

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**Manifestations of the supernatural
in Joe Hill's *Heart-Shaped Box*
BA thesis**

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**TARTU
2018**

ABSTRACT

Gothic literature has its origins in the 18th century and has become popular again. New authors want to stand out and create something notable, but partly still follow the Gothic framework. The primary aim of Gothic literature is to make people feel uneasy, this is often connected with supernatural elements, as the unknown can be scary. Joe Hill's *Heart-Shaped Box* has been described as a Gothic novel and the aim of this paper is to see to what degree the novel contains typical Gothic elements.

In the introduction a short summary and a survey of the critical assessment of the novel is given and the main topics of further chapters are introduced. The two core chapters cover the theoretical part and an analysis of the novel. In the first chapter it is explained how Gothic literature came to be, what are the typical characteristics of Gothic literature, what is horror fiction and the supernatural, with a main emphasis on ghosts. The second chapter proceeds from the key characteristics of the Gothic according to Jerrold E. Hogle. Features such as the setting, the ghostly figure and the link between the world of the living and the dead, the character conflicts and belief, and the woman characters and their emotional development are analyzed. Based on these key points it is going to be determined to what extent *Heart-Shaped Box* is a typical Gothic novel.

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INTRODUCTION

The book *Heart-Shaped Box* is a horror novel by Joe Hill. The book was published in 2007 and it is the author's first novel, which made it to the New York Times bestseller list. In the review in *The New York Times*, Janet Maslin writes, "These are the bare bones of "Heart-Shaped Box" — literally since the ghost is a skeletal old man. But Mr. Hill uses them to shockingly good effect, creating a wild, mesmerizing, perversely witty tale of horror. In a book much too smart to sound like the work of a neophyte, he builds character invitingly and plants an otherworldly surprise around every corner" (Maslin 2007). Sue Millinocket notes in the *Readers Lane* review that "Heart-Shaped Box is filled with plenty of supernatural horror and Hill puts together both a good cast of characters and a solid story to go with them" (Millinocket 2006).

The main character in the novel is a retired rock star Jude who is haunted by the ghost of Craddock McDermott. The ghost came to Jude in a black heart shaped box after winning it in an online auction. The auction where Jude bought the ghost was made up to trap Jude to buy the ghost. The ghost wants to get revenge on Jude for what Jude did to his stepdaughter Florida. Florida was Jude's girlfriend, whom Jude sent away and who committed suicide after that. As the ghost starts to meddle with the lives of Jude and his new girlfriend Georgia, Jude starts to uncover what really happened to Florida while trying to fight Craddock. During that he starts to open up emotionally and makes peace with his troubled past.

Critics have been describing this novel as a horror story and it seems to have similarities with Gothic horror in particular. In the first chapter I am going to look at the Gothic genre, how Gothic came to be and what are its typical characteristic features. After that I discuss what is horror fiction and what is the purpose of it, I look at the use of supernatural in fiction, more specifically concentrating on ghosts. In the second chapter I

am going to analyze the novel, comparing it to four out of the five points that Jerrold E. Hogle has listed as the most typical characteristics of a Gothic novel and determine if *Heart-Shaped Box* can be considered as a typical Gothic novel.

1. GOTHIC AND HORROR GENRE IN LITERATURE

1.1 The Gothic genre in literature

The origin of Gothic literature related to Horace Walpole, whose novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was one of the first novels that had Gothic elements in it. When the novel was first published, the subtitle for it was simply *A Story*, where Gothic was not mentioned at all, but when a second edition was published the title was changed into *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (Clery 2002: 21). The features in the novel by Walpole defined a new genre of fiction which introduced specific settings, characters, and elements of the supernatural (Botting 2000: 4). These elements which Walpole used separated the Gothic from other genres and Fred Botting (2014: 42) has suggested, “The consistency of the genre relied on the settings, devices, and events.”

