view that children are not innocent, nobody would run the risk of corrupting their innocence. Thus in Ariès's view the wealth of material that deals with children and sex prior to modern period is not a sign of moral degeneracy (102). The development that leads to the contemporary situation where children are protected from sexual references begins, according to Ariès, among the pedagogues of the Catholic Church (104). Ariès's reading of a medieval education manual, known as *De confessione mollicei*, is revealing since this manual was made for the sole purpose of helping *children to confess their sins to the confessors* (104). In a close reading of this manual, Ariès makes clear that its content is sexual, and its purpose is to help

the adult confessor to wring out from the children confessions considering the facts of illicit sexual behavior (104-105). For Aries, this is a proof that the modern idea of childhood innocence has not yet emerged. One of the prerequisites for this modern invention is the separation of children from adults in society. As Aries demonstrates, the old, pre-modern society did not regard children as innocent creatures to be shielded from the corrupting influence of the adult world. This idea emerges together with the concept of innocence and it is also accompanied with the idea that children are increasingly associated with domestic setting. Thus, the child becomes the central concern of the private bourgeois home. In other words, the development of the concept of childhood innocence thus originated in religious institutions that regarded childhood as a matter of concern because of Christ's childhood (109). Children were also increasingly compared with angels. Aries observes that simultaneously with the appearance of reverence towards children there emerged a reverse of this new notion of innocent childhood which meant that people started talking about the weakness and imbecility of childhood (109). Aries suggests that this was partly due to the classical spirit that laid stress to the importance of reason. The stress on the contemptible aspects of childhood, Aries argues, was a reaction to the emergence of modern childhood, and antipathy to children testifies to the novel importance that family and childhood had gained in society (109).

In this thesis I am drawing on the intellectual framework offered by gay and lesbian studies. The central tenet of this theorizing that goes under the name *queer theory* is the insight that modern sexual identities related to Ariés's formulations since they are also constructed through our use of language. The insight of queer theory is that the construction of marginal sexual identities is not simply a marginal phenomenon. The analysis of how marginal

sexualities are constructed also illustrates how cultural power operates in a society. This cultural logic is not simply limited to lesbian and gay studies. As Janssen has observed, childhood is now regarded as ground zero of all sexual politics (par.1). In the following I will address some of the basic formulations of this theory and assess their usefulness for analysis of narratives of childhood. In my thesis the modern Child is a construct that is aligned with modern sexual identities. One of the impacts of queer theory to the studies of childhood has been to acknowledge how seemingly simple stories of childhood take part in shaping dominant heteronarratives in society (Bruhn and Hurley, x). I will argue that those power struggles that define marginal sexual identities also define our assessments of modern childhood. Moreover, the discursive use of power is also present in what is not presented in these texts about children. My analysis of the narratives of childhood pays attention to what is laid aside to the margins of the text and regarded as unimportant. These following binaries that are discussed by Eve Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* are important for my analysis: center/margins, normal/queer, natural/constructed presence/absence, silence/speech, innocence/experience, knowledge/ignorance sincerity/sentimentality and majority/minority (11). These are negotiated particularly when one analyses representations of childhood sexuality. The Child with the capital C, for example, is a product of normative language, since it implies that “normal” children are always devoid of any sexual pleasure. The official narrative of the Child requires that when the child comes into contact with intergenerational relationships which are sexual by nature the result is always traumatic. In my thesis I want to identify this presumed center, the dominant narrative of childhood and show how it is linked to heteronormative discourse in general.

The dialectic of center and margins was pronounced in *Epistemology of The Closet*. Sedgwick made the claim that sex and the distinction between homo -and heterosexual desires is not an ontological issue; it is not concerned with what is in the world but with *how* we know things about the world (1-2). In this way Sedgwick's thinking had reverberations of Butler's formulations; Butler has argued that sex is not an essential attribute, not what one *is* but what one *does*. A central question for queer theory was how we become subjects, e.g., how the inscription "woman" for example, is imprinted on us and how it is linked with the issues of gender and power. Butler and Sedgwick have shown that power was not easily identifiable as patriarchal domination, for example. By contrast, we as subjects are implicated in the reproduction of power by certain repetitive linguistic patterns and speech acts. Thus the cultural construction of sexuality is not a marginal issue. Heather Love has evaluated the importance of Sedgwick for the general study of culture:

Sedgwick built on the work of feminists who had made links between gender and apparently unrelated aspects of culture (such as the distinction between private and public, or between nature and culture). By seeing the homo-heterosexual divide as central to questions of representation, Sedgwick was able to make a similar claim, arguing that general cultural oppositions like health/illness, innocence/initiation and natural/ artificial were deeply bound up with questions of sexual definition. (310)

My thesis is particularly concerned with Sedgwick's ideas about knowledge. In Sedgwick's analysis ignorance is the necessary counterpart of knowledge and both are played out in contemporary debates revolving upon marginal sexualities. Sedgwick has questioned the naïve

assumption that a political battle is always about a fight against ignorance, that if we manage to inform our oppressors everything turns out just fine (7). For Sedgwick there is a whole host of ignorances: ignorance is not a monolithic category but also a political mask that may help a person to justify his or her homophobia for example. In this way ignorance is also put into a political use, particularly when one discusses childhood and sexuality.

When queer theory emerged in the 1990s it was influenced by feminist theories that wanted to defy the essentialist notions of identity politics. There was no consensus whether sex was to be regarded as a primitive category that determined our identity or whether it too was subjected to same cultural power as gender. According to Judith Butler, sex was not nature, but a product of the same field of power that upheld that category (xxx). In this way *nature* was seen as a ploy that prevented a genuine analysis of identity formation in society (7). The name of the theory itself appropriated the common quip of spoken language as if to show how identity was a product; it was generated by repetitive use of language. In Butler's view the insult "queer" is a way in which the boundaries between normal and strange are constructed through repeated verbal acts. The utterance, according to Butler derives its force from its ability to create an "imaginary chorus" that speaks in unison over time (qtd. in Culler, 104).

In my thesis the cultural logic revealed by Sedgwick and Butler proves useful when we try to grasp the meaning of childhood and sexuality in our society. The erotic child is a cultural construct that necessitates a certain kind of response. The possibility of desire in children reflects the reactions which are generated when adults are faced with deviant sexualities. Moreover, the concept of childhood is produced in our society through certain repeated gestures that may be illustrated by queer theory and its ideas concerning gender and

performance. One of the central binaries in contemporary culture that, according to Sedgwick, owes its significance to the homo-and heterosexual divide is that of sentimentality and sincerity (114). In the following section I want to look at more closely how this dyad may also be linked with the questions of authenticity and cultural value.

2.2. Bad Taste, Kitsch and Sentimentality: The Question of Authenticity

The reader of the misery narrative is often aware of the low cultural status of the stories he or she is consuming. In this section I will offer an overview of different, often conflicting approaches to sentimental art. My argument is that the way in which the reader values narratives of sexual abuse of children is essentially a question of aesthetics rather than ethics. On the one hand, the question of how authentic such a narrative of childhood trauma may be depends on the reader's frame of preference concerning the validity of sentiments in regard to problems of representation. For some readers, a sign of genuine art is its capability to evoke emotions and allow the reader to feel sympathy, as I will show in this section. On the other hand, readers who regard emotions in art as a sign of cheapness and the distortion of the real may also criticize misery narratives of such misrepresentation. In this way, I will argue that the question of authenticity is a matter of opinion and preference; it is closely linked with the issue of the apparent incompatibility of emotions and representation.

Rothe's derogatory concept "trauma kitsch" is an illustration of this polemic (88). The term kitsch itself originates from nineteenth century (Solomon, 4). One of the suggested etymologies of kitsch according in Solomon's view is German for "playing with mud"

(Solomon, 4). Thus the negative connotations of dirtiness are brought to the realm of aesthetics. A person who enjoys bad art becomes dirty; he or she is playing with mud (4). Solomon suggests that the dirtiness of kitsch has to do with the role that emotions play in it. Kitsch is considered immoral because it is sentimental: a person involved with kitsch not simply shows poor taste but becomes morally suspect (Solomon, 4).

The concept of good taste depends on shared agreement about its standards (Solomon, 5). It is not as clear however, what are the standards for bad taste. Solomon devises the following suggestions: a) kitsch or bad art is mechanical, it operates by formulas b) kitsch is a form of dishonesty and false emotion c) It is cheap and superficial d) kitsch is manipulative f) kitsch distorts our perceptions and interferes with rational thought (4-5). The genre of misery narratives may be regarded as overly sentimental, and the reader is accused of being dirtied by soft emotions. The covers of the books are beset with images of saucer-eyed little children. In this way it is useful to acknowledge and outline the basic tenets of sentimentality. I am following Robert C. Solomon's description of history of sentimental art here. In the past, Solomon argues, if a work was capable of generating disgust it was considered bad (5). Nowadays it is customary to hold in high esteem works that cause nausea and revulsion. Hence, according to Solomon, while there is a deep seated suspicion towards soft-heartedness in contemporary culture, not all art that makes an investment to emotions is regarded inferior (2). A case in point is Wordsworth, who wrote his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802, and had a conviction that literature was meant to evoke the "universal passions of men" and that good art was associated with the "sympathies of men" (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 290). The "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions" (291) that characterized his poetical project had a specific aim: to illustrate to the reader that sentimentality is not necessarily vulgar, but

rather, a quality that functions as a mark of refined humanity (291). Wordsworth distinguished between the popular literature of his own time and the poetical works of his own make that attempted to counterbalance the apparently frenzied nature of contemporary fiction (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 294). Among his examples of the latter type Wordsworth listed “frantic novels and sickly and stupid German Tragedies” (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 294). For Wordsworth, the literature of the day reflected the conditions of modern life; life in the cities was conducive to mental apathy and passiveness. As modern men were forced to live in mechanical conditions that blunted their natural sensitivity to human emotions, there appeared a type of popular fiction that wanted to enliven and stimulate modern readers. “Thirst for outrageous stimulation” (295) was the evil of the day, and Wordsworth believed in the possibility of reclaiming the sensibilities of the modern reader with the help of his poetry.

This issue has to do with the implicit assumption that emotions in art and culture themselves have an ethical importance. Wordsworth has stated quite explicitly that the sentimental objects of his poetry were meant to “ameliorate the affections” of his readers (292). Since Wordsworth’s days, the sentimental project has gained negative connotations. In Solomon’s view, sentimentality in contemporary society stands for “superficiality, saccharine sweetness and manipulation of mawkish emotion” (4). Moreover, it is characterized by cheapness as it is mass-produced and implies a lack of cultivated taste. Yet, Solomon argues that sentimental art is always attacked by cultural snobs who are willing to denounce the bad taste of the multitudes:

Much of the literature attacking kitsch is political rather than aesthetic, though ironically, much of it comes from Marxists and their kin, who despise the mass

marketing origins of kitsch at the same time that they would defend the people who are most likely to purchase such objects. (3)

For Solomon there is an *ethical dimension* to sentimental art that deals with those aspects of our social environment that we find unacceptable (4). Solomon's list includes "provocation of the improper and cruelty" (1) for instance. For the disgusting dimension of bad art Solomon has reserved the expression "bitter kitsch" (2). This category, which is reminiscent of Rothe's *trauma kitsch* (88) suggests that sentimentality is not limited to soft emotions. There is a whole branch of sentimental culture that thrives on cruelty. I think this insight is useful for my analysis of misery literature. It also shows that sentimentality in culture is a contested area. Solomon, for instance, is keen to champion soft aspects of kitsch that allow us feel "cuddly" towards little children (6). "Why should the unsubtle evocation of tenderness be ethically blameworthy?" he asks (6). An answer is provided by Rothe, who is quick to condemn *mis lit* as "deeply unethical" (93). Rothe's objection is based on her idea of a naïve or gullible audience that eagerly responds with sympathy to the representations of atrocities. According to Rothe, misery literature is unethical since the publishing industry cashes in on the audience's appetite for "quasi-pornographic" depictions of atrocities (93). Thus Rothe seems to argue that readers themselves are a bit like children, easily duped and manipulated emotionally. As Solomon points out, kitsch is easily used for propaganda purposes, and it may displace more urgent and genuine political aims (7). At this point it will be useful to look at why critics have responded with suspicion to sentimental art that attempts to tug our heartstrings.

The possible association of sentimentality with self-deception and falsity is explicitly addressed by Mary Midgley in her article “Brutality and Sentimentality”. For Midgley, an object, a child for example, is not necessarily sentimental in itself (385). Midgley suggests that our willingness to indulge in our feelings is a necessary prerequisite of all sentimental art. “Being sentimental is misrepresenting the world in order to indulge in our feelings” she claims (385). Hence our attempts to label some works of art as sentimental as such are misguided. We have decided beforehand that we want to be *indulged in emotions*. For Midgley sentimentality stands for distortion of reality (385) and the sentimental enjoyment of literature renders one incapable of experiencing real compassion (385). Thus it seems that sentimental art is not capable of making us receptive to finer emotions in actual situations as Wordsworth would suggest. Rather, it blunts our capability to express genuine affection towards fellow creatures. Thus feeling compassionate for orphan girls in a sentimental story may make us insensitive to the real sufferings of such girls. (Midgley, 386).

Midgley’s argument is carried to its logical conclusion by Mark Jefferson. In his analysis sentimentality acquires sinister implications. Firstly, Jefferson mentions that there might be a “baffling discordance” in the manner in which certain people display their emotions (523). According to Jefferson, it is not uncommon that a person, capable of waxing sentimental about an art object, displays exceptional crudeness in his or her interpersonal relationships. According to Jefferson “the qualities that sentimentality imposes on its objects are qualities of innocence” (527). But the necessary counterpart of this unambiguous sentimental investment in innocent objects is a similar investment in objects of hatred.

In Jefferson's view, sentimental investment in objects plays a central part in the formation of bigoted reactions in contemporary society (528). Thus paintings of wide-eyed children and saccharine religious art can be used as ploys in generating hostile emotions towards certain members of a society. Jefferson illustrates this with an episode from E.M. Forster's *Passage to India*: the racial prejudice towards the Indian character in the novel is predicated on the alleged rape of an innocent lady. Jefferson stresses that the rape allegation simultaneously activates two kinds of emotions (520). On the one hand, the sentimental craving towards innocence is clad in the form of injustice perpetrated on the female victim, on the other hand, there is the outrage, hatred towards the perpetrator (520). Jefferson's reading of this emotional situation implies that innocence is a major trope in politics and used as a means to justify unjust treatment of the others. Similar tensions characterize our responses to narratives of childhood trauma. We as readers are often imposing the roles of the victim and victimizer in order to indulge in the passions of desire and disgust.

Judging from the contemporary debates surrounding childhood, it is indeed a topic characterized by overflow of powerful emotions. According to Lee Edelman, sentimental investment in childhood is an important aspect of contemporary politics (10-11). In his book, *No Future: Queer Theory and The Death Drive* Edelman claims that the Child with a capital C is not referring to any particular historical character but it is an embodiment of the heteronormative ideology (3). This fiction of innocence reconstructs the way in which we experience temporality, as it places the Child in the cultural center. According to Edelman, the ideology of the Child is important aspect of "reproductive futurity" (2). As this ideologically impinged narrative foregrounds a future which belongs to children, the idea implies that certain aspects of society are marginalized as others. This project is shared in both the liberal

and conservative ends of the political spectrum; in its appropriation of ostensibly apolitical aspects of culture, it becomes increasingly difficult to formulate a queer resistance to this ideology which seems so unproblematic and natural. According to Edelman, the demand to fight for our children is political precisely because it is so difficult to resist in political terms (14).

Hence, in the age of the Child, it is sentimentality and children together that construct the grand narrative of futurity. The basic tenet of this narrative is its *simplicity*. The ostensible artlessness of stories about children masks effectively the heteronormative ideology of such narratives. The investment in future in these stories signifies that whatever deviations from the norm these children might perform during the story, *in the end* they will eventually become normal adults. In the third section of my thesis I will discuss the importance of such narrative closure in *Ghost Girl*. I want to stress, however, that the name of Hayden's book might as well be *Queer Girl*. Hayden's narrative ending is paradigmatic: it undermines the queer nature of the child by suggesting that her ghostliness is a thing of the past. What the future holds for her is a life devoid of these uncanny visitations. At the same time the ending suggests, to use Edelman's formulation, that "there are no queers in that future, as there can be no future for queers" (38).

However, as a contrast to Edelman's argument that queerness and childhood are mutually exclusive concepts Kathryn Bond Stockton suggests that a child can indeed be represented as a queer, presuming that he or she is also abused (298). For Bond Stockton abuse is indeed the trope that allows queerness i.e., non-normative character traits to be incorporated into the image of the child:

In the 1990s there are historically specific echoes of this problem. Experience is still hard to square with innocence, making depictions of streetwise children (who are often neither white nor middle-class) hard to square with “children”. The ingenious solution to this problem (of children lacking the privilege of both weakness and innocence) is to endow these children with abuse. For as odd as it may seem, suffering certain kinds of abuse, from which they need protection and to which they don’t consent, working-class children or children of color may come to seem more “innocent”. (298)

Thus, for Bond Stockton the innocent child is a politically charged symbol and reification of a certain middle-class view of reality. This image is represented as a norm to the exclusion of other, racially and socially less privileged forms of childhood. This performance of normalcy is important since it necessitates and calls for our protection. By contrast, if the child is strong and knowledgeable, particularly in issues of sexuality, she becomes a threat to the normative middle-class values in society. In my reading this scenario is particularly prominent in *Ghost Girl* where the middle-class values are represented by the child psychologist whose task it is, according to the title of the book to save the girl. The Gothicized girl in *Ghost Girl* is not weak and innocent, but rather strong and manipulative, a source of potential danger, as my analysis will demonstrate. Thus, my analysis suggests that the middle-class narrator of *Ghost Girl* is not simply trying to rescue the girl; she is also attempting to preserve the privileged nature of her class that has apparently come under threat by the figure of the pedophile which is largely absent from the narrative proper. Moreover, the story suggests that this threat may be perpetrated by the child herself. But as my analysis will show, the narrative is remarkably

ambiguous about the real nature of the abuse. By placing the actuality of the abuse to the background the narrative chooses to focus on the middle-class problem of “squaring innocence with experience” (Bond Stockton, 298).

2.3. “This was real life, and I couldn’t get out of it”: Generic Ambiguity in *Ghost Girl*

In this section I want to suggest that the generic label *memoir* brandished in the cover of *Ghost Girl* is inherently problematic. According to its cover, *Ghost Girl* purports to be a “true story”. It is not in my interests, however, to question the authenticity of *Ghost Girl* or the autobiographical project of the author, rather to show how the story illustrates a paradoxical mixture of various generic components. In my view, the truth about genre in case of *Ghost Girl* is not simple as it may seem. This is because genre itself is a contested issue. Rather than suggesting that genres are static tools for pigeonholing textual objects, in this thesis it is assumed that it is possible to make sense of the fluidity of genre. On the one hand, the term genre and its interchangeability with such concepts as kind and type (*Princeton Encyclopedia*, 99) suggests that *genre* is etymologically affiliated with the biological concept of *genus*. The dictionary definition for genus is the following: “a group that includes all living things that have similar features” (*MacMillan English Dictionary*, 592). Arguably, the term genre owes some of its potency to its closeness to such general classificatory concepts as gender, race and generation. Moreover, genre often chimes with genetic. Hence, there is an underlying assumption that genre analysis is analogous with biological categorization and with the production of such seemingly unambiguous ranks as vertebrates and invertebrates: certain family resemblances and genetic associations link the types together.

On the other hand, categorical tensions between the literal and the real are reminiscent of the paradox outlined by Winifred Hughes in her discussion of nineteenth-century sensationalist novels (13). Such paradoxes are also discussed by Freud in “The Uncanny,” which I will return to in the third section. *Ghost Girl* belongs to the class of intertextuality that might be termed *inferred* (Pope, 236). There are no specific references in the text that refer to the original. It is the task of the reader to demonstrate these ghostly connections. In my thesis the generic paradox deals with the inconsistency between *Ghost Girl*'s purported factuality on the one hand and its literary elements on the other. As my analysis will suggest, the storyline of *Ghost Girl* re-enacts the narrative formula encountered in *The Turn of the Screw*. Thus my argument is that a dynamic (as opposed to static) view of genre is required to acknowledge the importance of *Ghost Girl*. Moreover, I want to go further than that and claim that genres and their dynamism have to do with the way in which we know about things in the real world. As Jonathan Culler has suggested we owe our actual romantic experiences to romantic literature, without it we would not know what it is to be in love in the first place:

Literary works bring into being ideas, concepts which they deploy. La Rochefoucauld claims that no one would have ever thought of being in love if they hadn't read about in books, and the notion of romantic love (and its centrality to the lives of the individuals) is arguably a massive literary creation.

(96)

Consequently, in this thesis genre is regarded as intrinsic, not only to how we read and write, but to how we know things in general. A perceived object in the actual world derives its form

and shape through this connection with the (generic) knowledge of the perceiver. The object becomes what it is through this contact, and during the process it becomes difficult to judge which party of the relationship has the power to determine the meaning. This model is partly indebted to Bakhtin's and Volosinov's theory of meaning and to the concept of *becoming*. Meaning in culture is characterized by a process of becoming, it is discovered and attained "in the absolute future" (Roberts, 246). In my view, the implication of this is that an object of study, a book for example is characterized by a certain generic openness. As a contrast to this dynamic approach to genre, Jonathan Culler argues that there is a tendency in cultural studies to regard genres as a priori concepts which are not considered as resulting from such dialectical relationships as I have outlined above (50). Such a reading of a genre implies that individual works of a given genre, such as "misery memoir" are not worthy of study in themselves. In such thinking generic classification means that works are regarded as symptoms of social totality that lies outside the text. In Culler's view such "symptomatic reading" has a tendency to overlook such practices of literary scholarship as close reading of texts, since it is the task of the critic to show how the text becomes an expression of socio-political configuration. As Culler puts it:

This [...] involves a shift from reading ('close reading') that is alert to the details of narrative structure and attends to the complexities of meaning, to the socio-political analysis, in which all the serials of a given era have the same significance, as expressions of social configuration. If literary studies are subsumed to cultural studies, this sort of "symptomatic reading" might become the norm; the specificity of cultural objects might be neglected along with the reading practices which literature invites. (51)

In my thesis I have used Rothe's analysis of misery memoirs as an example of such symptomatic reading. In my view, Rothe's analysis of genre is flawed, partly, because it does not attend to the specifics of misery narratives, i.e., to the poetics of these narratives and the way in which they achieve their specific effects in the reader. Moreover, such analysis neglects the complexities of genre. In Rothe's analysis the label 'misery memoir' is used as shorthand for books that all have the same significance: they are symptoms of popular trauma culture. There is the underlying assumption in her view that mass culture is characterized by ideological imposition or *interpellation* (Culler, 45). The concept of interpellation, coined by Marxist critic Louis Althusser, means that the audience is unknowingly manipulated by cultural forces (Culler, 45). For instance, the addressee of the misery memoir occupies a subject position which in Rothe's view is inauthentic, regardless of the fact that readers themselves regard these stories as expressions of authenticity. Hence, as a preparation of my subsequent close reading of *Ghost Girl* I want to look at two different dynamic approaches to genre that have influenced me during this study.

Firstly, this study is informed by the notion that genres are not stable categories. They allow us to identify certain repetitive patterns in the textual objects we perceive. I am influenced here by Derrida's essay "The Law of The Genre" where he suggests that our inclination to regard genres as pure and to guard them against pollution betrays the possibility that the truth about genres is that they are always already mixed (58). There is a sense in which both genre and gender lack essential attributes. Rather, they become what they are through certain *repetitive*, constitutive acts. Both genre and gender are difficult to separate from the social interaction that partakes in their generation. Each individual speech act that generates a normative

category for the individual may be aligned with a literary text that contributes to the definition of a specific genre. For Derrida, genre operates like a floodgate. This floodgate, as it is, contains the text and makes it possible:

Without it, neither genre nor literature come to light, but as soon as there is this blinking of an eye this clause or this floodgate of genre, the very moment that a genre or a literature is broached, at that very moment degenerescence has begun, the end begins. (66)

In Derrida's thinking paratextual markers of a genre are not to be relied on, since these explicit markers can be mendacious and, more importantly, since genres are inherently mixed (64). One's willingness to stress the purity of the genre is in itself misguided. The essential purity of genre identity is liable to deconstructive contestation (57). The result of this deconstructive analysis is that the law of generic purity betrays a concept internal to it, that of generic contamination (57). In this way the axiomatic speech act "genres are not to be mixed" (55) is a kind of compulsive re-enactment of purity that does not reflect the actual situation but rather reveals its opposite as well as the biased nature of genre analysis.

Secondly, in my analysis I am also indebted to Marxist criticism and the way in which it stresses the dialogical nature of the genre. Volosinov writes that:

Any human verbal utterance is an ideological construction in the small. The motivation of one's behavior is juridical and moral creativity on a small scale; an exclamation of joy or grief is a primitive lyric composition; pragmatic

considerations of the causes and consequences of happenings are germinal forms of scientific and philosophical cognition and so on and so forth. (45)

It belongs to the nature of this dialogic system that the higher forms are derived or crystallized from this unofficial literal activity. But once they are formed, they also start to affect our understanding of the more literal forms in question. In this way genres are elemental in their world making abilities, as they affect the way in which we produce texts. There is a sense in which one's understanding of society is always mediated by a certain framework or genre. The tendency to police genres may be due to the critical inability to acknowledge the performative nature of any given genre. If one considers genres as consisting of certain textual practices or stylistic features, it is the task of the critic to demonstrate whether a given text fits to a preconceived generic category. Such an approach to genre simply tries to show whether a given text fails or succeeds in fulfilling a set of generic norms.

However, a more social understanding of genre sees it as a system that is not limited to certain textual features. Critics such as Bakhtin have argued that genres resemble cognitive frameworks that help us make sense of the world (174). In his essay "Genres as Ideological Forms" Bakhtin stresses that genres are not seen as purely literary formations: there is a sense in which one's everyday utterances can be regarded as genres (175). Thus a person may possess a number of genres that allow him or her to make sense of a given text. These individual frames are never stable and they are not formed in isolation. Such a dialogic system of genres signifies that reading is always based on genres; one may acquire more genres and thus grow competent in reading one's social environment.

Thus genres are not regarded as ready-made boxes in which we place a textual object. Rather, they are essential features of human interaction. Genre is not a property of either reader or the text; it is a relationship that reflects the overall ideological atmosphere of a given society. In this sense, the genres used by an individual are not his or hers, strictly speaking, but they are projections of hierarchical relationships in society and the way in which society is organized. Yet these relationships also reflect back onto the individual so that in the end it becomes more and more difficult to separate the individual from the societal. In his critique of the subjectivist ethos of psychology in general and Freud's thinking in particular, Volosinov has claimed that it is the task of the official ideology to relegate certain genres of one's cognitive apparatus to the domain that is ostensibly outside the social (46). The narrative that is thus built is based on the assumption that there is an unofficial sphere, that of an individual or the unconscious, that reflects hidden motives in one's psyche. In other words, it is the task of the member of the medical profession to reassemble the fragments into a coherent narrative. The genre of *the case history* is thus based on this hierarchical relationship between the patient and the doctor. According to Volosinov:

A patient wishes to hide from the doctor certain of his experiences and certain events of his life. He wants to foist on the doctor his own point of view on the reason of his illness and the nature of his experiences. The doctor, for his part, aims at enforcing his authority as a doctor, endeavors to wrest confessions from his patient and compel him to take the "correct" point of view on his illness and its symptoms. (41)

In Volosinov's view, the narrative that takes its shape substitutes objective human relations for anonymous psychic forces as determining factors of the narrative (41). This means that the real interaction between the patient and the doctor and the tensions inherent in this relationship are made redundant. However, Volosinov argues that verbal utterance of the patient is not a reflection of his or her psyche: rather, it reflects that very social situation that has engendered it (42). Volosinov's central concern is the division that follows, the breaking up of social interaction into the official and unofficial spheres. Ultimately the whole premise of subjective psychology is based on the fact that certain aspects of discourse are regarded as unofficial. Examples of such genres for Volosinov include dream, myth, witticism, and the joke. These everyday genres reflect those societal tensions that take their shape in the immediate social environment including the hierarchical relationship between the patient and the doctor.

However, there is a problem when these everyday genres are not allowed to enter the official domain of discourse. Volosinov argues that there is a discrepancy between the two genres, the official conscious and the unofficial conscious. The result is that the gap between the two discourses gradually expands as certain utterances are censored. Simultaneously, the official discourse becomes the norm whereas unofficial speech is labeled as deviant. Ultimately the distinction between conscious and unconscious motives in the person's mind is a reflection of the distribution of power and wealth in the surrounding society. Moreover, they dictate how the categories of normal and the queer are perceived. As Volosinov puts it:

In a healthy community and in a socially healthy personality, behavioral ideology, founded on the socioeconomic basis is strong and sound – here there is no discrepancy between the official and unofficial conscious. (46)

In Volosinov's view the whole genre of the case study and the drama inherent in it reflects those historical tensions that took place a hundred years ago in European societies. Because the bourgeois family was going through crisis and its status as a norm had started to disintegrate and become more and more idealized, there was a need to make the family look more exciting. This took place by emphasizing the determining role of sexual, not social forces in its formation. Arguably, in this way childhood and family were given a narrative emphasis that foregrounded it as a domain of raw natural forces. Thus the meaningfulness of Freud's theories was premised on the apparent loss of significance in certain social institutions.

According to Volosinov, "sexuality had become the superior criterion for reality" (48). The result was that Freud managed to create a new genre of childhood and the family. This narrative stressed elemental forces or drives that were in charge of our behavior. It shared with the Gothic mode curiosity towards the awful demise of innocence. Moreover, both were curious to make the everyday experience look strange. In the following sections I will look more closely how Freud's narrative of childhood made children look strange or queer. At this point I want to bear in mind Volosinov's distinction between official and unofficial genres in society. Firstly, I think it is useful to acknowledge the official genre of *Ghost Girl*, the memoir. Secondly, there are various other genres lurking in the text. These genres may be called unofficial. The nature of these genres is that they are never mentioned explicitly. One possible candidate for such implicit genre is the psychological case history as I have suggested above.

Rothe's analysis suggest that contemporary memoirs, such as *Ghost Girl* arguably reify a view of things that is more personal, based on the first person view of things. However, my analysis of genre will show that the distinction between public and private is itself a product of an ideology. In my view of genre I am indebted to Marxist critics such as Volosinov and Bakhtin who claim that genres are not dividable along the subjective – objective axis, rather, they are always reflections of a particular, historical situations in a given society (Volosinov, 46). In this way, Rothe's observations of "paroxysms of personal exposure" (87) in relation to narratives of trauma become problematic. In Volosinov's and Bakhtin's view, the category of the personal is assumed to be identical with the category of the social. Ideally these two categories are not in conflict since all man's private concerns find their expression in the official, public discourse. However, if there appears a discrepancy between the two modes of interaction, and the verbal expressions of a person are relegated to the category of the unofficial, this may be a sign of crisis in a society. As Volosinov puts it:

The wider and deeper the breach between the official and the unofficial conscious, the more difficult it becomes for motives of inner speech to turn into outward speech (oral or written or printed, in a circumscribed or broad social milieu) wherein they might acquire formulation, clarity and rigor. Motives under these conditions begin to fail, to lose their verbal countenance, and little by little turn into a foreign body in the psyche. Whole sets of organic manifestations come in this way excluded from the zone of verbalized behavior and may become asocial. Thereby the sphere of 'animalian' in man enlarges. (46)

Thus there appears a blind spot in critical analysis that fails to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the inner and outward modes of representation. Volosinov suggests that when the realm of subjective is relegated to the margin and treated as an expression of a person's psyche, people become alienated: they fail to see the link between the self and the other, between private and public concerns. In this section I have offered an overview of the problematic nature of the genre. I have done this as a preparation for the following chapters of this thesis where *Ghost Girl* is analyzed more thoroughly. My concern of the genre of *Ghost Girl* is defined by aesthetics, instead of ethics. By ethical approach to memoirs I refer to the common anxiety among critics to address the authenticity of such narratives. Anne Rothe for example, argues that in the era of "victim talk" memoirs defy our "common sense notions of probability" in terms of genre (86). In Rothe's view the memoir is regarded, often on false premises, as a more authentic genre because it claims to offer immediate access to personal suffering (86). In my view the problem of this ontological approach is a fundamental one. It has to do with the way in which we understand the relationship between real and literary meanings in the first place.

Thus in this section I have argued that reality is always in some sense a matter of subjective concerns, or of what Rob Pope calls "frame of preferences" (217). Secondly, I argue that what we prefer to value as real also affects the way we respond to genres. Hence, the common - sense approach to reality is often accompanied by the notion that a realistic genre must always correspond to the reality it is depicting. To counterbalance this axiomatic approach to genre I want to offer a more permissive approach where it is acknowledged that genres can be mixed. I also want to challenge the notion that some genres are more objective than others. I will offer a social theory of genre that claims that traumatic first person narratives – such as *Ghost Girl* –

are not necessarily symptoms of personal exhibitionism in the cultural climate of “over-the-top-revelation” where private becomes public to a “startling degree” (Rothe,87). Rather, my analysis suggests that when the distinction between private and public forms of discourse becomes a pronounced one there is the danger that certain individual expressions are treated as idiosyncratic, as if they were formed independently in the psyche of the individual. Against this asocial and psychological reading of traumatic narratives I offer a view of genre that is essentially a dialogic one. Thus genres, regardless of how personal they may be, are never expressions of an individual psyche; rather, they are always reducible to the social and material conditions of a society that has produced them.

It is important to acknowledge that even realistic genres such as autobiography and memoir have particular conventions. In her discussion of poetics of postmodern fiction Linda Hutcheon outlines the function of truth and falsity in regard to various narrative genres, such as history and novel (105-109). Hutcheon’s analysis suggests that history and fiction are porous genres: they are not distinguished from each other by certain given textual qualities but rather by their reader’s conceptual frames of reference (110). These presupposed extra-textual values determine whether one regards a given genre as more or less authentic. The word reality itself is derived from Latin *res*, meaning *thing* (Pope, 217). Hence a certain genre necessarily entails a particular view of things, of what it encourages to acknowledge as real (Pope, 217). Thus to reify is to prefer some views of things to the exclusion of others (Pope, 217).

Ghost Girl, as I will show in my analysis, is eager to flaunt its own status as factual writing. My thesis will suggest, however, that *Ghost Girl* is also something else: a hybrid text that

questions the fundamental division between fact and fiction. Yet, I do not want to argue, that *Ghost Girl* is an example of a self-consciously postmodern text. *Ghost Girl* is not necessarily consciously making fun with our generic expectations. It is not a non-fiction example or a mirror image of postmodern *metafiction* that strives to lay bare the joins between fact and fiction. Rather, I would argue that the generic fluidity of *Ghost Girl* is a result of its belonging to several genres. *Ghost Girl* takes part in the construction of social reality by stressing its supposedly faithful view of reality. The paradox mentioned by Hughes above, I would suggest, derives from our preconceived ideas concerning reality. As Pope has argued, our view or reality is always a result of selection of what we value as real (217). One's frame of preference concerning reality is predicated upon exclusion of certain other categories of writing as unreal.

According to Anne Rothe, autobiographical narratives such as *Ghost Girl* are valued in contemporary culture over fictional ones (84-89). This is because first person accounts of traumatic events are regarded as more authentic when compared to their fictive counterparts (85). Rothe argues that memoirs exemplify popular culture's backlash to the literary and generic ambiguities of postmodern fiction (85). Moreover, it is not clear whether such ambiguity is simply limited to postmodern narratives. The foregrounding of the factuality of a narrative genre is almost always problematic. The novel, as Linda Hutcheon has argued, is historically difficult to separate from such factual modes of writing as the traveller's tale and sociology. In its inception the novel wanted to make claims to veracity by pretending that it was not made but simply existed (107). Hutcheon's examples include Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. However, such a list of purportedly true stories also includes the first Gothic

novel *The Castle of Otranto*. In the preface the author claims that he is simply presenting a historical document, a manuscript that dates back to the time of the crusades (39).

According to Hutcheon, the reader of such generically ambiguous stories derives a double pleasure from “both fictiveness and basis on the real” (107). Hutcheon argues that postmodern fiction which foregrounds the paradox of historical/fictive representation (106) – historiographic metafiction – is comparable to early novels that cashed in on this double awareness. I would like to suggest that such ambiguity is not limited to the examples mentioned by Hutcheon. One of the main strands of argument in this thesis is a deconstructive one. Following what Sedgwick has written about instability of symmetrical binary relations (9-10), I would like to argue that the paradox of genre only presents itself if one assumes a clear-cut symmetry between such terms as fiction and non-fiction, for example. As Sedgwick writes, the term B of any conceptual relation is always subordinated to the term A: A is always ontologically valorized (10). Sedgwick’s deconstructive understanding of these binarisms leads to a paradox: the privileged term and the dependent term are instable since the latter is always “at once internal and external to term A” (10).

To understand the ontological valorization inherent in such normative definitions we may think about the primacy of the genre of historiographic metafiction in Hutcheon’s analysis. This genre is presented as presumably ethically more sound than the historical novel where “real figures of the past are deployed to authenticate the fictional world [...] as if to hide the joins between fiction and history” (114). In Hutcheon’s view, postmodern fiction is appreciated because it is inherently paradoxical (120) and because of its refusal of the “closure and telos which narrative usually demands” (121). Similar valorization appears in Anne

Rothe's analysis of contemporary narratives of personal suffering, misery memoirs (87). Rothe regards them as inferior to fiction on an ethical basis. Memoirs of personal suffering make claims of immediacy and authenticity which they fail to validate. Because fiction does not establish "referential relations with reality" it is not bound by "rules of evidence" like autobiographical mode of writing (85). The unreliability of the autobiographical pact (85) paradoxically, leads to a situation where the truth of the non-fiction narrative is made suspect. In this way Rothe's diatribe against unethical accounts of personal pain resembles Sir Philip Sidney's claim that fiction is more authentic because its truth is independent of external reality.

2.4. The Child Queered by Freud

The above sections of my thesis have not explicitly stated what renders Freud's portrayal of childhood specifically Gothic, as it could be argued that modern psychology and fantastic literature are a far cry from each other. However, in this section I will offer an overview of how the two modes of storytelling might converge. This generic intersection characterizes also my approach to *Ghost Girl*. The pleasure of reading Hayden's memoir is uncanny because it is characterized by a generic combination that is both fictive and has a basis on the real (Huthceon, 107). In the next section I will discuss the role of Freud's influential essay "The Uncanny" in relation to the re-evaluation of the categories of fiction and the real. In this section I will show Freud's central role in the emergence of discourse about strange children.

According to David Blair, the literary Gothic dates back to 1764 when Horace Walpole wrote his novel *The Castle of Otranto* (viii), a story set in a distant pre-modern Catholic past. But

essentially the story is a reconstruction since it is an interpretation of the past from the point of view of the present. It is a projection that establishes an image of the past that is different from the present: not a golden age of virtue and mild manners, but rather a construct that stresses the intensity of affect, primal emotions and archetypal stories and myths. In the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* the author fabricated a story of a found manuscript, which in his view would presumably make the story more immune for criticism. Moreover, Walpole contrasts the manners of his fictional characters with the present society:

Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams and other preternatural events are now exploded even from romances. That was not the case when our author wrote; much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times who should omit all mention of them. He is not bound to believe in them himself, but he must present his actors as believing them. (40)

In this way the author justifies his portrayal of highly sensationalist fictions by assuming the role of a historiographer. He acknowledges that his characters are also naïve and unsophisticated; there is the assumption that prior to modern times people were brutal. The model of the self that Walpole projects into the past is conspicuously less democratic than the contemporary one. The impulses ousted from the contemporary society are celebrated in Walpole's fictional project of the past and include greediness, sadism, sexism, unequal power relationships, unjust treatment of others, and so on. In sum, Walpole purports to stage an image of a society that is, in Freudian terms, at an infantile stage of development.