Jerrold E. Hogle (2014: 4) has listed five points that can be compared to Botting’s list of characteristic features and elements of the genre. The first is the setting where the story takes place: often it is old and antique, from “moldering castles, graveyards, mansions/houses, and wilderness to urban and suburban underworlds” (Hogle 2014: 4). The second feature is the “ghostly figures, intermixing life and death as well as other incompatibilities /.../ that invade these settings, usually because of secrets from the past” (Hogle 2014: 4). The third feature is the “central characters /.../ consequently caught between conflicting systems of beliefs” (Hogle 2014: 4). The fourth feature are the women characters that are usually in the shadows, seen as the weaker characters and easily scared; however, they will start to recognize the possibility of equality and freedom. The final point is the “over-the-top word-patterns and images that incongruously mix “old romantic” hyperboles.” (Hogle 2014: 4)

The Gothic drew from the romance tradition of the time. First, it was recognized as another manifestation of the romance form. “The growing reading public included larger

numbers of readers from the middle class, especially women, and reflected a change in the distribution of power and wealth from an aristocratic and landed minority to those whose interests lay in a mercantile economy.” (Botting 2014: 43) Gothic was now thought about as domestic fiction which means that the novels had a connection with the contemporary readers who at that time were mostly women (Bloom 2007: 2). Clive Bloom (2007: 2) also suggests that Gothic, which is like the dark side of domestic fiction, appealed to contemporary readers because it was “erotic, violent, perverse, bizarre and obsessively connected with contemporary fears”. Botting (2014: 44) notes that during the industrialization “... gothic fiction blurs rather than reinforces social boundaries, interrogating, rather than restoring, any imagined continuity between past and present, nature and culture, reason and passion, individuality, family and society.”

Marie Mulvey-Roberts (1998: xvii) notes that the single moral function of Gothic is to provoke unease. Gothic is not connected to the natural order, the imagination is the only limit and things are not defined by realism, so that there is a possibility to write about the supernatural, which brings wonder and mystery to the genre (Botting 2014: 2). Jerrold E. Hogle (2002: 2-3) explains that “Gothic fictions generally play with and oscillate between the earthly laws of conventional reality and the possibilities of the supernatural /.../ often siding with one of these over the other in the end, but usually raising the possibility that the boundaries between these may have been crossed, at least psychologically but also physically or both.”

Gothic literature is still popular and gaining popularity even more. Clive Bloom (2007: 1) explains the Gothic nowadays is “...so disparate that it can include (because of formal similarities) works of fiction that contain neither supernatural nor horror elements, but which do contain similar attitudes to setting, atmosphere or style.” The Gothic has become more complex over time, the topics of “...sex and gender, race, nationality, power, law,

cultural “superiority” or “inferiority...”” (Hogle 2014: 7) are now appearing in Gothic fiction as well. Hogle (2002: 6) points out that the Gothic genre has lasted because “its symbolic mechanisms, particularly its haunting and frightening specters, have permitted us to cast many anomalies in our modern conditions, even as these change, over into antiquated or at least haunted spaces and highly anomalous creatures”. He adds that “the Gothic is thus continuously about confrontations between the low and the high, even as the ideologies and ingredients of these change. It is about its own blurring of different levels of discourse while it is also concerned with the interpenetration of other opposed conditions- including life\death, natural\supernatural, ancient\modern, realistic\artificial, and unconscious\conscious...” (Hogle 2002: 9). The concepts of horror and the supernatural also often occur in connection with the Gothic.

1.2 Horror fiction and the supernatural

Although this thesis is approaching the novel proceeding from the framework of Gothic literature, *Heart-Shaped Box* has been also described as a horror novel. There is a difference between Gothic and horror fiction; e.g., Clive Bloom (2007: 12) has noted that “if the gothic is concerned with the manipulation and exploration of feeling (human nature) then horror is more closely concerned with the manipulation of effect. /.../ Horror fiction need have no interest in ‘proper’ or rational explanations for the events described, making ‘no attempt to explain away terrors’ or naturalize violence or fear.” The aim of horror fiction is to scare the readers by creating an unpleasant atmosphere and frightening characters or actions.

Horror should not be thought as the same thing as terror, although Botting (1998: 123) has noted that “Horror is often used interchangeably with terror to describe the intense emotions produced by objects of fear, whether they be uncanny or sublime,

repulsive or threatening”. However, Botting (1998: 124) brings out the difference between horror and terror as well, as he explains that terror is something that is related to a threat which is immediate, but horror is something that is growing over time triggered by different events and emotions. Bloom (2000: 165) finds that the common horror story contains “the presence of the supernatural, demonic, violent and unpredictable, usually present without explanation or logic and glimpsed at the moment it breaks into our world.” He also mentions that the meeting of two worlds and the ‘other side’ is symbolic, which creates the horror’s core (Bloom 2000: 165).

The differences between horror and terror suggested by Jerrold E. Hogle are closely related to Botting’s and Bloom’s definitions of terror and horror. However, Hogle (2002: 3) adds that in terror “the characters and readers are mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past”, but horror “confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms of everyday life with wildly shocking, and even revolting, consequences”. It is interesting to observe that, although critics have described *Heart-Shaped Box* as horror, according to the definition above the novel mainly has the characteristics of terror. For the purposes of this paper however this question is not of decisive importance, because the discussion uses the Gothic framework

The supernatural, the unknown, can be frightening to some, which is why horror and Gothic fiction is often connected with the supernatural. The supernatural is a key element in horror fiction and Bloom (2007: 17) has noted that it “embraces all those areas above and beyond the material realm and is the usual designation for the hierarchic planes, fantastic creatures and daemonic forces which exist in cosmic and parallel dimensions and which rule and direct our physical existence.” Supernatural beings have different

definitions when it comes to different cultures and communities. The beings might have specific abilities, they can move in time and space, travel between the world of the living and the world of the dead, as well as between the spiritual and the material. With these abilities the supernatural beings are seen as capable of appearing to humans, either when summoned or by their own will (Bloom 2007: 18). Most commonly, the supernatural beings are ghosts or monsters with mixed “features from different realms of being, often life and death” and they “rise from within the antiquated space, or sometimes invade it from alien realms, to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view” (Hogle 2002: 2). The form that the forces can take depends on the circumstances; it can be physical or visible or have ambiguous physical form due to the connection to both spiritual and material world (Bloom 1998: 232).

The supernatural is tightly bound with religion, the occult and the demonic. In religion, there is the theme of good and evil: Gothic fiction shows it as a supernatural evil. The demonic presence is often depicted as a spawn of Satan (evil spirits and ghosts) but over time this depiction has changed: now the typical satanic characteristics are shown in evil human characters (Stoddart 1998: 43-44). Occultism deals with magic, such as white or black magic. How the magic is portrayed in the Gothic novel is up to the author. “The magician may try to understand the divine workings of the universe, using a natural or white magic, or to influence the course of events to personal ends through a malefic or black magic” (Willard 1998: 166). Bloom (2007: 18) notes that to achieve “a much more direct relationship with the invisible realms and an overt attempt to harness the power of demonic forces or to interact with other planes of experience in order to bring about transubstantiations, metamorphoses, or other acts of direct control over the material and invisible environment” belief, technique, and mastery over process should be combined.

“We can conclude that the term [the supernatural] will always refer to superior invisible forces which can intervene in human affairs either for reasons of their own or because they have been invoked through prayer, ritual or some form of sorcery” (Bloom 1998: 233). There are many sub-branches of the supernatural nowadays, such as magical and pagan practices, eco and feminist occultism, extraterrestrialism, orthodox mediumship and many more which are all in some way connected and create continuity between them. One of the popular supernatural figures that is often used is a ghost.

1.3 Ghosts

As mentioned above, the Gothic writing gained immense popularity in the nineteenth century, when writing and reading about ghosts became one of the most popular genres. “The telling of tales around the fireside makes explicit a particular aspect of the ghost story which depends upon a tension between the cozy familiar world of life and the mysterious and unknowable world of death” (Briggs 2000: 126). Stories about ghosts which varied from demonic entities to paranormal phenomena were related to both horror and Gothic but emerged as a separate genre as well (Bloom 2007: 6). “Throughout the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century, the setting of the ghost story has often paralleled that of Gothic novel: much use is made of the gloomy, isolated and decaying country house, and of dark, misty churchyards and their heaving graves” (Gilbert 1998: 69).