It seems to me quite possible that all that to-day is narrated in analysis in the form of phantasy, – seduction in childhood, stimulation of sexual excitement upon observation of parental coitus, the threat of castration – was in the pre-historic periods of the human family a reality; and the child in its fantasy simply fills out the gaps in its true individual experiences with the true pre-historic experiences. (Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, 311)

In my reading the thrill of such an arrested vision of the society of the old is an important trope. It may be a campy enactment of the past but it is also closely allied with Freud's interpretation of the individual's past. As I have suggested above, Freud's formulation of the preconscious stages of development of the individual resembles Walpole's Gothic mock-historical projections. We may consider Freud's discussion of the role of sexuality in children. While he champions his thesis, at the same time he is concerned about his audience's reactions in a very much the same way that Walpole was about his. Freud's reservation reminds that of Walpole: while he creates a model of the self that is irrational and divided between the ego and the rational self he is aware that his project is a *reconstruction*. This reconstruction is done from the point of view of the present. Like the Gothic projection of Walpole, Freud's text sees the infantile stages of development as a source of Gothic pathologies:

In this way it has been found that all perverse tendencies have their roots in childhood that children are disposed towards them all and practice them all to a degree confirming their maturity; in short perverted sexuality is nothing else but infantile sexuality magnified and separated into its component parts. Now you

will see perversions in an altogether different light and no longer ignore their connection the sexual life of mankind: but what distressing emotions these astonishing and grotesque revelations will provoke in you! (*Introductory Lectures*, 261)

In addition to the importance of Oedipus complex and other pathological states, Freud strives to create a world that is naked and natural, stripped of vestments of culture. Like Walpole whose purported faithfulness to the manners of the Dark Ages justified his literary anachronisms, Freud states that he is merely revealing a truth about childhood (261). The truth is hidden, since it has sank into oblivion. It is Freud's task to reveal the prejudiced nature of the idea of asexual childhood and to contrast this idea with the purported animal nature of children (263). Furthermore, Freud is keen on stressing the emotional content of his narrative of childhood. His "grotesque revelations" and the effect they generate in the audience may be compared with Walpole's authorial intensions. For Walpole it is necessary to keep the audience in the state of protracted emotional disturbance:

Terror, the author's principal engine prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted with pity, that the mind is kept in constant vicissitude of interesting passions. (40)

Queer theory has paid attention to the remarkable achievement of Freud's theories: since their inception sexual and aggressive children have become literary and cinematic clichés. However, if normal children are regarded as perverts, does it mean that perversions are normal? Jonathan Dollimore has titled Freud's creation as *paradoxical perverse* (qtd. in Bond

Stockton, 159). Freud's formulation is particularly counterintuitive because it implies that our culture's disavowal of perversity is a contradiction in terms. It is not, however, clear whether Freud's theory of childhood sexuality could be used as a way of authorizing the demonization of the manifest perverts (Bond Stockton, 157). Bond Stockton's analysis reveals that there have been precocious and knowing children in Victorian fiction before Freud's formulations.

What is more obvious though is the impact of Freud's theory on the performance of the strange childhood. Bond Stockton has created a topology of queer children as they manifest (repeat) themselves in popular culture. Bond Stockton's list includes such features as

1) The child queered by Freud, 2) The ghostly gay child, 3) The grown homosexual, 4) The child queered by innocence (282-297).

For Bond Stockton children are always beyond the pale of normalcy. Childhood is particularly revealing because of its implicit narrative teleology; children are always in the process of becoming normal, they are "not -yet-straight", merely approaching the official destination of straight couplehood in the future (283). Pertinent to my analysis of *Ghost Girl* is the first category, the child as queered by Freud, recognizable the sexual child with aggressive wishes. Bond Stockton quotes as an example the 1961 film *Children's Hour* (dir. William Wyler). Like *Ghost Girl*, *Children's Hour* follows the governess and the orphan girl formula: it is set in school, the strangely knowing and sexual children make use of their purported innocence, and manage to unleash the rampant homophobia of the surrounding society by revealing their teacher's illicit same-sex relationship (Bond Stockton, 293) One of the teachers commits a suicide – The deaths of the former teachers characterize *Ghost Girl* and *The Turn of the Screw* respectively – and the diabolic children gain the upper hand (293). It is important that this

“homophobic collapse” where illegitimate desire is followed by death as discussed by Wagenknecht (445) is characteristic of many stories featuring evil children. Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, for example, ends with Miles’s premature death when the mistress tries to wring a confession out of him about his relationship with the ghost, Peter Quint. As we shall see later on this thesis, this potential denouement is also present in *Ghost Girl*.

The most common available contribution to the victim narrative is arguably the story of a child who has fallen prey to illicit adult desires. This story is characterized by disavowal of the possibility of pleasure in connection with childhood sexuality. Sara Ahmed, in her discussion of narratives of pain, implies that these narratives are a new kind of “commodification of victimhood” (3). Since in contemporary culture pain has become a media spectacle, we have to ask ourselves what kind of subject is exposed to pain and why? According to Ahmed, the form of suffering which is most often repeated is the one that can be most easily regarded as “our loss” (2). The answer to the question of why we read stories of pain and suffering may be that personal accounts of loss and pain are increasingly becoming signs of authenticity. Similarly, children are often used in politics and culture as tokens of authenticity of a given discourse.

In sum, this chapter has suggested that contemporary narratives of victimized children often betray what Bond Stockton has called “violence embedded in ideals” (312). I have argued that Freud’s impact in revising the notion of innocent childhood has been of supreme importance, particularly in respect to popular culture’s representations of aggressiveness in children. Moreover, it has been stated that the myth of the potentially dangerous child in Freud’s thinking also parallels the emergence of the Gothic child in such stories as Henry James’s *The*

Turn of the Screw. I have suggested that this is because Freud's understanding of the history of the individual is in some sense Gothic; like the Dark Ages of human kind, it is shrouded in mystery. I have noted that this sexually charged notion of childhood in modern culture is characterized by ambivalence, the child is both innocent and worldly, she becomes a Gothic conundrum that puzzles the reader. In the following section my task is to illustrate how these various ideas manifest themselves in *Ghost Girl*.

3. Analysis of *Ghost Girl*

So far I have argued that Freud's project was Gothic in one significant way; it managed to make childhood and family look strange. According to Russian formalists, *defamiliarisation* allows us to see everyday objects in a different light (Pope, 86). In section 3.1 I will, first, look at Freud's influential essay "The Uncanny" as a way to approach contemporary stories of troubled childhood, such as *Ghost Girl*. In chapter 3.2 I want to look at more closely how the uncanny sensations in *Ghost Girl* produce what could be called "knowledge effects," to use Eric Savoy's formulation (245). I will suggest that *Ghost Girl* is a literary double of Henry James's *Turn of The Screw*: they are both incest narratives that foreground epistemological uncertainty through particular rhetorical devices such as prosopopoeia and aposiopesis. Finally, in section 3.3 I will discuss the importance of narrative closure in *Ghost Girl*, and argue that the ending contradicts some of the queer readings suggested by the story. There is a sense in which sexuality in children is allowed to be discussed, only if there is evidence of danger of abuse. Thus, oddly enough, there is a sense in which the queer child is made to look more innocent when she is abused. When the threat of abuse disappears the child becomes normal. Hence, the ending of *Ghost Girl* also marks the end of the queer child.

3.1. *Ghost Girl* and "The Uncanny"

Freud's essay "The Uncanny" is important for my reading of *Ghost Girl* because it argues that certain primal experiences in childhood explain why we respond with anxiety to narratives. Freud's essay is also an important contribution to the Gothicized narratives of childhood. The

source of uncanny experiences is located in the past, in our childhood. The uncanny nature of psychoanalysis is stated explicitly in “The Uncanny”:

Indeed, I should not be surprised to hear that psychoanalysis, which concerned itself laying bare these hidden forces, has itself become uncanny for many people for that very reason. In one case, after I had succeeded — though none too rapidly — in effecting a cure which had lasted many years in a girl who had been an invalid, the patient’s own mother confessed to this attitude long after the girl’s recovery. (“The Uncanny,”92)

The nature of this type of involuntary return to infantile experience is sexual since the sense of dread while reading a story, for example is generated by a kind of involuntary return to earlier stages of sexual development (Freud, “The Uncanny,”90). Eventually, Freud’s essay is an inventory of those features in literature and real life to which we respond with apprehension. I would suggest that Freud’s essay is also useful when one starts to think about queer studies and the boundaries between the categories of the normal and the strange. Freud’s essay asserts that our experiences of the strange do not derive from those things that we are unfamiliar with: uncanny feelings are not necessarily generated by novel or unfamiliar situations (Freud, “The Uncanny,” 76). Moreover, Freud’s essay is concerned with fundamental binarisms in our thinking, such as voluntary/automatic, active/passive, and secrecy/disclosure.

In this way Freud seems to repeat in “The Uncanny” his earlier formulations concerning childhood sexuality. He maintains that all the sexual perversions derive from childhood and that perverse behavior is nothing else but a repetition of normal characteristics of infantile

sexuality (*Introductory Lectures*, 261). As a result, the binary between the normal and the perverse seems to be a double or a doppelgänger of the familiar/unfamiliar dyad, discussed in “The Uncanny.” Both formulations amount to a rhetorical paradox: when one is faced with uncanny sensations one is also faced with something familiar. Similarly, when one tries to come to terms with perversions, one has to return to normality. The argument presented by Freud is itself uncanny: there is a sense in which one always involuntarily returns to where one started, to a scene that is strangely familiar.

Queer theory has stressed the performative and repetitive nature of the production of sexual identities. There is a sense in which we, in Freud’s words, follow the principle of the repetition compulsion (Freud, “The Uncanny,” 88) when we perform sexuality. Freud stresses that anything that reminds us of this compulsion may be perceived as uncanny. In his discussion of the role of death drive in queer theory and its compulsive nature, Lee Edelman gothicizes queer resistance to dominant heteronarratives of normalcy. This is how Edelman characterizes this resistance:

Queer theory, it follows, would constitute the site where the radical threat posed by irony which heteronormative culture displaces onto the figure of the queer, is uncannily returned by queers who no longer disown but assume their figural identity as embodiments of the figuralization, and hence the disfiguration of identity itself. Where the political intervention of identitarian minorities – including those who seek to substantialize the identities of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals – may properly take shape as oppositional, affording the dominant order a reassuringly symmetrical, if inverted depiction of its of its own

ostensibly coherent identity, queer theory's opposition is precisely to any such logic of opposition, its proper task the ceaseless disappropriation of every propriety. (24)

In Edelman's thinking repetition thus becomes associated with a certain kind of narrative thrust that reflects those uncanny literary devices described by Freud in "The Uncanny." Edelman's urge to return the figure of the queer to the Symbolic order reflects the idea that reality and sexual identities are produced culturally by a power that insists that we perform those identities and suggests that identity is not possible outside this system of representation (26). However, one is able to respond to this compulsive urge to produce identities in a way that is uncanny because it is mechanical, i.e., it seems to lack the organic, purported naturalness of the dominant heteronarrative. The figure of the queer represents this mechanical and compulsive identity since it resists the dominant cultural production of figures precisely because it does not have a future.

Edelman's queer logic is uncanny because it suggests that we should not choose life, but rather choose death. This proposal is reminiscent of the living dolls discussed by Freud in "The Uncanny." Or rather, maybe Edelman's argument is uncanny since it suggests that we should respond to the production of identities with a mechanical gesture of automatism. In a discussion of Freud's essay, Bennett and Royle argue that automatism is an important aspect of the uncanny, because it renders human behavior mechanical (38). Examples of such mechanical behavior in human beings include epileptic fits, sleepwalking, and madness. For Freud, such behavior is uncanny since it suggests that "automatic, mechanical processes are at work" ("The Uncanny," 80). Freud begins "The Uncanny" by reviewing earlier writers who

have analyzed uncanny effects in literature. One such effect is ascribed to uncertainty: whether an object presented is lifeless or animate (“The Uncanny,” 80). The dead/alive binary can be utilized in at least two different ways: either an inanimate object may appear as animate, or an object which is living may appear as mechanical (“The Uncanny,” 80).

Edelman’s response to the production of identity figures reflects Freud’s formulations of the concept of the *double*. The logic of the double is uncanny, because it undermines the stability of identity. The living doll is uncanny, Freud concludes, because it mirrors the pre-linguistic state where the self is not yet differentiated from the external world and other persons (“The Uncanny,” 94). In a formulation of a later psychoanalytically inspired theorist, Jacques Lacan, this is the state of the Imaginary that is contrasted with the Symbolic order of culture (Pope, 205).

For Freud repetition is thus an important feature in the production of uncanny sensations. But as Freud’s essay suggests, there are many instances that share this logic of replication. Freud suggests that the categories of ‘real life’ and ‘literary’ are somehow linked in a way that makes it impossible to keep these separate:

An uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality. (“The Uncanny,” 93)

Freud’s observation is particularly pertinent to us when we try to grasp the uncanny in *Ghost Girl*. As readers we are made aware that this is a non-fiction narrative and thus separate from

the genre of fiction. However, *Ghost Girl* has the capacity to disturb us precisely because it has a very distinctive literary quality in it. Hence the reading experience becomes characterized by an uncertainty concerning the genre of the text. As my analysis in the third section will demonstrate, this literariness is executed by repeating some genre traits of Gothic fiction. Thus the familiar appears alongside with this sense of the strange for the reader of *Ghost Girl*. There is a sense in which the real seems to merge with the literal.

Another aspect of the uncanny repetition mentioned by Freud has to do with the categories of the real and the literal; when an incident occurs one is sometimes made to wonder whether it was an accident or not. As Freud puts it:

It is only this factor of *involuntary repetition* which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of chance only. (“The Uncanny,” 88; italics mine)

For example, when the narrator in *Ghost Girl* arrives at the town of Peking and takes up her new post as a teacher it is soon revealed that her predecessor has committed suicide. As the story unfolds, one starts to wonder whether the death was a coincidence or somehow linked with the troubled children in the class. Finally, when the eight-year-old girl in the narrator’s class threatens her teacher’s (the narrator’s) life, the sense of involuntary return appears; the fate of the narrator is somehow a repetition of what happened in the past. The suicide of her predecessor, June Harriman is a source of anxiety since it suggests a repetition of a situation in the future. One has a vague sense that there is something familiar in the course of events that

the narrator is now witnessing. Finally, the deceased teacher in *Ghost Girl* is paralleled with similar examples in fiction. In Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* the new teacher who arrives at Bly discovers that her predecessor Miss Jessel has died under mysterious circumstances. In this case the opening of the story of the *Ghost Girl* becomes strangely familiar as it repeats aspects of its literary equivalents. One is left to wonder how the real suddenly acquires such literary qualities.

Moreover, there is a sense in which the narrator has become the double of her predecessor. In "The Uncanny" Freud has a lot to say about the double, seeing it as a yet another instance of strange repetition. Freud's inventory of doubles include: reflections in the mirror, shadows, the soul, recurring situations and places, and finally conscience ("The Uncanny," 86). According to Freud, the idea of the double originates in the pre-linguistic period of human development. The original function of the double according to Freud was to shield the individual from destruction and death and endow it with the promise of immortality. However, when the individual leaves this narcissist, primitive stage of development the double takes on a more sinister aspect, it becomes the "ghastly harbinger of death" ("The Uncanny," 86).

An example of this appears in *Ghost Girl*. There is a fatal awareness that because her predecessor died, the narrator of the memoir is fated to die too. The deceased teacher functions as a foretoken of what will happen in the story. A similar instance where the double, which according to Freud is a form of repetition ("The Uncanny," 86-87), seems to indicate the nearness of death appears when the narrator gives a doll as a present to her pupil Jadie Ekdahl. During a discussion with Jadie's parents, it becomes obvious to the narrator that the doll is her double.

“It looks just like you that doll. Got blond hair, just like you,” Mrs Ekdahl said.

“Jadie’s going to like that. Going to make you feel she isn’t missing you so much and Jadie always was one for having her dolls look like people.” (207)

Later the narrator discovers that the doll is placed behind her car, trapped under the tires. When she reverses the car, the head of the doll is disfigured. Upon finding this, the narrator’s apprehensions escalate. When she discusses the matter with an expert on witchcraft, it becomes evident that the doll had been placed behind the car for a purpose. Given that her conversations with Jadie have circled around issues that savour of the occult, the narrator is now ready to admit that she has become a target of malevolent designs. An expert on witchcraft reveals to the narrator that a powerful spell is put on that doll — an injury to the doll signals that someone desires her death: “They want you to commit suicide” (297).

The uncanny effect of this episode is partly due to the idea of the double; the narrator has become the double of her predecessor, June Harriman, as well as of the doll. Freud has reserved a separate category for uncanny effects that spring from apparent evil intentions and from “secret intentions of harming someone” (“The Uncanny,” 90). These instances of the uncanny hark back to “animistic conceptions of the universe” (“The Uncanny,” 90) implying a fantasy of instant wish-fulfillment. It is possible to kill a person by merely desiring her death (“The Uncanny,” 94). For Freud this primal fantasy is a part of infant psychology characterized by “omnipotence of thoughts” (“The Uncanny,” 90). Freud argues that a person can become uncanny if we ascribe evil intentions to him and if these intentions are accompanied by alleged secret powers that allow the person to achieve his aim. In this way the

uncanny effect of the child in *Ghost Girl* is due to the fact that we ascribe these evil intentions to the child. Similarly, Freud argues, such representation is able to bring back to life those animistic vestiges of our mental life which the civilized man has long since forgotten (“The Uncanny,” 90).

There is a clear sense that *Ghost Girl* projects these uncanny primitive aspects onto the image of the child. The violent nature of these archaic passions also allows the author to represent children as objects of Gothicized desire: they are attractive in a “rather atavistic way”, disheveled, shabby creatures that look like “war orphans” (253). When the narrator has used a camcorder to record Jadie’s antics, she develops an obsession with the sexualized image of the child:

I felt an overwhelming urge to see it again, to study Jadie’s ghostly figure wavering before the camera, to hear her eerie high-pitched whispers. Would they have more meaning to me now? Would I understand things I hadn’t understand then? (197)

This image is sexual because it is one among many textual examples through which the narrator attempts to “understand things”. The word “things” eventually relates to the primal scene of Jadie’s alleged sexual abuse. Later in this section I will demonstrate the logic of these textual matters in the story and show what their function to the plot is.