“Ghost stories commonly provide an alternative structure of cause and effect, in which the supernatural is not explained away but offers its own pseudo-explanation according to some kind of spiritual law of action and reaction: an unburied corpse, a murder victim or some other secret apparently buried safely in the past returns to haunt the perpetrator...” (Briggs 2000: 123). The unknown made the ghosts more mysterious and people were fascinated with forces that could commute between two worlds. Julia Briggs (2000: 122)

notes that the ghost story's main source of power could be the tension between the known and the unknown, between the certainty and doubt. She also adds that, even though ghost stories can have multiple meanings, the "one constant element is the challenge they offer to the rational order and the observed laws of nature, though they may do so in a variety of ways, reintroducing what is perceived as fearful, alien, excluded or dangerously marginal." (Briggs: 122) Bloom (2007: 19) suggests that "These forces break into the human plane and the world of everyday in the form either of the miraculous or of the horrific. Such forces range from the benevolence of angels and spirit guides to terrifying satanic entities called up from the planes of existence sometimes higher and sometimes lower than the human." The common base in ghosts' stories is "the fear of the living for the dead and the hatred of the living by the dead" (Bloom 2001: 160). These stories make the reader think about death and what may happen to the spirit after death. This feature has also been linked with the Gothic: "Even as Gothic tales render death extraordinary, they also refer to the basic fact of mortal existence, namely that the one certainty we have in life is that we must die. These stories fascinate with chilling horror, because they allow us to indirectly confront our own death, even though on the surface they appear to revolve around the death of the other" (Bronfen 1998: 41).

The ghosts in the stories usually are similar to humans and the most common theme in ghost stories is revenge – the ghosts deal with mostly primitive sadistic impulses (Briggs 2000: 128). Julia Briggs (2000: 128) points out that revenge is the most typical motif that is seen in ghost stories. The past or recent past secrets are haunting the characters psychologically and physically (Hogle 2002: 2). "In more psychological renderings, ghostly recurrences manifest an unease and instability in the imagined unity of self, home or society, hauntings that suggest loss or guilt or threat" (Botting 2014: 3). In ghost stories there are no rational explanations, the aim is to make the reader feel real fear (Gilbert 1998:

69). In the ghost story the plot usually “...revolves around the doings of the returning dead and the interaction between them and those among the living who, wittingly or unwittingly, but almost always disastrously, encounter them” (Gilbert 1998: 69).

Julia Briggs (2000: 130-131) notes that “...the ghost story, with its many symbolisms of a world within us, beyond us or looming out of the past to our destruction, continues to be a potent and living literary form, offering its readers a serious and even self-reflexive message as well as the thrill of fear, and will continue to do so, as long as human life is terminated by the mystery of death and the workings of nature and our own minds remain opaque to us” and that for the reader it gives an opening to imagination so the readers themselves can reproduce the images that are described in the stories. “Death becomes attractive, because it is apparently unreal, the result of exaggerated passions, revealing itself in the midst of hallucinatory delusions and involving characters that have been transposed into worlds made unfamiliar” (Bronfen 1998: 40). The goal of the author is to make the reader get the grip and focus on of the narrative, to make the reader nervous, speed up their heartbeat so that any noise they will hear would make them jump (Briggs 2000: 124).

In the following chapter I am going to read the novel *Heart-Shaped Box* against this theoretical framework, paying particular attention to the points listed above by Hogle to see to what degree this contemporary novel corresponds to the model of the typical Gothic novel. Due to space constraint this thesis is not going to analyze the style and the images of the novel but focuses on the first four features.

2. THE GOTHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF *HEART-SHAPED BOX*

2.1 The setting

Clive Bloom (2007: 1) has noted that even though today's horror fiction does not rely on supernatural elements as it used to do, it usually still has similar settings and atmosphere. The setting creates an atmosphere which in the Gothic world usually is melancholy, menacing and filled with guilt and fear (Tracy 1998: 104). "The darkness and decay of ruins, the flickering of candles, the drafts that cause curtains to move, the creaks and echoes of underground chambers all conspire to stimulate superstitious fancy, mystery and suspense" (Botting 2014: 5-6). Traditional Gothic story settings are usually associated with old castles, decaying abbeys which are often deserted, haunted and in ruins. With this came another type of space: the houses which were homes that were seen as protection are now prisons and filled with fear. The buildings in Gothic are never safe from shadows, disorientation or danger (Botting 2014: 4). Similar features have been brought about the ghost story: "Through the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century, the setting of the ghost story has often paralleled of that Gothic novel: much use is made of the gloomy, isolated and decaying country house, and of dark, misty churchyards and their heaving graves" (Bronfen 1998: 40).

The story in *Heart-Shaped Box* starts in a country house outside the city of New York. It has big fences and a barn used as a garage. The house itself is moderately new, about 100 years old, with no specific history mentioned in the book. It is located outside the city and isolated from the outside world, which is common in a Gothic setting. At night the house gets dark, which gives the place more of a gloomy feeling, for example, "the long hall was draped in shadows" (Hill 2007: 116). Fred Botting mentions (2014: 6) that the play with light and shadow, the partially visible objects in darkness have an effect on the imagination – when denying a clear look to the world it makes the character and the

reader feel anxious and elevates the sense of mystery and unknowingness. Craddock first starts to manifest at nights, when the house feels unsafe and dark. As Craddock emerges for the first time, he is seen sitting in a hallway on a chair with just a dim light hitting him. Only as Jude makes his way closer to Craddock does he start to see the details of the ghost. Although this shows the figure of the ghost more clearly, he still remains unknown. Jude does not see a blurred figure or a spirit that is floating; Craddock is seen as a regular human, the only difference is black marks on his eyes.

The narrator uses darkness to enhance fear, for example, "...the dead man, standing over him in the dark, made him weak with dread" (Hill 2007: 106), "...the darkness and quiet of the bedroom appalled him" (Hill 2007: 112) and "...in the cool darkness of the upstairs hallway" (Hill 2007: 226). The darkness is not used just to create atmosphere. When Jude gets a call from his assistant he says, "I am walking in the dark" (Hill 2007: 114) which Jude thinks at first means that he is on some kind of a road, wandering around drunk. However, the assistant is actually dead as he notes "This road in the dark... this is the dead" (Hill 2007: 117).

The overused Gothic settings of graveyards and mansions might be abandoned today, but the contrast between light and dark, good and evil remains (Botting 2014: 105). Light symbolizes the good in the world, it shows hope and clarity. The dark however, symbolizes the bad, showing evil and death. When Jude is seeing Craddock down the road, the narrator explains, "He was there for a moment when the sun was behind a cloud so that the road was in shadow. As sunshine fluttered around the edges of a cloud, Craddock flickered away" (Hill 2007: 92). As darkness is used to enhance fear and unknowingness, light is used to show the end of fear, the clearing of a situation: "The skies were clearing. The thick, curled grey cloud cover was coming apart, and the sun blinked irregularly through the rents." (Hill 2007: 92). Light is used as a way to show the good in spirits.

Craddock is a black figure in a black suit, but when Florida emerges from the world of the dead she is shown as a figure of bright light. The light, which Florida projects, takes over Craddock, showing that good defeats evil.

As mentioned above, the setting in a typical Gothic is isolated from the outside world and there is no help available, the characters are usually alone and experiencing the hauntings alone. However, in this novel it is not exclusively so. As the events escalate in the country house Jude and Georgia go on the road. They stop in a hotel where there is a diner nearby. In the diner, there are a lot of people and after their meal Craddock uses a diner customer's electronic speaking device to transmit a message. The message is heard by everybody but only Jude and Georgia understand what is happening. Craddock does not need them to be isolated from the outside world, he has the power to reach to them even when other people are around.

In *Heart-Shaped Box*, elements of the typical Gothic settings can be seen, but they have been modified and made more modern. There are no abandoned houses, old castles or graveyards, but regular residential houses that, however, may be isolated. Light and the dark are used to create the setting according to the situation. The dark represents the unknown and danger, and light shows the clearing of a situation, a brighter outcome, and safety.

2.2 Ghostly figures and the link between the world of the living and the dead

In this part of the chapter I am going to look at how the ghost is portrayed and if it resembles the typical Gothic supernatural being on basis of the research done by literary scholars. Julia Briggs (2000: 128) notes that the most typical motif in a ghost story is revenge. The ghostly figure in *Heart-Shaped Box* Craddock McDermott is an old man haunting Judas. His goal is to get revenge on Judas for her stepdaughter Anna (also called

Florida), he blames Jude for her suicide and seeks revenge, but the truth is it was Craddock who killed Florida. There is not much known about Craddock at the beginning of the story, but as time passes we learn more about his motives and his life when he was alive. The powers he possesses as a ghost are connected to his living life.