There emerges thus in *Ghost Girl* a strange repetition in the images of obsession. Firstly, there is the narrator’s imperative to uncover the truth concerning her “case”. There is a sense in

which this obsession impinges on her mental health and steers her life towards madness. As Bennett and Royle argue, the logic of the uncanny undermines the concept of identity (41). Secondly, there is a sense in which the categories of literal and real, self and the other are thrown into disorder by the canny, knowledgeable child who seems to possess unnatural awareness concerning sexual matters. This knowledge is often represented in the form of possession that evokes the concept of automatism discussed by Freud: the workings of unknown force govern the child's behavior. This is shown in the story in the following way:

Sitting silently at my desk, pen still in my hand I watched with fascinated horror. There was an urgent, compulsive quality to her play which would have made any interjection from me an interruption, so I did nothing but watch [...] "I am going to kill you now" she shrieked but her words seemed directed more at thin air than at me. On about the fourth circle around the room she careered by my desk. Reaching out she snatched the felt-tip pen from my hand. "Shit! Shit! Shit!" she continued to shriek. Bumping into the far wall since the room really was too small to run in, she whipped up the pen and before I realized what she was doing she had drawn several encircled crosses on the wall. (95-96)

This vignette is uncanny for several reasons. Most remarkably, however, there seems to be a parallel between the pathological state of the child and her teacher's "fascination" with her. Inadvertently the story draws our attention to the teacher and her silence which is contrasted with the child's antics. Regardless of violent nature of the scene, it seems to have an epistemological subtext in which we are invited to follow the teacher's interpretation of her pupil's possible demonic influence. The child is depicted as a mystery and we are invited to

watch this mystery evolve. But simultaneously we are asked to witness how knowledge concerning this childhood is produced. The silence of the teacher is uncanny, since, as Bennett and Royle have argued, it is a way of generating uncertainty (39). The teacher is uncertain about the correct diagnosis, and the numerous encounters with her and the child are characterized by an eerie silence on behalf of the teacher. In the next section I will focus more closely on this trope of hermeneutic bafflement in *Ghost Girl*. My formulation is indebted to earlier criticism on Henry James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* which I will introduce more closely later on. James' novella is paradigmatic in its portrayal of a female figure that tries to solve the riddle of abused children without ever being able to get to the bottom of "things". Thus this type of narrative foregrounds epistemology and ambiguity instead of clear resolution and denouement. (see for example Shoshana Felman's analysis of James' novella.)

In "The Uncanny" Freud also draws our attention to the most uncanny thing of all, the fear of being buried alive (92). Bennett and Royle argue that this uncanny feeling is often evoked by an image of *claustrophobia*: "Stuck in a room with last person in the world you would like to be left alone with" (39). Arguably this type of uncanny experience is associated with other experiences to which we, according to Freud, respond with dread: solitude, darkness and silence ("The Uncanny," 99). The uncanny atmosphere in *Ghost Girl* is particularly concerned with the idea of premature burial; in the story this image is repeated in the picture of claustrophobic containment, seen in *Ghost Girl* in the narrator's encounters with Jadie in a locked room. The intervals between these meetings are in stark contrast with the claustrophobic spectacles staged in the room, taking place in the familiar surroundings using school, home, and shops as their backdrop. Following Freud's formulation that the uncanny is about "something that ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to

light” (“The Uncanny,” 79) we can conclude that this division between *concealment and openness* plays a decisive role in the story. With other adults the narrator attempts to solve the enigmatic information offered in these solitary meetings and “To share the eerie experience of being locked in a cloakroom” (101).

In her analysis of misery memoirs Anne Rothe states that they bear particular resemblance to Gothic novels, by employing familiar tropes of “clausturation, thwarted escape and innocence buried alive without being able to voice its recognition” (46). In the above section I have elaborated on the issue of generic affinity between misery narratives and the Gothic mode by showing how *Ghost Girl* employs Gothic elements in the story, particularly those outlined by Freud in his essay “The Uncanny.” However, I would like to disagree with Rothe’s notion that “misery narratives titillate the reader’s imagination by depicting the sufferings of victims whose innocence is absolute” (94). Freud’s investigation of the logic of uncanny reveals that it is characterized by paradoxes that are at the very heart of the common logic of identity. As a sign of this, clearly defined boundaries between entities such as self and the other, literal and factual seem to disappear. As Bennett and Royle put it, the uncanny has to do with “troubling of definitions” (36). I want to suggest that *Ghost Girl* is ghostly particularly because innocence in the story is not, after all, absolute. The uncanny sensations of the story are emerge because the boundaries between familiar categories of the victim and victimizer are not as definite as Rothe would appear to suggest. What I attempt to show in this thesis is how the uncanny logic of identity permeates all the levels of storytelling in *Ghost Girl*. In the level of genre *Ghost Girl* becomes uncanny due to its characteristic in-betweenness; on the one hand we think it as a realistic text, on the other hand there is disturbing quality of literariness in the text. In the remaining parts of my analysis I want to show that not only the reader, but

also the narrator, is disoriented by her experiences in the story. In my reading *Ghost Girl* and its narrator become doubles of the Jamesian ghost story and its governess that potentially depicts “hallucinations of a woman with a morbid psychology” (Hanson, 371). *Ghost Girl* offers a similar kind of “paranoid pleasure” mentioned by Hanson (371). This type of narrative is ambiguous because we are made uncertain as to the fact of who is held responsible for corrupting the children. This results from the fact that the fiends, i.e. the pedophiles in the text are characterized by an uncanny silence and absence. Also, similarly, the thing itself, the primal scene of sexual abuse in this narrative, is characterized by absence. This epistemological trope that foregrounds uncertainty itself invites analysis, as Eric Savoy has suggested (245). In the following chapter I will explore more thoroughly the manifestations of Jamesian knowledge effects in *Ghost Girl*.

3.2. *Ghost Girl* and Jamesian Knowledge Effects

Before embarking on my analysis, I should like to define some of the basic concepts. Firstly, it should be noted that any attempt on critical analysis, as Jonathan Culler has suggested, has to decide between two poles of interpretation, being either hermeneutic or linguistic in approach (61). The former approach means that the critic takes the text itself as basis of her interpretation, trying to find new interesting angles to it. Hermeneutic approach is keen on explaining what the text means. The latter frame of interpretation, called poetics (Culler, 61) is concerned with how textual effects, such as ambivalence are produced in a work. It is the task of poetics to account for “whatever effects we can attest to” in a piece of writing (Culler, 62). My concern in this section is preoccupied with poetics and with certain literary

conventions in *Ghost Girl*. These effects are called “Jamesian” since they are most often associated with the author named Henry James. However, as my analysis reveals, they are by no means limited to James’s writing.

Secondly, the question I would like to address is how does the issue of knowledge become linked with the production of literary effects? It is suggested that *Ghost Girl* applies a system of conventions that is clearly recognizable. My analysis shows that this system of conventions allows *Ghost Girl* to be identified as a certain kind of text. The central question is: how can I communicate this generic knowledge to a reader that does not share this knowledge? If the text produces a certain effect in me, does this mean that it produces similar effects for everyone? This problem of potential insularity of knowledge and competence of the reader is outlined by Shoshana Felman in her essay “Turning the Screw of Interpretation”:

Reading, then, begins with awareness, with a perception of ambiguous signifiers: an enigmatic letter, an unfamiliar and uncanny ghost. The meaning they imply is knowledge from which the governess is barred. [...] If it is precisely out of lack of knowledge that the reading process springs, the very act of reading implies at the same time the assumption that knowledge is, exists, but is located in the Other: in order for the reading to be possible there has to be knowledge in the Other (in the text, for instance) and it is that knowledge in the Other, of the Other which must be read [...] Knowledge haunts. The question of meaning as such, which seems indeed to haunt the pages of *The Turn of the Screw*, can thus be formulated as a question “What is it that knows?” (157)

Thus, Felman suggests that the tension between knowledge and ignorance defines the dynamics of James's Gothic story at two different levels. Felman argues that the narrator in *The Turn of the Screw* is a sort of uncanny double of the reader. The actual reader is invited to follow the character's reading in the narrative and subsequently is also plunged into the abyss of ignorance. My reading of *Ghost Girl* parallels the text with Felman's line of interpretation; *Ghost Girl* becomes the textual double of *The Turn of the Screw*. In the following I will illustrate the way in which Jamesian knowledge effects are generated in *Ghost Girl*. Firstly, I will outline the generic conventions in which *Ghost Girl* is participating. Secondly, I will attempt to outline what I would like to call "a poetics of doubt" in *Ghost Girl*.

A typical Gothic narrative features a female teacher that is put in charge of orphan children. Examples of such stories include Elizabeth Gaskell's *Old Nurse's Story* and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*; my analysis is particularly concerned with the influence of the latter in the formation of the genre. *Ghost Girl* is particularly indebted to James's narrative of childhood abuse, where the pleasure of reading is derived from claustrophobic sense of suspicion. In discussing the text, my analysis will build on the discussion of the uncanny nature of claustrophobia in the above section. The characteristic of this suspicion is that it easily escalates into social panic; there is a growing uncertainty as to the fact that who should be held responsible for corrupting childish innocence. Eric Savoy has argued that this type of story of abuse where "suspicion spirals into a panic" is a master narrative of sexual abuse of children (246). This narrative permeates contemporary society; the media often raises questions concerning uncertain cases where adults have victimized children. The crux of these stories is a "rhetorical circuit of suspicion" (Savoy, 246) where the narrative finalization is left blank. Instead we as consumers of these narratives are obsessively asked to return *repeatedly*

to the “exiting circuits of suspicion” (Savoy, 246). My task is to show how this circuit of suspicion is put to practice in Torey Hayden’s *Ghost Girl*. However, I want to show that arguably this genre is much older than one might think. The pattern is already detectable in Henry James’ novella, as I will show. Thus, the narrative that revolves around the circuit of suspicion is specifically a characteristic of Gothic storytelling.

The subject matter in the governess and orphan children formula purports to make the audience slightly apprehensive in a way that the ghost stories told at home would. *Ghost Girl* evokes the narrative schema where the nurse/narrator mediates between the reader and the slightly mysterious, and wretched child. In *Ghost Girl* the role of the nurse/storyteller is taken by the author, a teacher named Torey Hayden. My argument is that Hayden’s narrator is comparable to the governess - narrator in Henry James Gothic story, *The Turn of the Screw*.

As Ellis Hanson reminds us in her queer reading of *The Turn of the Screw*, the inception of the *Gothic child* is a modern phenomenon, its appearance being approximately contemporaneous with the emergence of Freudian child psychology (365). According to Hanson, prior to this, Gothic literary transgressors were either “repressed women or demonic men, rather than wayward children” (367). What makes these children queer is the way in which they are portrayed, as sexual creatures. In James’ novella, the story is framed with a conversation that takes place in a homely setting, next to the fireside. The interlocutors are trying to decide what constitutes the pleasure of reading such stories about children in peril. They conclude that the most pleasurable is the type of story where children who are “at so tender age” are molested. (James, 7). The involvement of children gives an added suspense, or a turn of the screw as the speakers admit. The fictional audience that is about to hear the story is unrestrained about their

desire to read. My analysis of *Ghost Girl* takes into account the different agents of the narrative, the audience, the narrator, and the characters. Moreover, I want to consider the kind of pleasure involved in reading such stories — which has remained intact for more than hundred years since the publication of James' novella. The added turn of the screw, the child in torment, is still a queer pleasure.

The governess and orphan child formula often features an attractive adult, a young female figure that develops an intimate relationship with a child. In this narrative formula the story is transmitted through a clearly outlined subject position. To read Hayden's non-fiction memoir, is also to have an encounter with the Jamesian fictional memoirist. Since James wrote his fictional memoirs, the repressed governess has become a stock character in literature, and in his criticism Edmund Wilson would coin the catchphrase "woman with a morbid psychology" (371). My argument is that the Gothic features of repression and anxiety concerning child sexuality are also present in Hayden's non-fiction memoir. In the narrative framework of the queer child genre the governess, after having landed in a distant, semi-rural location, gradually discovers the presence of dark figures that seem to put the innocence of the children under threat. In *The Turn of the Screw* these figures are ghosts, spirits of the former staff members of the mansion. While alive, they had developed a close relationship with two orphan children, Miles and Flora, who inhabit the house. A crisis emerges as the new governess becomes aware of the (fact) that ghosts are still communicating with the children. The story is essentially about the teacher's ill-fated attempt to prevent the corrupting relationships with the spirits of the deceased who are also members of the lower class. The sinister figures Miss Jessel and Peter Quint hover at the background of the story, and their ghostly presence ostensibly helps

the reader to explain why the children are debased and possess an uncanny knowledge, particularly concerning sexual matters.

In his discussion of Jamesian “queer formalism” Eric Savoy evokes the long history of criticism that outlines the narrative strategies of ambiguity, for example Allon White’s *Uses of Obscurity* (249-250). Generally speaking, narrative ambiguity means that the reader’s access to knowledge concerning the story is limited, since some of the details are missing. The result of this narrative economy is that the reader starts fulfilling the holes in the narrative and wishes to ground his or her suspicions to certain particulars which the story remains silent about (Savoy, 249). This type of indirection leads to an uncanny atmosphere in the incest narrative, characterized by “the episteme of scandal” (Savoy, 249). The text rouses the reader’s sexual panic by remaining silent about the actual history of the abuse and approaches it by taking circuitous narrative paths. According to Savoy, this “process of adumbration” is a technique that refers to visual arts where the represented object is enveloped in shadow. I think this is just what takes place in the narrative in *Ghost Girl*. The narrator attempts to make sense of the shadowy figures that are visualized by Jadie, either in her drawings or in her dramatic re-enactments of the primal scene of abuse. The narrator attempts to convert these adumbrated shadowy figures into a consistent knowledge. Simultaneously the narrative foregrounds her inability to verify what actually happens in the story.

This type of traumatic historiography takes place in *Ghost Girl* as well. We are invited to follow the narrator’s reconstruction of the events that antedate her arrival. The narrator of *Ghost Girl* also has to encounter ghosts, i.e., the Gothic child itself who claims to be one. Moreover, the abusers themselves are ghostly, because they are characterized by absence and

silence. The ghostliness of the 8-year old girl is rendered through her appearance. She is not like the beautiful angelic children in James's story, but a more like a monster:

What I noticed immediately was her posture, quite unlike anything I'd encountered while treating elective mutes. Hunched over almost double, she had her arms crossed and tucked up under her, as if she were clutching an unwieldy load of books. I made a mental note to inquire about scoliosis. (10)

In addition, we are told that the girl in *Ghost Girl* has lost her ability to communicate. The governess figure in Hayden's memoir has a diagnosis for her pupils' uncanny silence, which is termed as "elective mutism." In this way, one might argue that the supernatural elements of the classical ghost story are rationalized and given medical diagnoses. In *The Turn of the Screw* we were left blank on the issue whether the ghosts were actually seen by anyone else than the governess. In *Ghost Girl*, Jadie explicitly declares herself a ghost: "It is nice being alone when you're a ghost. We just float around" (61). The ghosts themselves remain silent. The equivalent of the ghostly silence of child-lovers in James's story is Jadie's unwillingness to talk, particularly about her parents' suspected implication in sexual abuse. Nonetheless, silence is essential in the way in which the child is gothicized in both of these stories. The role of the governess is to wring out a confession from her confidante. Mirroring the pedophilic seduction that takes place in the margins of the narrative but remains unexpressed, the governess figure wants to make her charge(s) to speak. This desire to make the child talk about his/her seduction is the driving passion in both *The Turn of the Screw* and *Ghost Girl*. It is based on the tenet of the talking-cure. This idea is crystallized in the obsessive remark of the

governess in *The Turn of the Screw*: “I’ll get it out of him. He’ll meet me, *-he’ll confess. If he confesses, he is saved-*” (112; italics original)

It should be stressed that these readings are not simply skewed or twisted readings of texts that are innocent in themselves but rather, effects that are made possible by certain formal textual features. This thesis has been concerned with the notion that innocence can be made suspect, and also used for political purposes. Following Ahmed’s example, my study has been informed by the notion that certain formal or literary features such as metonymy are not limited to the high end of literary spectrum. As a sign of this, *Ghost Girl*, for example deploys rather often a figure of speech called aposiopesis which according to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry* means “becoming silent” (60). Hence, there are numerous examples where the narrator attempts to impress the reader by vague hints and elliptical expressions in regard to the child’s abuse. *The Princeton Encyclopedia* quotes such examples as Shakespeare and Pope in order to illustrate the effects of this device. Characteristic for the use of aposiopesis is that it is dramatic: the speaker is moved by an emotion most often hate, and breaks off the sentence in mid-point when things are “too sordid to become mentioned” (Hayden, 60).

In *Ghost Girl* this ritual of the talking cure takes place in a small cloakroom that is locked during the secret meetings. It is important that the narrative focuses on these private encounters with a child and an adult. We are anticipating a revelation. But essentially the closet is place where the queer child is celebrated. It is here in the space of fictional privacy that we are invited to watch Jadie performing her queer identity unabashed. To quote Hayden’s narrative:

Jadie examined the door minutely. She ran her hands over the wood, lingering to feel the grain. She pursued the ornamental molding with her fingers then came to the knob and lock. These, like the door itself were old-fashioned and there was a *proper keyhole*. All of this too Jadie examined carefully, poking her little fingers to the keyhole turning the knob watching the latch go in and out. This whole procedure took a full ten minutes, and, throughout, I didn't say a word. *Still at my desk, I simply watched.* [...] Fascinated by her behavior, I agreed and dug the key out of my desk drawer. Jadie deftly slipped it into the keyhole and turned it. The deadbolt slid into place with a satisfying thunk. "That's good" she murmured, in a pleased tone. (68, italics mine)

The foregrounding of the door and its accessories, particularly the keyhole, aligns us with the voyeuristic subject; it invokes secrets, an illusion of privacy, accompanied with erotic pleasure. Keyholes in particular are associated with the idea of watching someone *unobserved*. The dictionary definition of *voyeur* is as follows:

someone who gets sexual pleasure by watching other people take off their clothes or have sex, usually secretly. 2. Someone who enjoys learning about the private details of other people's lives, especially unpleasant or shocking. (*Macmillan English Dictionary*, 1604)

What we have here is a literary rendition of voyeurism of a kind that one might call indirect since it is transmitted through the words on a page. It could be said that it is an adult form of

childish curiosity: we are offered an apparently unguarded vision of an adult watching a child in private. Hence, the narrator as a professional adult functions as a go-between and her task is to appease our sense of guilt and justify our intrusion. The reader avoids the moral question of unlicensed intrusion and questionable pleasure associated with it, since she thinks that she has a good cause: the reader wants to save the child from her peril, just like her protector in the story proper. The passage here foregrounds the presence of locks by making clear that it is the child who is in charge of imprisonment. Her expression “that’s good” makes explicit the pleasure that the reader should feel; she is now alone with the mysterious object, the child, locked in a room. As a result the narrative places the child as a gothic conundrum in a very clear-cut unambiguous manner.

Freud has noted that the urge to look on, i.e., the gazing-impulse is intimately tied with knowledge and sexuality. In “The Uncanny” Freud offers his reading of Hoffmann’s *Sandman* and Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*. Both stories feature the same motif: the eyes of the main character are eventually blinded. Arguably the pricking of one’s eye is in Freud’s thinking linked to societal norms that police normal sexual behavior. Freud argues that fear of having one’s eyes pricked is linked with castration anxiety (“The Uncanny,” 84). In *Introductory Lectures* Freud discusses *skoptophilia* [sic] i.e. the gazing impulse (257). For Freud *skoptophilia* is, on the one hand, a feature of what he terms childish curiosity: the child has a strong urge to watch his or her parents’ sexual intercourse (186). On the other hand, in an adult this same impulse amounts to perversion:

Foremost in the second group are those perverts whose sexual desires aim at the performance of an act which normally is but an introductory or preparatory one.

They are those who seek gratification in looking and touching, or watching the other person's most intimate doings; or those who expose parts of their own bodies which should be concealed, in the vague expectation of being rewarded by similar action on the part of the other. (*Introductory Lectures*, 186)

Moreover, in his formulation of the Oedipus complex, Freud claims that it is the child, not the adult who actively seeks to seduce either of his or her parents. Thus the "horror of incest," as Freud puts it, originates in childhood (281). For Freud, it is simply naïve to think otherwise. According to Freud, the child's morbid curiosity towards sexual issues results from the fact that he or she may actively desire the death of the parent. Further, knowledge becomes an issue as Freud starts examine how he himself has reached his conclusions, and on what grounds (*Introductory Lectures*, 307). At this point it becomes clear that Freud's subject position in relation to children, knowledge and sexuality is similar to the one occupied by the narrator in *Ghost Girl* who is forced to discuss the factuality of Jadie's narratives concerning her abuse: "How could she create such details, if she didn't have firsthand knowledge?" (224). Freud also is suspicious about the factuality of narratives concerning childhood sexual abuse:

You know that from analysis of symptoms we arrive at the knowledge of the infantile experiences to which the libido is fixated and out of which the symptoms are made up. Now the astonishing thing is that these scenes of infancy are not always true [...] The phantasy of seduction has special interest, because only too often it is no phantasy but real remembrance [...] Do not suppose, however, that sexual misuse of children by the nearest male relatives is entirely derived from phantasy. (*Introductory Lectures*, 307)

For example, Freud tries to account for the fact that some of his patients often have phantasies about sexual issues that took place in early infancy. One recurring story in Freud's account is the one where the patient claims to have been sexually abused by an adult. Freud notes that these fantasies can occur irrespective of whether they have actually happened (307). Another common fantasy is that the patient claims to have had witnessed adults engaged in *more ferarum*, i.e., in anal sex. Freud argues that as this knowledge may have been derived from watching copulating animals, such as dogs, it is linked with "unsatisfied skoptophilia" (Introductory Lectures, 310). But none of these stories have to be grounded on factual events. In Freud's view these narratives derive their uncanny nature from the fact that in them "truth and falsehood are mixed up":

After a little reflection we can easily understand what it is that is so bewildering in this matter. It is the deprecation of reality, the neglect of the difference between reality and phantasy; we are tempted to be offended with the patient for taking up our time with invented stories. (*Introductory Lectures*, 308)

Hence, Freud's explanation as to the causes of stories of sexual abuse are surprisingly unethical, if one considers the discussion revolving upon contemporary misery memoirs many of which have been revealed as forgeries (Rothe, 88). Freud seems to suggest that the child actually finds these scenes of seduction pleasurable regardless of whether they have actually happened. Because the reality principle requires that the ego must renounce some of its objects of desire, it gains some compensation in the form of fantasies (*Introductory Lectures*, 311). For Freud the realm of fantasy is analogous to nature reserves and parks which strive to retain

the state of nature in where there is too much culture (*Introductory Lectures*, 312). In Freud's view stories of childhood abuse become a signal of naturalness that promises "gratification independent of reality's sanction (*Introductory Lectures*, 313).

Freud's ideas concerning childhood sexuality seem to be in stark contrast with the ideological tenets of misery literature. The doctrine of misery narrative could be formulated as follows: children are innocent and devoid of any references to crime, secrets, closets, or "what police would like to call in common parlance, a past" (Bond Stockton, 296). To these children, sex is "shockingly queer" (Bond Stockton, 296). The child portrayed in a misery narrative is often white and middle-class. Whenever this child possesses premature knowledge of sexual matters, it is because they have been corrupted by lascivious adults. This is why, as Aries points out, the devotional pictures commemorating holiness of innocent childhood often feature, along with the guardian angel that protects an effeminate looking boy and his girl companion also the figure of the Devil, depicted as middle-aged man lying in wait for the boy (121). I think this basic configuration can be found in misery narratives such as *Ghost Girl*. The governess figure fulfills the function of the guardian angel that "holds a shield between the boy and the middle-aged man" (121). In other words, she tries to ward off the sexual knowledge of adult life, portrayed in the figure of the pedophile.

But the situation in *Ghost Girl* is more complicated as it exemplifies what Hutcheon calls a paradox between historical and fictive representations (106). When Jadie is introduced to the reader, the text subtly undermines iconic representations of innocence. We are told that Jadie is "attractive in a pale, overwhelmed sort of way" (8). Moreover, she is shrouded in mystery. Her self becomes entangled with representations right from the beginning:

The door cracked open to reveal a small girl with thin matchstick legs and pinched features dwarfed further by what could only be described as a Pre-Raphaelite hair-style – a great wedge of dark curly hair parted unevenly down the middle and descending over her back in a sheet. (8)

The reference to Pre-Raphaelites is particularly interesting as their Victorian paintings often depict women in an ambiguous manner they are often both witches and innocent angelic girls (Edwards, par. 3). Edwards argues that these paintings are often symbolic in nature, the sinuous hair of the women evocative of such mythical characters as the powerful Medusa whose hair consisted of snakes (par. 1). The images are ambiguous since the women are often silent although powerful in a sinister way (Edwards, par.1). One of these paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti portrays Lilith, the all-powerful femme fatale who was Adam's first wife (par. 4). Edwards interprets Rossetti's poem that accompanies the painting in the following way:

The poem describes Lilith, identified as Adam's first wife, as a dangerous seductress whose powerful beauty seems as much fearful and grotesque as it does worthy of male worship. In Rossetti's text Lilith becomes at once serpent, spider, and feminine strangler. (par. 4)

In Edwards's view these Pre-Raphaelite women are examples of Victorian Gothic imagery comparable to Bram Stoker's feminine vampires in *Dracula* (par. 6), which are ambiguous, since they are simultaneously victims and lustful temptresses (par. 10). Thus the passage

where Jadie is introduced to the reader is a puzzling one. The reader knows that this is supposed to be not fiction. However, this knowledge does not seem to be of any avail as the figure of the child is shrouded in a mythical and uncanny atmosphere. In his discussion of the relationship of the uncanny effects to genre, Freud states in "The Uncanny" that uncanny sensations do not occur too easily in real life and that fiction is a much more "fertile province" in this sense since it contains "something that cannot be found in real life" (97). This would seem to suggest that stories such as *Ghost Girl* cannot be uncanny because of their purported factuality. Without explicating what this "something" is, Freud makes two important observations that are characterized by a paradox. Firstly, he claims that a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life, and secondly, that "there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life" ("The Uncanny," 97).

According to Freud, this paradoxical logic of the uncanny explains why certain genres like the fairy tale do not evoke uncanny sensations. In Freud's view fairy tales are not uncanny since the world of reality is left behind at the very start ("The Uncanny," 97). Thus the reader's knowledge as to how the frame the narrative is of supreme importance. However, Freud's premise that fiction is more fertile province for uncanny sensations than reality is seemingly contradicted by his conclusion that "when imaginary reality is imposed on the reader, the reader is spared all trace of the uncanny" ("The Uncanny," 97). Did not Freud just argue that fiction is a more fertile ground for evoking uncanny sensations than reality? Freud's solution to the problem appears to be that the more realistic the genre is the greater its capacity in evoking uncanny sensations ("The Uncanny," 97). Thus Freud makes a distinction between two important concepts which Rob Pope has defined elsewhere. Firstly there is reality, the

general ultimately unknowable notion of what is, and secondly, realisms, specific aesthetic movements which at various times have claimed to have represented that reality accurately (Pope, 216).

Moreover, there is a sense in which issues of knowledge in *Ghost Girl* are also linked with such uncanny binaries as secrets/disclosure and public/private. The logic of the narrator's encounter with the child follows narrative trajectory of an illicit love affair that is hidden from the public. The reader is offered a horizon of expectations where our thirst for knowledge is gratified step by step — and then again nullified. As the story of *Ghost Girl* proceeds, it becomes clear that what we are hankering after is to be alone with the child and her protector and wait for a revelation. The text seems all too willing to gratify this urge to see and hear what she has to say. We are held in awe because we are in a state of anxious anticipation since we do not know what to expect and what is the consummation of this affair. What causes the deformity of Jadie, for example? What causes her muteness? What is she? What is her secret? These questions are also raised by the narrator:

“The thing is, I can't figure out what's going on with her. That's what so upsetting to me. I mean what if it is true? What if I am sitting here, doing nothing because I think she's imagining it, and these horrible unbelievable, unthinkable things are happening to her?” (201)

This passage shows how the Gothic child in *Ghost Girl* sparks our thirst for knowledge. In my view, this takes us back to Felman's rhetorical question “what is it that knows?” which was said to characterize the narrator's uncertainty in *The Turn of the Screw* (157). In this way the

pedophilia in these texts can be contrasted with reader's epistemophilia i.e., his/her urge to get to the bottom of things (Culler, 91). The task of the narrator is comparable to Freud's case histories such as *The Wolf Man*; the narrator of *Ghost Girl* is also trying to reconstruct the primal scene of sexual abuse, the story could be re-titled as "The Case History of Ghost Girl." I will argue that the Gothic suspense in *Ghost Girl* is result of lamination of the narrator's attempts to make sense of Jadie's obscure narratives. The plot focuses on the narrator's gradual tightening of the screw of interpretation. But there is a sense in which this screw never closes and obscure incidents remain unexplained. As soon as new evidence appears, it is also made redundant.

In the following I will try to outline these different interpretative layers of the Jamesian incest narrative as they appear in *Ghost Girl*. *Ghost Girl* is thus structured and organized around what Felman has called a topography of turns (qtd. in Savoy, 250). This extended metaphor of the screw is derived from the frame narrative of *The Turn of the Screw* where the embedded audience discusses the pleasure of ghost stories. When a child appears in a ghost story, the screw of the audience's expectation is turned, they might argue. When another child appears in the story it becomes even more exciting.

"If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to two children-?" "We say of course" somebody exclaimed, "that they give two turns! Also that we want to hear about them." (James, 7)

Sedgwick has argued that questions about deviant sexualities are essentially questions about the limits of our knowledge, about epistemology (7). Questions about unspeakable sexualities,

such as pedophilia or homosexuality, are a cause of hermeneutic bewilderment as they demand that we differentiate between homosexual and homosocial, normal and queer, relationships between human beings. Because of the vagueness of the limits the outcome of these considerations is usually intellectual uncertainty. The child in the closet in the *Ghost Girl* may be regarded as such an enigma. We have an idea of a normal kid, what he or she should be like, and we are left to wonder what constitutes this deviant, queer childhood. Moreover, we want to know the secret about the child's relationship with the adults around her. Is it an example of normal affection when the narrator outlines the pleasurable outward appearance of Jadie, or maybe a queer example of illicit child-loving?

She was sensuous looking child with her pure blue eyes and dark lashes, her wide rather pouty lips, and her long tangled hair. This fact was not lost on me. [...]"Do you want to go back up to the room with me so we can talk?" (128)

This wording surprises the readers of the text, since we may think that the narrator wants to shield her protégé from all premature knowledge of sexual matters. It is as if she admits in the quotation above that children are sexy and she is also involved in their illicit seduction. It remains also unclear whether the adult is really safeguarding the child from the corrupting influence that lurks outside the remit of the locked room. There is the possibility that the protector herself is in danger, that the child has been corrupted to the point where there is no hope of saving her. This line of reasoning illustrates the way in which the story of abuse necessarily generates suspicion and pulls everything into its "circuitous orbit around the unverifiable" (Savoy, 246)

An important source of uncanny sensations in *Ghost Girl* is produced by its repeated attempts to decipher the drawings made by Jadie. Like Sigmund Freud in “The Uncanny” the narrator in *Ghost Girl* is looking for a correct interpretive framework that would help her to decide what the significance of the child’s creative output is. At first she regards these pictures as merely belonging to the genre of the fantastic, thus lessening their uncanny effect. After an incident occurs where Jadie is caught having oral sex with her classmate, her teacher discusses Jadie’s drawings with her colleagues.

“Yes, she’s pretty heavily into symbols. Makes a lot of different marks, sort of like writing, but this one’s her favourite. She is always doing that one on things. Jules says it is symbolic of sexual intercourse. He says the circle represents the vagina, the cross, the point of penetration.” I paused, leaning over Hugh’s shoulder to regard the picture. “I don’t know if I necessarily agree with his reasoning. Jules sees vaginas and phallic symbols in everything. On the other hand, I think he might be right in this case. I am beginning to suspect she is sexually abused.” (138)

A plethora of explanations is offered as to the causes of Jadie’s premature knowledge in sexual matters. Some comments put the blame on media; children are exposed too early to videos, TV and explicit sexual content (136). The psychoanalytic readings of the drawings offered by the narrator’s colleagues does not appear to be up to the task:

I found their work heavily couched on psychoanalytic framework which, while interesting, and possibly accurate, was of little practical use for me in trying to

help Jadie in the classroom. In the end I could accept this, as I don't suppose I had really come expecting any answers. I'd been in the business long enough to know it was never that simple, but I had hoped that sharing the material, talking it over with my old colleagues, hearing their ideas would cause something, somewhere, somehow to drop into place. (137)

A decisive turn (of the screw) in the story is taken when the narrator shows Jadie's artwork to her boyfriend. This uneducated working class character, Hugh, is contrasted with the psychoanalytically minded scholars. His quick perusal of Jadie's drawings results in a statement that Jadie's problem is not simply her precocious sexual behavior but there is more to this case (138). It is here that the text clearly establishes a pattern where the desire to know alternates with a fear of knowing. This narrative thrust is based on the assumption that there exists an original or primal scene that we are gradually approaching the thing. As the prospect of finding the truth about Jadie appears promising, the reader is simultaneously made aware that the truth is the function of accumulating evidence.

The narrative in *Ghost Girl* resembles Derrida's logic of the *supplement* (qtd. in Culler, 7-14). It is characterized by a negotiation of such categories as *mediatedness* and *unmediatedness* discussed by Rothe in connection with misery memoirs and their authenticity (87). By the supplementary logic of the narrative I mean that it promises to reveal to the reader the primal scene of abuse, however, immediate access to this is characterized by constant deferrals. Instead of access to the "thing itself", i.e., to the primal scene, the text foregrounds the importance of interpreting textual evidence; eventually there is a sense in which one is never able to get to the bottom of things. In this sense *Ghost Girls* fails to offer the promised

immediacy. Rather, it is characterized by absence which again necessitates the supplement. I do not want to argue, however, that the text is characterized by deconstructive or referential “nothingness” as Eric Savoy puts it (251). There is that “something” that hovers at the background of the story in *Ghost Girl* and which forms, in Savoy’s words “the traumatic prehistory of the narrative” (251). A quote from Eric Savoy is particularly useful at this point as he argues that incest narratives often invoke “a chain of baffled interrogations” (252) which are organized around the narrator’s ignorance:

The governess, then, is a failed reader who requires the supplement, or perhaps the finely baited trap, of critical intervention: the suspense of the tale arises almost exclusively from her inability to move from seeing to knowing to articulating. The prolongation of the exquisite pleasure of Gothic suspense might be said to require these two forms of suspension, one arising from the repression of conclusive interpretation [...] the other from the repression of speech. (253)

This means that the truth in *Ghost Girl* is always an *effect*, based on signs that require interpretation. The appearance of immediacy is based on Derrida’s “endless linked series” (12): we are invited to follow these links in the narrative, but each new revelation that purports to be the truth is in fact a new impression of that truth. The ghostliness of *Ghost Girl* can be ascribed to this supplementary nature of the story. However, the text foregrounds its immediacy by frequent authorial asides that stress the common-sense idea of reality as something present: “This was real life, and I couldn’t get out of it” (295); “Listen to what you’ve cooked up for Pete’s sake. It sounds like a plot to a bad novel” (243); “These stories I’d always felt were mythic, the results of popular horror films and books and few charismatic,

headline grabbing psychotics” (224); “An ideal script for horror film” (75); “In the black and white world of reporting good copy is everything. So is reader/viewer draw. Bias often isn’t. A young, physically attractive child, full of gory tales of torture and sex is irresistible prey” (375); and “How easy would it be for a confused child exposed to violent pornographic material to extrapolate it to real life?” (284)

On the basis of the above, I would suggest that *Ghost Girl* is characterized by a certain inconsistency in relation to the category of the real. The text constantly reminds us of its genre, that reality is something knowable to which the text has access to. The text wishes to separate itself from myth and it praises itself of being not fictional. The implicit assumption here is that fiction is something deceptive and deluded. The text thus places the concept of real in the center as a sign of immediacy and authenticity. However, the text is remarkably silent about its family resemblance to such fictional narratives as *The Turn of the Screw*. By these observations I do not want to reinforce extreme opinions about reality as opposed to imagination. My point is not to argue that *Ghost Girl* belongs to either of these categories. Rather, the definiteness these notions can be challenged by playing close attention to what actually happens at the textual level.

Ghost Girl’s existence as a textual object is predicated on *absence* rather than on presence. An example of this is the absence of any real historical significance in the narrative. When the narrator goes through the files containing the case history of Jadie, she merely remarks that it is possible that critical information is omitted from the files (45). This omission, together with Jadie’s muteness, plays a role in constructing the text’s Gothic suspense of uncanny silences. Moreover, the pre-history of the narrator is characterized by such omissions. When she accept

new position as a local teacher, the narrator is informed that none of the locals wanted the job. They know that the previous teacher had committed suicide amidst uncertain circumstances:

An appalled silence followed. What did one say in reply to something like that? Not having known her personally, I found myself filled with morbid curiosity and wasn't too pleased at having it. (29)

These holes in the narrative are important since they imply that an organizing principle is needed in order to make sense of the picture as a whole. Thus there appears a distinction between *sjuzhet* and *fabula*; the raw material of the narrative “imagined as though in chronological sequence” and “worked up material of the actual narrative” (Pope, 86). This distinction is important since also Peter Brooks has argued that the decisions that are concerned with omissions and inclusions create suspense in the story:

The relation between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, between event and its significant reworking, is one of suspicion and conjecture, a structure of indeterminacy which can offer only a framework of narrative possibilities rather than a clearly specifiable plot. Undecidability becomes particularly acute issue in the question of *origins*. The specification of origins should be of utmost importance in any etiological explanation: to understand causes one must get back to the beginning. (275)

Following Eric Savoy's discussion of adumbrated narratives and the “cultural agenda of suspicion” in contemporary narratives of abused children (245), one could argue that the

narrative indeterminacy in *Ghost Girl* is generated by evoking a myth of origins. This is done by arranging a narrative spectacle that revolves around the promise that in the end one will know what really happened. This narrative prospect is, however, deceptive since the promise of origins is constantly deferred to the next narrative level of suspicion. It is the nature of this narrative spiral to amuse us by simply revolving without breaking off.

What this deferment means can be illustrated with the following example. After the narrator has shown the drawings to her boyfriend we reach a new layer in the laminated system of spiraling suspicion. Since Jadie's drawings contain many symbolic elements that can be interpreted as sexual, the narrator starts to suspect that Jadie is sexually abused (138). Her boyfriend Hugh points out the possible occult nature of Jadie's drawings: "It is after all just a cross with circle around it. But I do remember seeing something like this. It was what Satanists carved on trees and stuff to call a Black Mass" (138). The narrator responds to these misgivings with disbelief. Her playful reference to "flying saucers" and "changelings" relegates occult explanations to the realm of phantasy (138). Once again, our misgivings are for the time being made redundant.

Soon afterwards a new incident occurs, as Jadie is found performing oral sex, this time with a dog. This prompts the narrator to arrange a meeting with Arkie Peterson, the team manager who is in charge of the children in the district. For the first time the narrator introduces the possibility of sexual abuse to a colleague. We are told how Arkie, on hearing the incident with the dog "frowns with revulsion" (169). The narrator *repeats* the incident in all its graphic details:

“She was talking about sucking milk out of a penis, definitely a penis and not a teat, and it doesn’t take a lot of imagination to substitute ‘*milk*’ for ‘*semen*’. Your average eight-year old would not come up with that on her own. Most kids of that age are appalled by the idea of sexual intercourse, much less fellatio.” (169-170)

It becomes obvious that there is not enough evidence. The narrator is unable to prove that when Jadie is talking about milk she actually refers to seminal fluid. The contesting meanings attached to *milk* in this scenario illustrate the “lack of referential certainty” in the narratives of childhood abuse (Savoy, 251). Instead of the core meanings of words, the logic of suspicion in narratives such as *Ghost Girl* foregrounds connotations and personal associations. One is made suspicious of the primary meanings of the words and thus plunged into a state of suspense. The narrator is also left alone with her suspicions. What makes the case particularly problematic is the genre of Jadie’s narratives. She is always avoiding direct references to persons but instead mentions characters from the famous television series *Dallas*, which makes it difficult to judge correctly what the product of her imagination is, and what is real or textual in her stories. Arkie Peterson’s role in this scene is to play the skeptic. Central to her argument is that children nowadays are more knowledgeable than they used to be: “They have access to a lot more information than we had” (170). Hence, there is a possibility that Jadie’s canny sexual behavior is derived from watching too much pornography. However, the text hints at the possibility that the narrator’s intuition concerning the case is contrasted with the rigidity of the judicial system that does not allow one to express such concerns directly.