Sally Ledger (1998: 286) suggests that “the main tenet of spiritualism is that it is possible for the living to contact and communicate with the spirits of the dead.” Craddock had got interested in spiritualism and the human mind when he was young. Craddock felt that there was an untapped potential in the human mind. He made a career out of hypnotizing people, trying to heal them and help them get rid of bad memories. He used a razor attached to a chain which he would move in front of people’s eyes and with the help of his calming voice he was able to hypnotize people. He took the chain along with him to the world of the dead when he passed away. Craddock knew how to connect to the world of the dead; he would not call out spirits, but rather make sure that when he passed away his spirit would be able to travel between the worlds of the dead and the living.

Bloom (1998: 232) has pointed out that spirits “...have ambiguous physical form due to the connection to both spiritual and was material world”. However, Craddock is shown as a human figure, he has a distinct shape and form. He seems like a regular person sitting in a chair and the only difference is that his eyes have black marks on them. Later in the story, Jude finds out that the black marks on the dead eyes are there because in the world of the dead the sky is a way to see the land of the living, but it is very bright so that you cannot look directly into it. To avoid the light of the living the black scribbles are like “the sunglasses for the livin’ dead” (Hill 2007: 370). Craddock’s appearance remains the same throughout the story. Still, although he has a specific shape, he is able to move in and out of objects – for example, he is able to manifest from a box when Jude opens it, and he has the ability to enter into a body through the mouth.

Bloom (2007: 18) explains that the power of a supernatural figure is achieved by “a strong peripheral or inverted relationship with orthodox religion, embrac[ing] the practices usually termed the occult. In such systems, there is a much more direct relationship with the invisible realms and an overt attempt to harness the power of demonic forces or to interact with other planes of experience in order to bring about transubstantiations, metamorphoses, or other acts of direct control over the material and invisible environment.” At first, Craddock is shown as a harmless figure sitting in a chair without moving, but shortly afterwards he starts to show his presence not only by manifesting as a figure but giving hints to the characters that he is capable of more than that. Jude starts to feel the presence of the spirit more often, as well as to see him more often. On one occasion Craddock is hypnotizing Georgia without her knowing it, whispering in her ear, but only Jude is able to see him. Craddock does not have the ability to move things on his own, to do that he uses his mind-controlling power which he had when he was alive. He made people concentrate on his voice which put them in a trance.

As a ghost, Craddock also has the ability to change what people see at the present moment. For example, when Jude and Georgia are in a tunnel they see Craddock's truck heading towards them, but later they see that it is a Jeep driven by a stranger. Thus, Craddock is able to make people see false reality that he wants them to see. As he has the power to get inside the minds of the people, he uses their past and their weaknesses against them, reminding them of their actions, their losses and making them doubt themselves. Craddock tries to build guilt in Jude, manipulating him to believe he was the reason why Florida committed suicide.

Craddock took his emotions and the powers he had when he was alive with him to his grave. As a spiritualist, he has found a way to have an impact in the world of the living. The ways used by the dead to connect with the living in the novel are most often

electronics, the mind, and the dreams. As concerns Craddock's powers, these are more concentrated on the mind. He uses his chain with a razor to hypnotize people even when he is dead, and he has the ability to get into people's heads. He whispers them things while moving his chain in front of them without them realizing it. Also, he does not need to use the chain every time, he can make people do things he wants by merely speaking. For example, he makes Georgia get a gun out of the safe, makes Jude move where he wants him to move and controls the body of Jude's father.

Another power Craddock has is meddling with electronics. He uses radio and TV to get messages across, constantly using the same phrase to manipulate people by repeating "The dead pull the living down". It is a phrase that Jude constantly hears on the radio and on TV. Craddock himself does not appear on TV, but he makes it seem that this is the topic that the speakers on TV or on the radio are talking about. Later on, he uses electronic gadgets such as radio, to talk himself. He uses the ability to get messages through, making the people on the radio speak things he wanted to say. When Jude and Georgia are in the diner there is a man who uses a speaker to talk. Craddock uses this to communicate with them, telling them they are going to die and how it is going to happen. By speaking he is hypnotizing Jude and Georgia. He does not use his chain constantly to make people do what he wants them to do – after he has done the hypnotism with the chain, words are enough to make people listen to his voice and do whatever he commands them to do.