Yet another private encounter with Jadie proves fruitful. Jadie gives an detailed description of what appears to be ritual murder of a six year old child, Tashee: “‘Miss Ellie took the knife, the one shaped like this’ she paused to trace the design on the tabletop with her finger, ‘and she put it right there on Tashee’s throat’” (180). However, following the logic of suspicion that requires that misgivings are inflated and balked at in turns, this revelation is exhausted by the possibility that Jadie has merely concocted the story from different sources: “Miss Ellie killed her? That lady from TV?” the narrator asks. As Jadie’s counter question “Did you see it too?” (181) reveals, it is uncertain whether we are talking about a re-enactment of a TV-series or about a ritual murder that may have actually happened.

These examples illustrate the inconclusiveness that hovers around narratives concerned with alleged sex crimes against children. Eric Savoy has argued that in such stories “connotation establishes itself as master trope of traumatic historiography” (246). The result of this kind of framing is that the narrative starts to circle obsessively around the unverifiable: we are led to believe that there is an absolute origin, a primal scene in the narrative which the narrator is capable of gradually assembling. However, the story never achieves such totality of the sign. The result is that the narrative repeats, perhaps obsessively events that return us to the formula of suspicion. For Savoy this dwelling on suspicion is essentially a queer phenomenon (246). Almost like a ritual, the story seems to follow this protocol of suspicion without ever mentioning it directly.

The above discussion of the relationship between the sign and the referent needs to be clarified. It is understood that signs such as *Ghost Girl*, consist of two different aspects. Firstly there is the signifier which is in this case the material existence of the book, the words on a

page. The signified, on the other hand, is that something that we think *Ghost Girl* to mean, in other words what it refers to. The referent refers to the capacity of the language to name things in the extra-linguistic world (Pope, 376). But, as Pope argues, references are closely related to preferences (376). The insistence that there is a reference in the non-verbal world is in itself a certain way of seeing the world that could be called realistic. Some critics, however, argue that the category “real” should be discarded from this equation and that we should explore similarity and difference in the level of language only (Pope, 185).

The missing referent in *Ghost Girl* is also a source of uncanny experience. The framework in which the way to the primal scene is deliberately attenuated by narrative evasions is typical of Gothic suspense, as Savoy points out (249). The circle of suspense revolves around traumatized children which are posited at the center of the narrative. The threat of pedophilia can be contrasted with desire to know: the reader is obsessed with the idea of unveiling the truth. Jonathan Culler’s term epistemophilia regards reading as an sexually tinged, essentially masculine activity that culminates in the moment when the reader finally is granted the access to the truth (91). The pleasure of reading such stories as *Ghost Girl* may be deemed perverse, because access to the truth is denied. The only thing which is left is the perverse pleasure of suspicion.

The next level in this rhetorical circuit of suspicion, the traumatized child in its pivot, takes place when the narrator starts to apprehend that her life is in danger. This takes us back to Freud’s assertion in “The Uncanny” that death is uncanny because it is strangely familiar; we all know that the end comes, that we are going to die (Freud, “The Uncanny,” 92). And yet this knowledge is hardly able to alleviate the uncanny feeling in relation to death (92). The

prospect of death is uncanny for the narrator in *Ghost Girl* for at least three reasons. Firstly, it is strangely familiar from the beginning of the story when the narrator learns about the sudden departure of her predecessor. Secondly, the possibility of death is uncanny because it is heralded by a child. Thirdly, it is announced in a dubious, evasive manner that characterizes Jadie's disclosures. This is shown in the text: "They say hurting is good. You get stronger when you hurt. They make you strong, so you can kill people. If you don't like someone they teach you how to make that person die [...] Miss Ellie says if I want to make you die, I can" (195).

The subsequent confusion of the narrator results in the tightening of the spiraling circle of suspicion. The narrator speculates about the possible grounds of suspicion: if the characters mentioned by Jadie are real, not ghosts of Jadie's imagination, there is the likelihood that Jadie is sane and both her and the narrator's lives are in danger. Or there is the likelihood that the fantastic content of Jadie's stories is a response to a traumatic event and an attempt to protect her from remembering it? There is also the possibility that Jadie is simply psychotic. Such hermeneutic puzzlement of the narrator is in the narrative often followed by a set of rhetorical questions. These questions foment suspicion and give an added uncanny twist to the tale. It is important that these questions are not meant to be answered. Rather, they merely take us near to the point where the circle of suspicion is rendered almost unbearable. They insist on paying attention to the existential gap between seeing and knowing. After the narrator has witnessed Jadie's behavior in the privacy of the locked room she is concerned how to translate this experience into knowing, as the following passage shows:

What was happening with Jadie? Was she being abused? Were her stories true? Could they be true? Had some real children being murdered and Jadie made to drink her blood? The instant that thought came to me, the conversation with Hugh in the summer flashed back into my mind. Satanism. (223)

One possible way to approach this formal strategy that could be called a poetics of doubt is to address the type of poetical language and rhetorical tropes Jadie is using. Her expressions rest upon the trope of *prosopopoeia*, “vivid presentation of something absent, dead or imaginary” since the persons she is referring to are absent (*The Princeton Encyclopedia*, 1121). Her disclosures can also be characterized as *allegorizations* of historical events as the *dramatis personae* in the episodes staged by Jadie can be described as performing in masks. For example, the characters in the re-enacted satanic rituals carry the names of fictitious characters from the TV-series Dallas. At other instances Jadie uses inanimate objects, such as dolls as the *dramatis personae* of her re-enactments of the scenes of abuse:

Jadie regarded the doll’s tiny penis for several moments and then touched it gingerly with her index finger. Unexpectedly, she blew a loud, derisive raspberry: “That’s what I think. And you know what I am going to do? This.” And she spat heartily between the doll’s legs before flinging it across the cloakroom. The doll hit the opposite wall with a resounding thud and fell to the bench below [...] She had a very defiant expression on her face, although it was inward, and not directed at me. “They make us play peanuts” she murmured her voice brittle. “J.R. and Bobby and them. They take out their dickies and then

everyone says ‘Peanut, peanut, who’s got the peanut?’ and me and Amber, we got to...” Her voice trailed off. (231)

In his analysis of the rhetorical figure of prosopopoeia Michael Riffaterre has suggested that it is a kind of false face, a mask put on to something that may not even have a face (108). Riffaterre argues that prosopopoeia should not be confused with personification which often attaches human attributes to nonhuman forces or objects but it is rather a trope that denotes the impossibility of referential dimension (108). It is characterized by absence, but we are not sure whether there is a thing that is absent at all. The etymology of the trope *prosopon poiein*, as Riffaterre states, means to “give a mask or a face” (108), and we are thus invited to ask what is behind the mask, but simultaneously, the mask itself does not necessarily refer to anything real. Rather than having reality as its authority, the mask is persuasive because it inaugurates an atmosphere of investigation.

Riffaterre’s analysis suggests that a text can have a quality of undecidability, and this characteristic can be achieved by rhetorical means. In Riffaterre’s line of reasoning mimesis does not necessarily have anything to do with referentiality (108). I take this to mean that we do not have to assume a realistic point of view when we try to grasp the meaning of a text that claims to be a faithful rendering of reality. Similarly, I would suggest that the atmosphere of suspicion in any text, but particularly in *Ghost Girl*, is not simply a question of the missing referent. The narrator’s bafflement followed by her attempt to read Jadie’s messages is not simply a function of her failure to provide a satisfactory answer to the question of who is abusing Jadie. The fact that who the real abusers are is secondary by virtue of a rhetoric device that foregrounds intellectual uncertainty.

I think it is useful to think about some of the historical contexts where prosopopoeia has been put in to practice. A friend of Horace Walpole, the author of the first Gothic novel, Thomas Gray was one of the poets of the graveyard school of the 18th century (*Princeton Encyclopedia*, 575). Gray's "Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard" is an apt example of the use of prosopopoeia. The voice of the poem is meditative, focusing on the uncanny silence of dead people. The poem is essentially about giving voice to those who are absent, who have passed away without notice. The ghostly component of these poems derives arguably from the fact that these poems offer glimpses of life after death in a textual sense. There is an often explicit tendency to censure those who are living: in all their power and wealth they have neglected those unsung histories of the poor who inhabit the graves. One of the couplets of Gray's poem reads thus:

Even from the tomb the voice of nature cries,

Even in our ashes live their wonted fires. (*Norton Anthology*, 2867)

The ghostliness of *Ghost Girl* is a function of the same rhetorical arrangement. Since Prosopopoeia by definition is an uncanny mode of writing, a poem or novels that allows the dead or absent persons speak is bound to have a certain effect on the addressee. For Riffaterre the use of prosopopoeia entails a kind of symmetry between the addresser and the addressee which he calls a chiasmus. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry*, the word derives from the Greek letter X and from the verb *chiazein* which means to "place crosswise" (225). But it can be used as a way of illustrating the structure of the work too:

Chiasmus, the symmetrical structure of prosopopoeia, entails that, by making the dead speak, the living are struck dumb – they too become the monument. Prosopopoeia thus stakes out a figural space for the chiasmic interpretation.

(112)

In my interpretation it is precisely this symmetry “figural space of chiasmic interpretation” that one is able to see at play in *Ghost Girl*. The narrator is struck dumb by the spectral figures in Jadie’s re-enactments. One could say that it is the essence of this chiasmic interpretation that it is inert or in other words, incapable of providing a clear resolution to the narrative. The narrator is dumbfounded; this narrative lethargy becomes one of the main sources of ghostliness in *Ghost Girl*. Hence, the absence of definite answers results in a paranoia, as each member of the narrative becomes a potential candidate for abuse. When the narrator undresses Jadie’s sister Amber in order to inspect an injury, the six-year-old girl remarks that her mother has forbidden her to let anyone undo her clothes without permission. However, after the removal of the trousers, a scar is detected in Amber’s abdomen and it turns out to be one of those symbols Hugh discovered in Jadie’s drawings. Its revelation is followed by Amber’s mysterious repetition of the phrase “X marks the spot” which is often used by Jadie. The appearance of the symbol X at half point of the narrative also marks a chiastic or hour-glass shaped pattern in the story. When the narrator interrogates Amber it is revealed that Jadie is responsible for drawing the X-shaped symbol. From this point onwards the narrator starts to entertain doubts about Jadie’s innocence. That this marks the chiastic structure is arguably a result of the fact that it coincides with a reversal of earlier roles of the helpless victim and victimizer. Until this point in the story the reader has thought that the teacher tries to save Jadie, but at this crucial point the story seems to suggest that Jadie is actually the victimizer.

Deeply troubled, I returned to my class. I did not know what to think now. While the degree of Jadie's disturbance had always been an issue in interpreting the things she told about, it had never crossed my mind that she, herself, might actually be the perpetrator. This threw everything into an entirely different light, and I was horrified by the implications. (257)

After childish innocence becomes suspect, the reader and the narrator embark together on a quest to unveil the truth about the child: is she genuinely bad or just made to look so? The essentially evil, Gothic sexuality of the child is outlined in *The Turn of the Screw* where we are first led to think about the curious way in which the governess is being carried away, or seduced by the beauty and innocence of his charges. Thus there appears a twist in the tale where the child becomes the potential aggressor. It appears that Jadie has brutally killed a cat. On questioning Jadie of the issue, Jadie explains that her abusers "tingled her pranny" with the cat's tail, and finally tore the cat in pieces, sprinkling Jadie with the cat's blood (263). On hearing this narrator's anxiety escalates into a panic. Since Jadie again refers to "Bobby and Clayton" as the perpetrators, the narrator's uncertainty as to the ontology of these re-enactments of abuse prompts her to wring out a confession from Jadie. This climactic scene is reminiscent of the governess's remark in *The Turn of the Screw*: "*If he confesses, he is saved*" (112; italics original):

"Jadie, you must tell, "I said. when I could finally trust my voice again. "This can't go on. It needs to come out into the open." "I can't tell." "You can. If the things you are telling me are true then we must stop them. I can't do it alone. I

can't do it without your help, but it has got to stop. These are wrong, bad, *terrible* things, and they should never be happening to anyone. "I can't tell", she said again, plaintively, tears thickening her voice. (264; italics original)

But we must remember that this climax of the narrative also signals the end of it. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the boy called Miles dies on the act of confessing — there is a sense in which the Governess has caused the death of the boy by requiring that the truth about unspeakable sexualities is brought into the open. The urge to wring out the confession is also a symptom of the narrator's selfish desire to get to the bottom of things. Similarly, in *Ghost Girl* this insistence on the truth on the part of the teacher leads to the symbolic death of the queer child as I will show in the next section. In sum, the closure in both stories suggests that not only the child but also the governess is an ambivalent figure that actually or symbolically kills her protégés with her overpowering presence.

In this section I have analyzed the function of Jamesian knowledge effects in *Ghost Girl*. *The Turn of the Screw* establishes a pattern where the Gothic child is essentially an epistemological creature that invites us to assess such basic categories of thinking as adult/child and knowledge/innocence. In my analysis I have drawn on Eric Savoy's analysis of queer formalism which is helpful in approaching incest narratives. According to Savoy, *The Turn of the Screw* is a narrative that can be regarded as a template for contemporary stories of child abuse (245). Some of the formal features mentioned above include for example, connotation which according to Savoy is responsible for creating ambiguity in the story. Secondly, I have analyzed such rhetorical devices as prosopopoeia and chiasmus and showed their function in *Ghost Girl*. I have also attempted to outline what I call poetics of doubt in *Ghost Girl*: the

narrative that defies “self-evidence of denotative language” helps to usher in what Savoy has termed an adumbrated narrative (250) that centers on suspicion. In my opinion these formal features of *Ghost Girl* are helpful additions to the insights provided by Freud in “The Uncanny”. In incest narrative like *Ghost Girl* the reader is asked to share the narrator’s rhetorical inconclusiveness. Instead of presenting clear-cut resolutions, the narrative constitutes of repeated returns to the impossibility of providing definite answers. In the next section I will analyze the problem of closure in *Ghost Girl* and how it refuses to warrant us with a solution to the enigmatic sexual abuse of Jadie by characters from Dallas.

3.3. Narrative Closure and Reproductive Futurity in *Ghost Girl*

Since the movement of the screw constitutes in fact not a circle, but a spiral which never closes: the spiral consists of a series of repeated circlings in which what turns is indeed about to re-turn, but only returns so as to miss anew its point of departure, to miss the closing point, the completion (or perfection) of the circle. (Felman, 178)

In my analysis of *Ghost Girl* I have been influenced by Shoshanna Felman’s above-quoted summary of the logic of narrative of suspicion. I have emphasized that *Ghost Girl* consists of repeated narrative reversals: each attempt to solve the enigmatic narrative of the child is regularly made redundant by a new plunge into the circle of suspicion. One of the themes foregrounded in the text is the question of *knowledge*. According to Sedgwick, knowledge is not power in itself but it is a magnetic field of power: it is particularly implicated in the

command of ignorance (4-7). For example, the narrator in *Ghost Girl* repeatedly justifies her intrusion to queer topics such as Satanism by underscoring ignorance: “I’d never been particularly interested in such subject matters” (223). One could read the story of the *Ghost Girl* as a paradigmatic example of deconstructive thinking: we have a similarly vague sense that there is nothing real beyond the mask of language. However, the story itself asserts that the impossibility of closure testifies to the realism of the story, that it is not fiction. In this final section I will analyse the importance of the apparent lack of closure in *Ghost Girl*.

Curiously, *Ghost Girl* seems to have not one but two endings. The first one appears in an epilogue that sums up the case history of Jadie where the narrator points out that she is *not* able to offer a satisfactory closure to her story:

Some ten years on I still find this the single most harrowing case I’ve involved with, in part, because it still persistently controverts all efforts to close it. As I write the book, I so wish I could draw the kinds of satisfying conclusions that would elevate it from the inelegant real-life situation it is. Clearly I realize a clear cut climax and resolution would make it a much better book. Unfortunately it would also make it fiction. (373)

However, a few pages later the narrator concludes that “Jadie is now doing admirably” and that she is “soaring academically” (377). She is planning an academic career “most likely in English literature” (378). Today, we are told, Jadie is an “unusually attractive young woman” (378) who is “busy getting on with her life” (378). It seems that narrator has, after all, managed to offer us a satisfactory conclusion to her story. It is a story of a child getting a life,

a movement from an underworld of sadistic nightmares towards normal life. The tenet of a heterosexual futurity is implied in the reference to Jadie's good looks: she is attractive and it is likely that in the future she will find a husband, possibly from the university she goes to study at. The bodily transformation of Jadie from the monster she was to this attractive and intelligent woman she is now is the major achievement of the narrative, its grand closure.

However, in contrast to what the narrator wants us to believe, this type of ending is not simply a "real-life situation" but signals a *political choice*. For Lee Edelman, the pressure on writing a proper ending to the story whereby the child is rescued to the heteronormative future is also a pressure on producing a story that is essentially anti-queer (12). In this way we embrace our commitment to heterosexual narrativity of liberalism that sees reproduction as the basis of social continuity (Edelman, 27). Edelman writes:

For the liberal's view of the society which seems to accord the queer a place, endorses no more than the conservative right's the queerness of resistance to futurism and thus the queerness of the queer. While the right wing imagines the elimination of queers (or the need to confront their existence) the left would eliminate queerness by shining the cool light of reason upon it, hoping thereby to expose it as merely a mode of sexual expression free of all-pervasive coloring, the determining fantasy formation by means of which it can seem to portend and not for the right alone, the undoing of social order and its cynosure, the Child. . (28)

According to this framework of interpretation, the closure of *Ghost Girl* signals a denial of sexual pleasure of a child. Once the shadow of death that characterizes Jadie in her ghostly condition is removed, the future seems sexually promising for this de-Gothicized Jadie. Edelman's queer readings of narratives of childhood suggest that our society's normative approach to homosexuality and childhood are closely intertwined. Though we are eager to deny the possibility of sexuality and sexual pleasure in children, we implicitly think about them as heterosexuals. Homosexuality is a threat to society because it is associated with death: homosexuals are the gravediggers of our society (Edelman, 114). In this way children who are Gothicized also form a threat to the narrative stability of reproductive futurity.

One may also compare the appearance of a normal Jadie in *Ghost Girl* with the death of her fictional double, Miles, in *The Turn of the Screw*. Remembering Freud's assertion in "The Uncanny" that the emergence of the double foreshadows death, one could have anticipated such narrative termination also in *Ghost Girl*. Jadie, however, is saved by her teacher. One may ask whether this upshot in the narrative is simply a question of intertextual asymmetry or whether the birth of a normalized Jadie also signals a death, albeit a symbolic one, of a queer Jadie? David Wagenknecht has argued that a typical closure of the stories featuring aggressive sexual children revolves around repressed homophobia. Miles is put to death in *The Turn of the Screw* because we know that he may have had sex with his adult male custodian. Nathaniel in Hoffmann's story *The Sandman*, quoted by Freud in "The Uncanny", suffers a violent death for similar reasons (445). Edelman's argument in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* suggests that in the narratives of childhood closure plays a decisive role. Edelman argues that we have an obsession with the logic of futurism that is epitomized in the image of the Child. Thus our culture has reserved two types of endings to narratives of

childhood; they either end with a promise of heteronormative futurity or terminate in premature death as a result of illegitimate desire.

Thus, my argument is that the ostensibly open ending in *Ghost Girl* does not testify to the story's nonliterary qualities. Rather, *Ghost Girl* takes part in the social construction of narratives of childhood, as Bruhm and Hurley put it, by appearing to render its ideology invisible (xiii). Thus, *Ghost Girl* appears to be a simple story where the queer history of Jadie is contrasted with her normality in the future. But as Bruhm and Hurley argue, there is a sense in which this narrative of reclaimed children is a product of adult fantasy:

In all these ostensibly simple stories —about Alice, queer teens, the children of gay and lesbian parents — the story of the child shifts almost imperceptibly to the story of the adult in a key moment: *the ending*. If writing is an act of world making, writing about children is doubly so: not only do writers control the terms of the world they represent, they also invent, over and over again, the very idea of inventing humanity, of training it, and watching it evolve. This inscription makes the child into a metaphor, a kind of ground zero for the edifice that is adult life, and around which narratives of sexuality get organized. As long as there is a sister to contain Alice, an editor to organize the voices of queer youth, and a squeaky-clean uncle to make being gay all right, the fantasy of preferred future that the child embodies is secure. (xiii; italics mine)

As my analysis has suggested, *Ghost Girl* ends with the symbolic death of queer Jadie. The story has shifted, indeed, almost imperceptibly to one telling of the heterosexual adult that she

has become. There is thus a sense in which such endings exemplify a pressure to “flatten the narrative of the child into a story of innocence” (Bruhm and Hurley, xiv). Bruhm and Hurley point out that narratives of erotic girls have a particular genealogy: such novels as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Little Eva* (1852), Dickens’s *Little Nell* (1841) and Louisa May Alcott’s *Beth March* (1868) fetishized erotic girls as martyrs (xviii). Bruhm and Hurley claim that these stories offered the sexual child as a victim of sinful culture who was able to transcend that very culture by her death. In such stories the child becomes a “paradigm of bourgeois heteronormativity” (xvii) whose “sexuality is exploited so that it can be dismissed and sacrificed on the altar of secular gender normativity” (xvii).

My analysis suggests that *Ghost Girl* takes part in this same cultural agenda of gender normativity: the story allows the child to eroticized, as long as this “sinfulness” is understood not to dwell within the child herself. In an earlier section I have mentioned Bond Stockton’s claim that cultural otherness poses a problem for narratives of childhood (298). This is because the seemingly innocent idea of childhood is a crystallization of middle-class values of privilege, whiteness and heterosexuality. In Bond Stockton’s view, deviations from this norm are tolerated if the child is rendered innocent by suggesting that he or she is victim of sinful culture: in the case of *Ghost Girl*, we have seen this cultural force represented by the pedophile. The figure of the middle-class redeemer, in this case the child-psychologist and narrator, represents normalcy. Thus a queer reading of *Ghost Girl* suggests that the strange Jadie is put to death or “sacrificed to the altar of secular gender normativity (Bruhm and Hurley, xv) because she poses a threat to the normative middle-class culture. In her analysis of illicit child-loving in *The Turn of the Screw* Ellis Hanson has suggested that the figure of the pedophile is associated with the working class (367). The children themselves prefer the

company of these wicked creatures in James's story. It is the task of the governess to "save" the child and incidentally kill him in the process. My analysis suggests that these assumptions are also present, albeit tacitly, when one is reading *Ghost Girl*. This is because, as I have tried to demonstrate, the Governess and orphan girl genre is characterized by ambiguity that permeates all levels of the narrative.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined Torey Hayden's *Ghost Girl* as an example of Gothic storytelling. I have shown the text's affinity with such canonical Gothic narratives as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. Thus, by this juxtaposition I have sought to illustrate the difficulties of making clear distinctions between such categories as literary fiction and contemporary popular non-fiction narratives. Arguably *Ghost Girl* exemplifies a story that is more complicated than the cultural critics of "misery literature" such as Anne Rothe seem to suggest. *Ghost Girl* takes part in the cultural construction of childhood and incorporates a nexus of ideas which have a long history, including Freud's theories of sexuality and Gothic literary fictions. *Ghost Girl* is not a simple story that does not merit close reading, or where the difference between the villain and the innocent victim is clearly discernible.

Firstly, the above analysis (3.1) has suggested that *Ghost Girl* evokes a kind of narrative uncertainty that operates on all the levels of the work. On the basis of Freud's study "The Uncanny" I have presented such instances in real life which are, according to Freud source of anxiety. In Freud's view the source of uncanny is located in childhood experiences. The difficulty of defining the concept of the uncanny results from its two fold nature: in addition to being something strange, it is also something familiar that has taken place in childhood but which has now been forgotten. Thus, Freud argues, that the uncanny is somehow related to our amnesia concerning childhood experiences. As a result childhood in itself becomes characterized by a sort of uncanny or Gothic atmosphere. Such categories as normal and perverse are ambiguous in Freud's view, since childhood by definition is characterized by perverse sexuality. My analysis has demonstrated the links between Freud's narrative of

sexual development and his speculation on stories that evoke uncanny sensations. I have also suggested that queer theory is uncanny, since it can be seen as performing what Freud calls “the repetition compulsion” of sexuality. According to Freud, repetition is a central trope in the production of uncanny effects in both literature and in actual life. Moreover, the questions of the relationship between the categories of the normal and the strange are essential to a queer analysis of culture.

Moreover, I have considered Freud’s concern for the real/imaginary binary and suggested that *Ghost Girl* generates uncanny ambiguity at the level of genre. The reader is aware that this is not fiction; however, the text has a distinct literary quality to it. In addition to genre I have also outlined other uncanny features in *Ghost Girl* and shown that such examples of the uncanny mentioned by Freud as claustrophobia, automatism, the fear of being buried alive, are also applicable to Hayden’s narrative. There is a sense in which *Ghost Girl* becomes a textbook example of the eerie effects mentioned by Freud in “The Uncanny”. I have suggested that the uncanny atmosphere is mostly involved with a “troubling of definitions”: this is illustrated by the fact that the narrator in *Ghost Girl* has a problem of defining the truth concerning her protégé Jadie. The narrator’s attempt to understand “the things” which Jadie is telling her becomes a pattern in the narrative that is repeated. The narrative returns obsessively to the narrator’s puzzlement concerning the Gothic child, Jadie. This child is Gothic, because she is sexual and potentially aggressive, as I have demonstrated in the sections above.

As a result, in the section 3.2 I have incorporated my analysis of the uncanny effects in *Ghost Girl* into the general patterns of ambiguity in narratives. I have identified Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* as an influential example of a text that foregrounds what I have called

“knowledge effects”. These effects often overlap with those uncanny features of the text which I mentioned in an earlier section. I have compared and contrasted *Ghost Girl* with James’s ghost story and concluded that James’s narrative is an important precedent for contemporary incest narratives. In order to make sense of what I have called poetics of doubt in *Ghost Girl*, I have identified, following Shoshana Felman, a narrative pattern which is called “topography of turns”. At the level of the story the spiral of turns develops gradually as the narrator is trying to make sense of her protégé’s alleged abuse. There is a sense in which the Gothic atmosphere of suspicion is analogous to a screw that is tightened: however, this epistemological screw simply circles around its orbit, failing to produce a clear resolution. Moreover, the scene of abuse which I call “the thing” remains shadowy to say the least. This is also a feature that is indebted to James’s notion that any references to the vulgarity of actual abuse are avoided. What we are left with is the nearly intolerable atmosphere of suspicion. I have attempted to identify the different stages in the spiraling of suspicion as they manifest themselves in the narrative from the first misgivings of abuse to the narrator’s apprehension that she herself has become the victim of an infernal plot to kill her. Moreover, my analysis has shown that *Ghost Girl*’s portrayal of the Gothic child is associated with certain movement between the private and the public domains of action. The queer sexuality of Jadie is played out and displayed in the privacy of the closet, in other words, in the cloakroom that witnesses Jadie’s revelations concerning her abuse. Thus my analysis has suggested that the narrative tension in *Ghost Girl* follows the pattern of secrecy and disclosure outlined by Sedgwick in the *Epistemology of the Closet*. In this way, *Ghost Girl* foregrounds dialectical relationships between such categories as knowledge/ignorance and certainty/uncertainty.

The narrator's attempt to solve the mystery of Jadie calls attention to the fragility of her task. I have compared the narrator with the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. Arguably the atmosphere of ambiguity in both stories derives from the narrator's futile attempts to make sense of the child's traumatic pre-history. This uncertainty is a narrative device, which is predicated on Jamesian knowledge effects, as I have shown. All the gaps and holes in the narrative of *Ghost Girl* lead to a situation where the reader is left to wonder what the real cause of Jadie's disturbance is. I have argued that this uncertainty generates a narrative of suspicion that gradually develops into paranoia. The initial situation where the narrator regards herself as the savior of the disturbed girl is eventually turned upside down; it is possible that the child is the perpetrator, not the victim. But as I have shown it is a part and parcel of Jamesian knowledge effects that the reader is not sure. The scenario of ritual abuse could simply be a product of the narrator's imagination. It is a characteristic of the narrative to operate by turns, as I have shown. Paradoxically, new accumulating evidence of abuse generates more suspicion in the story. The result is a narrative that circulates or hovers around the suspicion that it has generated, without assigning any closure to it. I have argued that this kind of Gothic suspense, with the child in its focus, can be regarded as a template for contemporary incest narratives that circulate in the media.

In addition, I have identified in *Ghost Girl* certain formal features that follow closely a pattern titled "queer formalism" by Eric Savoy in his essay. I have listed such rhetorical figures as prosopopoeia which is deployed by the narrative particularly in regard to the child's discourse characterized by absent personages. Such formal features are also relevant to Derrida's idea of the supplement; it is characteristic of writing to defer its meaning and thus "the thing" itself remains elusive. Thus the common sense notion of realism that reality is attainable by writing

is a problematic one. Similarly the narrator's urge of immediacy and authenticity in *Ghost Girl* becomes a contested issue. However, the narrator argues that is the very lack of resolution in her narrative that testifies to its authenticity, as I have shown in section 3.3. I have argued that one of the consequences of this type of narrative schema is that questions of epistemology are foregrounded. Epistemology, unlike ontology, is concerned with the general question of how we know things, and whether it is possible to know anything. My analysis of Hayden's narrative suggests that the closure of *Ghost Girl* forces the aggressive and sexual child to remain in the closet. Her coming out would pose a threat to the (middle-class) tenets of childish innocence and reproductive futurity. This is because in *Ghost Girl* knowledge is hard to balance with innocence. My analysis has been informed by the notion that questions of knowledge in Western thinking are associated with sexuality. Thus the aggressive, sexual child in *Ghost Girl* is rendered tolerable and less threatening by the implicit assumption that her viciousness is not part of her character, but results from the corruptive influence of the adult society that surrounds her. We are ready to tolerate the child's sexualized behavior since we know that she has been sexually abused by the monstrous pedophiles. However, my analysis has shown that *Ghost Girl* undermines this conviction by certain repetitive patterns of storytelling. As a consequence the reader is made to vacillate between the extreme notions of childish innocence and impurity.

This constant movement between the two contrasting possibilities is characteristic of Gothic storytelling, as I have shown. In her book *Aliens in The Home*, Sabine Bussing argues that this idea of a child that is both evil and innocent originated in James's story *The Turn of the Screw*. According to Bussing, James's story is remarkable because it does not ignore the complexities of Freudian child psychology (103). Thus the notion of the "evil innocent" child has since

become a common figure in popular culture. Bussing's observation is that horror fiction that features strange children often simplifies things, by ascribing the child's knowledge of sexual issues to outside evil forces.

The problem of sexuality, on the other hand, has become a major point of interest in connection with the evil innocent. Since sexual activities of any kind are generally taboo, authors gladly employ evil spirits to give the "aberrations" of their child protagonists a plausible justification. Thus children may practice incest or masturbation or rape their relatives, always remaining detached observers of their own actions (*Aliens in the Home*, 103)

Bussing's analysis suggests that evil spirits and other supernatural forces are merely ploys that allow the author to "indulge in all kinds of obscenities" (104). They also justify the reader's urge for witnessing scenes of childhood sexuality. Moreover, they allow the child's innocence to remain intact. My analysis has suggested that *Ghost Girl* substitutes these supernatural spirits for the pedophiles that victimize Jadie. Thus the question of the child's own sexual desire and her violence is circumvented. A case in point is the pattern of exorcism in William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist*: after the devil (of evil sexuality) has been exorcized the child returns to her normal amiable self. Hence the Gothic sexuality of the story proper is characterized by irrational forces and there appears a clear distinction between the normal and the queer self. However, my analysis has suggested that *Ghost Girl* often complicates matters by applying Jamesian narrative strategies of ambiguity.

In this way my reading of *Ghost Girl* moves the issues of ontology and essence into the background. I have argued that this has a very powerful consequence in the way in which the reader interprets the narrative. In this way I have identified the presumed center of the text which stresses questions of reality and real suffering. Unlike the critics of misery narratives who have been preoccupied with the questions of authenticity, real/fake suffering and veracity in relation to misery memoirs, my analysis has attempted to decenter such concerns. Rather than focusing on ontological issues in *Ghost Girl*, I have foregrounded its literary elements as they manifest themselves through formal features, for example. In the following I will try to identify the implications of such decentering.

One of the possible consequences of such theoretical reframing is related to the distinction between literary and non-literary texts. As I have demonstrated in chapter 1.3, there is an inclination in cultural studies to decide in advance what kinds of texts deserve literary readings. As a sign of this, Anne Rothe argues that stories such as *Ghost Girl* are not read for their aesthetic qualities but rather, because they are thought of as warranting a proximity to genuine suffering. Thus there is a sense in which our preconceived notion of genre must coincide with a suitable way of reading: only aesthetically superior texts should merit literary readings. Such a view of literature seems to suggest that genuine literature lacks any practical purpose. Literature is meaningful since it does not want to proselytize or bring us to God, or spread the gospel of trauma culture as Rothe argues. This seems to suggest that great books that belong to the canon of literature are aesthetically superior precisely because of their certain disinterestedness.

According to this line of reasoning, ‘misery literature’ and such books as *Ghost Girl* are not literature because they have a practical purpose: by appearing to appeal to the reader’s softer sentiments they want to turn him compassionate towards the sufferings of tormented children. (In chapter 2.2 I suggested that sentimentality in art is a contested issue that is also linked to political questions.) Rather, such texts are treated as expressions of socio-political situation from which they seem to stem. In Sara Ahmed’s book *Cultural Politics of Emotion* emotions and their manifestations in cultural forms are not given neither psychological nor socio-political readings, rather emotions become forces that shape our understanding of such categories as “the individual” and “the collective” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10). However, Ahmed’s theory of the circulation of emotions in culture questions the purported authenticity of emotions. Feelings only seem to reside in objects while the history of their association with objects is obliterated. Thus, emotions become fetishized. Because the subject does not know *why* he feels certain emotions in relation to an object, he or she does not know how to questions the authenticity of emotions which seem to stem from the subject’s psyche.

In Ahmed’s view, emotions do not exist a priori or inside the individual psyche, but they are generated or performed through certain repetitive speech patterns. Thus Ahmed’s notion of the performativity of emotions takes us back to chapter 2 where I discussed the impact of Austin’s speech act theory on cultural studies. In Ahmed’s view emotions circulate, not only around objects, but also by becoming attached to certain words with the aid of literary or rhetorical figures (12). These formal features of language allow emotions to stick to certain words and objects. While the subject tends to regard his or her emotions as causes that are generated in contact with objects, Ahmed’s analysis claims that the opposite is the case: emotions shape the objects and their distinctiveness is a result of this contact (13). Moreover, it is

characteristic for emotions that they “slide” through words and objects while generating effects (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 14).

In my view of Ahmed’s analysis implies that emotions in culture are a means of authenticating certain narratives of loss over others. Ahmed’s textual examples include a British National Front Poster (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 1). In this poster the white male subject is regarded as the injured party, and there is a sense in which bogus asylum seekers who invade the country are penetrating the nation. In my view this idea of penetration is important as an extended metaphor, since it restages the political situation in sexual terms. The white male subject feels love towards the nation which is assaulted by hateful immigrants. Ahmed stresses the importance of this trope:

So who is hated in such narrative of injury? Clearly, hate is distributed across various figures (in this case, the mixed racial couple, the child-molester, the rapist, aliens and foreigners). These figures come to embody the threat of loss: lost jobs, lost money, lost land. They threaten to violate the pure bodies; such bodies can only be imagined as pure by the perpetual restaging of this fantasy of violation. Note the work that is being done through the *metonymic slide*: mixed race couplings and immigration become readable as forms of rape or molestation; an invasion of the body evoked here as the vulnerable and damaged bodies of the white woman and child. (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 44; italics mine)

This passage is disturbing in many ways. Firstly, it suggests that narratives of injury necessitate the image of the hateful other; in the case of *Ghost Girl* the pedophile is interchangeable with the immigrant. Hence there is a sense in which our love for the tormented victim is coupled with hate; our love is the alleged *reason* why we are entitled to hate the monster that has caused the child's suffering. Secondly, this passage suggests that the compassionate reading subject may unconsciously take part in promoting emotional discourse about privileged subjects who possess a greater resource to narratives of injury. Ahmed's metonymic slide implies that narratives of child molestation can be read alongside with the poster of British National Front. The white child that is at the center of the narrative in *Ghost Girl* is a symbol that is easily identified as our loss and hence can be paralleled with the female personification of the nation. Hence, due to such metonymic slippage the body of an individual becomes the national body, an embodiment of the collective.

In this study I have argued that childhood and tormented children can easily become the subject of our grief and sympathy, because of their innocence and purported ignorance. In the preface to a book about compassion in contemporary American culture, Lauren Berlant states that the Freudian concept of *Schadenfreude* is always present even if we were talking about genuine sympathy (5). By *Schadenfreude* Freud meant the pleasure one derives from witnessing the other's suffering. This is important in Berlant's view because we as readers and consumers of modern spectacles of suffering are forced to admit that we are also entertained simultaneously. Regardless of the oxymoronic quality of suffering and entertainment, it would be useful, I would suggest, to understand that experiencing pain vicariously is a form of popular culture which combines the idea of social optimism with a more bleaker view which wants to remain distant from a culture which derives comfort from the social wrongs. In her

outline of modern politics in the United States, Berlant reminds us of the fact that the conservative governance has taken the cult of compassion as a tool in their politics. The expression of *compassionate conservatism* (4) has become a catchphrase in the last decade. The emotional response we are asked to feel in the current context seems to have its counterpart in replacing the old system of welfare state:

Great Society ideology had presumed that the social realities of privilege did not require individual intentions and practices to contribute directly to inequality. Nor were one's particular experiences deemed authentic evidence of whether undemocratic practices were organizing life [...] Instead unjust inequalities were objective and enabled by state sanction. (2)

Following this line of argumentation which draws a parallel between the functions of sentimentality in contemporary society and politics I would like to locate the reading subject of the subgenre of misery memoirs at the centre of this political battle. The conservative bias of these texts seems to be that political action is not based on reason, but it has its roots on our emotional response. Such a view has a bleak idea of the subject of popular culture; in the affective meaning economy we do not simply decide rationally on who deserves our sympathy but our response is proportionate to the way in which the afflicted subject is capable of rousing our emotions. In her discussion of modern therapeutic culture, Sara Ahmed addresses writing as a cure for past illnesses. She notes, contrary to Berlant, that the political bias of testimony is not always conservative (5). Both Berlant and Ahmed argue that we should be wary of being too eager to denounce manifestations of compassion in cultural and aesthetic forms. There are subjects who deserve our sympathy. This thesis has shown that the problem may lie in the

often implicit images of normativity that are interwoven with narratives of injury. As I have discussed above, it is the tendency of hate speech to create an image of a normative subject that is in danger and becomes a token for an 'ordinary citizen'. Similarly, the image of an innocent child is an often repeated figure which is related to the heteronormative practices of contemporary culture and society.