The dead can connect to the living through electronics, but the living can connect with the dead with the help of the Ouija board. Jude and Georgia use the board to get a connection with Florida. When Georgia tries to call out to Florida there is no response; however, when Jude tries to contact her they get an answer. Jude had a connection to Florida, which makes her communicate with Jude. Florida does not answer to Georgia because she is unknown to her, but Jude is the one that Florida has loved. They ask her

how to defeat Craddock and get rid of him. At first, when they are speaking letter by letter, Georgia freezes and starts to speak the messages Florida is giving them. Florida uses Georgia as a medium, a bridge to connect to the world of the living. She speaks about a golden door and tells Georgia something that Jude does not understand. Georgia has a private communication with Florida, talking about how she is willing to do what it takes.

Georgia is speaking about a Golden Door which at the beginning seems nonsense to Jude. In the end, the reflection that Florida showed them in the mirror comes true. The door that Florida spoke about is the door to the world of the dead. When Georgia is lying on the floor she tells Jude to make a door. When he has made the door out of Georgia's blood it opens, and a bright light is coming out of it which Florida follows. This door opens the possibility for Florida to manifest in the world of the living. It is a gateway between the world of the living and the dead. Florida manifests as a figure of light, she fights with Craddock and pulls him through the door that Jude created.

A specific way in which Jude can influence the dead is through music. Jude is a retired rock star and music has been a part of his life since he first learned to play guitar. The power of music as one of the ways to defeat the ghost is hinted at throughout the story. A saying by Georgia's grandmother: "The dead win when you quit singing and let them take you down the road with them" (Hill 2007: 258) points out to Jude that music is the key to escaping Craddock. When Jude has a flashback of Florida talking about her family he remembers Florida saying that her stepfather was not a fan of music, especially Jude's music. When Jude and Georgia are on the road, Jude has a dream of what happened with Florida in her final moments, how she figured out what her stepfather was doing to her, her sister and her sister's daughter. Then, Craddock tried to hypnotize Florida once again, but when Florida was singing one of Jude's songs she could avoid the hypnotism. This shows Jude that when he is singing he cannot hear Craddock's voice. Whenever Craddock speaks

to hypnotize, other voices disappear, but by singing Jude can still hold control of his own mind and not concentrate only on Craddock's voice.

Thus, the ghost of Craddock does have the typical characteristics of a Gothic supernatural being but with his own twists. As Sally Ledger (1998: 286) pointed out, spiritualism is used to make the connection with the living and the dead, and Craddock was a spiritualist who used his ability to connect with the afterlife as a way for him to manifest in the land of the living after passing away. As mentioned above, the main motif of a typical ghost is usually revenge which is Craddock's motif as well. Although Jude is not responsible for Florida's suicide, Craddock is certain that Jude is the one to blame for what happened. The typical ghost is usually depicted as a mass that floats without a specific shape; however, Craddock has a defined shape, and even the details on his suit can be noticed. The powers that Craddock possessed were more concentrated on the mind; he had the power to make people do what he wanted them to do. One way he manipulates people is by hypnotizing them, as he can make people concentrate only on his voice and use them the way he wants. The other way in which Craddock communicates with the living is through electronics, he used them to get messages across. But the dead are not the only ones that can communicate between worlds. The Ouija board is used by Jude and Georgia to communicate with the world of the dead as they try to reach Florida, who responds to them.

2.3 Character conflicts and beliefs

Fred Botting (2014: 3) notes that "in more psychological renderings, ghostly recurrences manifest an unease and instability in the imagined unity of self, home or society, hauntings that suggest loss or guilt or threat." The main characters in *Heart-Shaped Box* all have pasts that come to haunt them during the events. Jude must face his

past that he has tried to leave behind him without solving it first. He had a habit of pushing people away but due to the events he starts to let people in, learning more about the people around him and learning about himself by making peace with his past.