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FINNISH SUMMARY

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan lapsuuden esittämistä populaarikirjallisuudessa. Analyysin keskipisteessä on Torey Haydenin teos *Aavetyttö*, jossa muistelman kirjoittaja kertoo kahdeksanvuotiaan Jadie Ekdahlin yllä häilyvästä seksuaalisen hyväksikäytön epäilystä. Tekstiä lähestytään Henry Jamesin tunnetun kauhutarinan *The Turn of the Screw* rinnakkaistekstinä. Tutkimuksessa Jamesin tarinaa luetaan inestitarinana, joka tarjoaa mallin nykypäivänä mediassa kiertävien inestitarinoiden lähestymiseen. Teoksen analyysia edeltää johdanto – ja teoriaosiot, joissa Haydenin teosta ja sen tapaa esittää lapsuutta tarkastellaan queer-teorian viitekehyksestä. Tutkimuksessa väitetään, että tarinat lapsista ovat tärkeällä sijalla kun normatiivisia käytänteitä ja ajatusmalleja tuotetaan yhteiskunnassa, sekä kiinnitetään huomiota siihen, että viattomuus on itsessään poliittinen toiminnan strategia. Haydenin teoksen analyysiin tukeutuen tutkimus esittää, ettei lapsuuden esittäminen hyväksikäytettyjen lasten tarinoissa nojautu yksinomaan hyvä-paha dikotomioihin. Keskeiseksi Haydenin inestitarinan analyysissä nousee kysymys epäilystä itsestään, sen luonteesta ja retorisisista keinoista, jotka mahdollistavat tarinallisen jännityksen.

Haydenin teos asetetaan tässä tutkimuksessa osaksi kirjallisen perinteen jatkumoa, jossa näkyy jälkiä useista tekstityypeistä. Haydenin muistelmä nähdään tekstilajien hybridinä, jossa sekä gotiikan kerrontaperinteet että psykoanalyttinen tapaustutkimus kohtaavat. Tutkimuksessa yhdistetään teorioita tekstityyppien sekoittuneisuudesta Sigmund Freudin analyysiin outouden (Das Unheimliche) ilmenemismuodoista kirjallisuudessa, ja väitetään että Haydenin teos on itsessään esteettisenä objektina outo; se on lähtökohdiltaan genren rajoja rikkova. Siten on

hedelmällisempää lähestyä Haydenin kertomusta tarinan rakenteen heterogeneettisyyden ehdoilla, kuin että korostettaisiin omaelämäkerrallisen autenttisuuden ongelmia.

Johdannossa kehitellään Lee Edelmanin esittämää ajatusta lapsuudenpalvonnasta (the cult of the Child). Sen ilmentymänä on Edelmanin mukaan kulttuurin pakonomainen tapa toistaa ideaalia viattomasta lapsuudesta. Edelmanin mukaan tämä metatarina otetaan kulttuurissa usein annettuna poliittisesta katsantokannasta riippumatta. Tutkimuksessa osoitetaan, että lapsuus on itsessään kiistanalainen käsite lapsuudentutkimuksessa. Lapsuudenpalvonta siihen liittyvine normatiivisuuden ajatuksineen — ”lisääntykää ja täyttäkää maa” — on Edelmanin mukaan nykykulttuurin tapa edistää normatiivisuutta tarinallisuuden keinoin. Lapsuus on Edelmanin mukaan itsessään hienovaraisesti rakennettu tarina, jossa huomio kiinnittyy siihen, että lapset nähdään aina normaaleina. Ajatus tulevaisuudesta lasten alueena liittyy Edelmanin muotoilussa siihen että lapset, viattomuudestaan ja epäseksuaalisuudestaan huolimatta ovat myös heteroseksuaaleja. Edelmanin ajatuksena on, ettei nykykulttuurin käsitys lapsuudesta voi sisällyttää itsensä sukupuolista poikkeavuutta siihen sisäänrakennetun normatiivisuuden vuoksi. Tämän seurauksena Edelmanin näkemys on, ettei lapsuus koskaan voi sisällyttää myöskään ajatusta poliittisesta vastarinnasta. Ainoa tapa vastustaa idealisoitua kuvaa lapsuudesta on queer-teoria, joka Edelmanin muotoilussa yhdistyy Freudin ajatukseen kuolemanvietistä. Siten valtakulttuurin sentimentaalinen projektio lapsista tulevaisuuden suvunjatkajina ja queer-teoria ovat Edelmanin katsannossa yhteen sovittamattomia.

Edelmanin lapsuuden idealisointia kritisoivan näkökulman lisäksi tutkimus tuo esille Anne Rothen esittämän ajatuksen traumaattisten tarinoiden vastaanottajista: inestien uhriksi joutuneiden kertomuksia luetaan juuri niiden oletetun autenttisuuden vuoksi. Toisin kuin Edelman väittää, inestitarinoiden lukeva subjekti kääntyy näiden tarinoiden puoleen juuri koska lapsuus nähdään merkinä viattomuudesta ja autenttisuudesta. Journalismissa ja kulttuurintutkimuksessa näitä tarinoita nimitetään usein pilkallisesti kurjuusmuistelmiksi. Rothen tulkinnan mukaan populaarikulttuurin lukeva subjekti on osa populaaria traumakulttuuria, jossa keskivertolukija on usein kritiikitön ja ottaa annettuna ajatuksen kärsimyksestä autenttisuuden takeena. Siten kurjuusmuistelmien lukeva subjekti on olennaisesti massakulttuurin harhauttama. Tutkimuksessa Rothen pessimistinen ajatus popkulttuurin subjektista asetetaan marxilaisen massakulttuurin kritiikin traditioon. Tämän tuloksena syntyy ambivalentti suhde kulttuurituotteisiin, niiden autenttisuutta populaarin, kansanomaisen kulttuurin ilmentäjänä epäillään, vaikka samanaikaisesti hyväksytään populaarikulttuurin tärkeys korkeakulttuurin vastavoimana. Vastapainona tälle pessimistiselle tavalla lähestyä populaareja inestitarinoita ja niiden vastaanottoa tutkimuksessa väitetään, ettei Haydenin inestitarina asetu yksinkertaiselle lapsuuden hyvä-paha jatkumolle, eikä se myöskään tule ymmärrettäväksi pelkästään genren autenttisuusoletukseen ja ontologisiin kysymyksenajatteluihin nojaten. Tutkimuksessa oletetaan, että kurjuuskirjallisuuden lukija on kykenevä hienovaraisempiin distinktioihin kuin Rothe antaa ymmärtää.

Tutkimuksen teoriaosassa tarkastellaan ensiksi lapsuutta ja sen esittämistä erityisesti sellaisten vastakohtaparien kuten tieto/tietämättömyys ja viattomuus/säädyyttömyys avulla. Jälkimmäinen käsitepari on keskeinen Philippe Ariésin lapsuuden idean syntyhistoriaa

käsittelevässä teoksessa *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*. Ariésin ajatus lapsuuden käsitteen rakennetusta luonteesta liitetään tässä tutkimuksessa osaksi queer-teorian perinnettä, jossa sukupuoli identiteetti nähdään performanssina, jota uusinnetaan määrättyillä toistuvilla puhetavoilla. Ariésin mukaan lapsuuden idean kehittymisen suuri linja on siirtymä lapsuuden ajatuksen eriytymättömyydestä kohti tilannetta jossa lapsuudesta tulee kulttuurin, perheen ja porvarillisen yhteiskunnan keskiö. Olennaista tälle kehitykselle on, että sen kuluessa kehittyä ajatus lapsuuden viattomuudesta. Tutkimuksessa osoitetaan queer-teorian ja lapsuudentutkimuksen välinen yhteys. Queer-teoreetikko ja kirjallisuudentutkija Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick väittää kirjassa *Epistemology of the Closet*, että suuri osa länsimaisen yhteiskunnan jaotteluista perustuu homo-hetero vastakohtaparin jännitteeseen. Siten sellaiset käsitteparit kuin viaton/kokenut tai tieto/tietämättömyys ovat seksuaalisesti määrittyneitä. Queer-teorian valossa lapsuuden kulttuurinen rakentuminen rinnastuu Sedgwickin hahmottelemaan kaapin (closet) dialektiikkaan vihjailuineen ja peittelyineen. Näin alun perin alakulttuurinen ajatus kaapista laajentuu tutkimuksessa osaksi yleistä kulttuurin tapaa rakentaa käsityksiä eroja itsen ja muiden välillä. Sedgwickin väite on, että kaapin synnyttämä jännite liittyy olennaisesti tiedollisiin kysymyksiin ts. epistemologiaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa oletetaan, että nämä tietämisen rajoihin ja mahdollisuuksiin liittyvät kysymykset ovat lähtökohta lapsuuden esittämisen analyysille.

Teoriaosan toisessa luvussa lähestytään Sedgwickin mainitsemaa vastakohtaparia vilpittömyys/sentimentalisuus. Koska lapsuuden representaatiot ”kurjuusmuistelmissa” rakennetaan usein tämän vastakohtaparin avulla, tutkimus pyrkii hahmottamaan sentimentaalisten representaatioiden jännitteitä yleisellä tasolla ja erityisesti niiden suhdetta

kysymykseen autenttisuudesta. On kiistanalaista, näkevätkö kriitikot sentimentaalisuuden halpahintaisena totuuden vääristelynä vai tapana päästä lähemmäksi yhteistä ihmisyyden rajapintaa. Tässä osassa käsitellään Richard S. Solomonin sentimentaalisuuteen myönteisesti suhtautuvaa lähestymistapaa. Sen lisäksi osoitetaan kriittinen tutkimusperinne, jossa sentimentaalisuus nähdään petollisena ja epäeettisenä. Tässä mielessä yllä mainittu traumakulttuurin ja kurjuuskirjallisuuden kriitikko Anne Rothe liittyy jälkimmäiseen traditioon.

Teoriaosan kolmas luku laajentaa kysymystä autenttisuuden ja sentimentaalisuuden suhteista osaksi genre-analyysia. Lähtökohtana toimivat *Aavetytössä* usein esitetyt vakuuttelut tarinan autenttisuudesta ja epätarinallisuudesta. Myös Anne Rothe väittää traumakulttuurin analyysissään, että omaelämäkerta-genre on nykyään arvostetumpi genre kuin fiktio, koska siinä yhdistyy ajatus kärsimyksen autenttisuudesta lukijoiden illuusion kokemuksen välittömyydestä. Rothen ehdotuksen mukaan genererajojen häilyvyys nykyculttuurissa on johtanut tilanteeseen, jossa lukeva yleisö kaipaa lukukokemuksia joita ei luonnehdi monitulkintaisuus. Tämä osio pyrkii vastaamaan tähän väitteeseen kahdella tavalla. Ensinnäkin pyritään osoittamaan normatiivisen genrekäsityksen ongelmakohdat: genret ovat itsessään monitulkintaisia ja niiden suhde todellisuuteen määrittyy subjektiivisten valintojen ja preferenssien kautta. Jacques Derridan ajatusta genrestä soveltamalla tämä tutkimus olettaa, että genret eivät aiheuta lukijoille ongelmia ollessaan sekoittuneita, päinvastoin osa lukemisen mielihyvystä palautetaan niiden määritelmälliseen monitulkintaiseen. Toiseksi, tutkimuksessa osoitetaan että genren käsite voidaan myös ymmärtää yleisenä maailman jäsentämisen tapana. Bahtin ja Volosinov väittävät kirjoituksissaan, että genret eivät ole pelkästään tekstityyppejä

vaan suhteita joiden avulla yksilö asettuu dialektiseen vuorovaikutukseen ympäristönsä kanssa.

Teoriaosan neljäs luku soveltaa edellisessä luvussa esitettyjä käsityksiä genrestä käytäntöön etsimällä yhtäläisyyksiä goottilaisen kirjallisuuden historiakäsityksen ja psykoanalyysin yksilöä koskevien tarinoiden välillä. Tutkimuksessa ehdotetaan, että Freudin ajatus yksilön historiasta on rinnastettavissa gotiikan maailmankuvaan: yksilön, kuten yhteisönkin menneisyys näyttäytyy arkaaisena viettien taistelukenttänä. Tässä osassa osoitetaan Freudin panos lapsuuden viattomuuden idean uudelleenarvioinnissa. Freudin näkökulmasta lapsi esittäytyy potentiaalisesti aggressiivisena ja seksuaalisena olentona. Freudin muotoilujen samanaikaisuus monitulkintaisten gotiikan lapsikuvien esiintulon kanssa on se historiallinen tausta, johon Haydenin tekstin lähiluenta tässä tutkimuksessa rinnastetaan.

Analyysiosan ensimmäisessä luvussa sovelletaan Freudin analysoimaa outouden tai kammottavan käsitettä (*Das Unheimlich*) *Aavetyön* tulkintaan. Freud määrittelee tosielämässä ja kirjallisuudessa esiintyvät outouden kokemukset tunteiksi jotka ilmentävät kategorioiden häilyvyyttä. Outoudessa ei ole pelkästään kyse tuntemattoman kohtaamisesta, vaan siihen liittyy myös muistuma jostain tutusta joka on unohtunut. Outouden käsitteen monitulkintaisuus on rakennettu itse sanan etymologiaan, sillä ilmaus ”unheimlich” sisältää paitsi merkityksen piilossa olevasta ja kätketystä, myös avoimuudesta ja tuttuudesta. Freudin analyysin kohteena ovat erityisesti outouden manifestaatiot kirjallisuudessa, ja hän tarkastelee erilaisia keinoja joiden avulla oudot vaikutelmat ilmenevät. Freudin analyysin mukaan

outouden kokemukset liittyvät olennaisesti lapsuuteen. Kirjallisuudessa usein esiintyvä ajatus kaksoisolennosta esimerkiksi liittyy Freudin mukaan lapsen esikielelliseen kokemusmaailmaan jota luonnehtivat kaikkivoipaosuuskuvitelmat. Aikuisuudessa tämä tila on unohtunut ja kaksoisolento muuttuu kammottavaksi, siitä tulee kuoleman viestintuoja. Kaksoisolennosta muistuttavia outoja asioita ovat peilikuvat ja ajatus sielusta, mutta myös samankaltaisina toistuvat tilanteet. Koska lapsen kehityksen varhaisvaiheet rinnastuvat Freudin ajattelussa ihmiskunnan alkuhämärän kanssa, tässä tutkimuksessa outoutta lähestytään eräänlaisena vastentahtoisena paluuna tilaan, joka muistuttaa gotiikan kertomuksia. Outouden käsite nivoutuu tässä tutkimuksessa myös queer-tutkimuksen kysymykseen normaalin ja epänormaalin välisestä rajankäynnistä.

Analyysissä selvitetään outouden ilmentymiä *Aavetyössä* ensinnäkin tekstityypin ambivalenttiuden kautta. Freudin mukaan outouteen liittyy usein rajojen hämärtyminen toden ja kirjallisuuden välillä. Tutkimuksessa *Aavetyön* outous liitetään juuri Freudin ehdottamaan genren rajojen häilyvyyteen. Toinen tärkeä aspekti outojen vaikutelmien synnyssä on toisto. Freudin mukaan toistosta tulee kammottavaa, mikäli siihen liittyy tunne vastentahtoisuudesta ja kohtalonomaisuudesta. Analyysi tarjoaa esimerkin *Aavetyön* juonilinjasta: kun kertoja saapuu pikkukaupunkiin vastaanottaakseen pestin opettajana, hänelle kerrotaan että hänen edeltäjänsä on tehnyt itsemurhan. Tarinan edetessä syntyy vaikutelma, että kertoja on kuin kuningas Oidipus Sofokleen näytelmässä joka tahtomattaan nai äitinsä. Tässä tapauksessa kertojan tarinasta on vaarassa tulla kohtalonomainen toisinto hänen edeltäjänsä mystisestä kuolemasta. Toiston ja kaksoisolentojen lisäksi analyysi tarjoaa muitakin Freudin mainitsemia esimerkkejä outoudesta joiden ilmentymiä *Aavetyössä* tutkielma tarkastelee. Tässä

mainittakoon erityisesti suljetun paikan kammo, mikä Freudin ajattelussa liitetään alkukantaiseen pelkoon elävältä haudatuksi tulemista kohtaan. Aavetyössä tämä vaikutelma on olennainen, sillä tarina sijoittuu paljolti lukittuun huoneeseen, jossa kertoja on kahden suojattinsa kanssa. Siten outouden yhteys käsitepariin kätkeyty/avoin tulee olennaiseksi tulkinnan välineeksi. Aavetyön outous liittyy paljolti kertojan kyvyttömyyteen muuttaa kahdenkeskisissä kohtaamisissa kuullut tarinat julkiseksi, avoimeksi tiedoksi. Aavetyön kammottavuus liitetään analyysissä myös pelkoon siitä, ettei ympäristö voikaan kuulla mitä yksilöllä on sanottavanaan.

Analyysin toisessa jaksossa tämä outouden logiikka ja siihen liittyvä selvärajaisten kategorioiden hämärtyminen yhdistetään kysymyksiin tiedosta ja sen rakentumisen ehdoista. Analyysissä eritellään erilaisia tekstuaalisia keinoja joilla tarina voi rakentaa tiedollista epävarmuutta ja monitulkintaisuutta. Tekstiä lähestytään Henry Jamesin tunnetun kauhutarinan *The Turn of the Screw* rinnakkaistekstinä. Tutkimuksessa Jamesin tarinaa luetaan insestitarinana, joka tarjoaa mallin lähesty myös nykypäivänä mediassa kiertäviä tarinoita hyväksikäytetyistä lapsista. Jamesin tarinalle on ominaista harkittu tiedollinen epävarmuus suhteessa hyväksikäytön alkuperään. Tutkimuksessa ehdotetaan, että jamesilaisen tahallisen tiedollisen hämärtämisen tekniikka on nähtävissä myös Haydenin tarinassa. Tällainen tarina rakentuu Shoshana Felmanin väitteen mukaan epäilyksen spiraalin mallin muotoon, jossa epäluuloja vuorotellen vahvistetaan ja kumotaan. Tunnusomaista tälle spiraalille on, ettei se tarjoa selvärajoista sulkeumaa ja lopullista varmuutta. Siten *Aavetyön* avoin lopetus näyttäyty jatkumona tarinan sisäiselle dynamiikalle. Aavetyön tarinallinen jännitys perustuu oletukselle että lukijalle paljastetaan hyväksikäytön todellinen luonne, tästä odotuksesta huolimatta lupaus

ei toteudu. Sulkeuman puute ei siten ole merkki tarinan autenttisuudesta sinänsä, vaan voidaan sijoittaa laajempaan historialliseen viitekehykseen. Gotiikan tarinat ja psykoanalyttinen tapaustutkimus ovat esimerkkeinä tekstityypeistä, joita luonnehtii sulkeuman puute.

Lopuksi tämä tutkimus väittää että tekstityypin rajojen häilyvyyden sekä tiedollisten epävarmuuksien korostaminen ohjaa tulkintaa suuntaan, jossa epistemologiset kysymyksenasettelut tulevat keskeisiksi ontologisten sijaan. Täten etusijalla ei ole kysymys viattoman lapsen kärsimyksen autenttisuudesta ja totuudenmukaisesta esittämisestä. Sen sijaan *Aavetyttö* ohjaa tulkinnan siihen tapaan, jolla epäily ja kammottavat vaikutelmat voivat ilmetä populaareissa teksteissä. Tutkimuksen yhteenvedossa pohditaan tämän tulkinnallisen uudelleenarvioinnin merkityksiä ja väitetään että eräs niistä koskee kysymystä kirjallisuuden luonteesta. Mikäli Haydenin tekstiä lähestytään vain ontologisten kysymyksenasettelun kautta eikä tukeuduta kirjallisuusteoreettiseen lähilukuun, *Aavetyön* kirjalliset ja muodolliset puolet helposti sivuutetaan. Sara Ahmedin analyysiin tunteista ja politiikasta tukeutuen tutkimus esittää, että myös sentimentaaliset representaatiot edellyttävät tutkimuksessa sivuttuja kirjallisia rakenteita ja siten käsitteet ”kirjallinen” ja ”ei-kirjallinen” ovat myös määritelmällisesti ongelmallisia ohjattaessaan tulkinnan suuntaa ennalta arvattavalla tavalla.