Jude believes that there might be a chance there is a life after death, he certainly is very interested in afterlife. He has different objects that are believed to be possessed or have a dark past, for example, a noose that was used to hang people, a skull, and a snuff film. His music appeals to people who are unconventional, they are fans of his music in which death and mental illness are reoccurring topics. His fans sent him books that dealt with occultism, spirits and other topics related to afterlife. When seeing the ghost of Craddock for the very first time he is not sure if what he saw was real or just in his head. Jude himself points out that the ghost might exist inside his own head, which makes him think that ghosts might not haunt places, but minds. At first, he tries to make logical explanations to why there are sounds in the house and why the dogs are barking. When Jude acknowledges that the ghost is real and what he has seen is true he tries to keep it to himself, but it is not long until others around him starts to see, and get affected by, the ghost. As Botting (2014: 44) has noted, Gothic fiction does not explain the supernatural elements in the novel, but rather blurs them.

At first, Jude is portrayed as a hard-headed rock star, a persona he has created for himself after leaving behind his home and his old self, a boy who was terrorized by his father. When his fame started to grow, he had a typical rock star life. Partying and drugs were a regular part of his day and he had so much money he could do everything he wanted. He was constantly touring, sleeping with different women, traveling the world. It was a persona he created for himself, this strong guy who did not have a care in the world. Jude constantly thought about why he kept people who he did not like around him. After retiring, the careless part has stuck with him. He acts as if he does not need anyone around

him, that he is past his prime and the only thing he wants to do was to be on his own. He has the habit of distancing himself from people, which is why he calls the girls he is with by the states they are from, not by their real names. He does not want the girls to get the idea that he is fully committed to them. He keeps his assistant around, even though Jude points out, whenever he interacted with his assistant, that he was unpleasant, but Jude did not want to talk to other associates like his record label and lawyers, himself.

He has kept his past a secret; he hates his father who was abusive towards him and his mother. When he was 18 he left his childhood home and has not visited that place since then. He tells himself that he really does not care if his father is alive or dead. It has been 30 years since he last talked to his father, now his father cannot talk and is on life support, living his final days. As time moves on in the novel, Jude starts to open up to his past. As he figures out what happened to Florida over time and that what happened to Florida was the result of the abuse by Florida's stepfather, he starts to think more about his own dad. After visiting Florida's sister, he decides that the next place to go is his fathers' house. He realizes that his father's home has always been the destination. When seeing his childhood home, he sees how much it resembles his own country house. Seeing his father does not make him angry as he had believed it would, but rather sympathetic. In the last battle with Craddock, Craddock possesses his father's body. The defeating of the body is a symbol for Jude making peace with his father and his past. He gets his revenge and sees his father pass away the way he thinks his father deserved.

After Jude pushed Florida away, he told himself that he had tried to help her as best he could. At first, Jude only knew that Florida had killed herself, and for him it was something natural. He felt guilty but thought that it was her crazy mind that made her do it. When learning about the truth he sees the deeper connection to Florida, he feels responsible for not knowing the root of her problems, not learning about her past. He starts

to see how much Florida meant to him. By learning what had happened to Florida, Jude feels guilty not learning enough about Florida, so he starts to open up more to Georgia. He tells her about his past, what drove him to this kind of life, how he became successful and what his past relationships were like. This helps him accept the things he had done and things that have happened, he started to make peace with his past.

His values start to change. He has pushed away most of the people in his earlier life but now he starts to see how important people in his life are. Craddock shows Jude his immorality, that pushing people away results in his own loneliness. He has a connection with his former friends who have passed away which makes him realize how he took them for granted. He feels guilty about Florida, but in the end, he sees that he was not the one that had to feel guilty, he let what happened to Florida go and starts to think about the future with Georgia and how she has been beside him and supporting his every decision.

2.4 Woman characters and their emotional development

The heroine in the early Gothic novels was typically a woman who was chased across the countryside by a villain figure. Sometimes the heroine had a virtuous young man who loved her and accompanied her on the road (Horner 1998:115). In *Heart-Shaped Box*, the roles are reversed. The man who is chased is accompanied across the countryside by a woman who loves him. There are two main women in the story, who are shown from Jude's point of view, Georgia and Florida. In the beginning, they both are depicted as fragile and weak; for Jude, they are damaged by their past. They both have been dealing with mental health issues and have had a disturbing childhood. As the story moves on both woman characters start to show signs of getting stronger and play a bigger part in the story. In this section I am going to talk about the past of Florida and Georgia, how it influenced them later in life, and how the two main women characters are similar.

Georgia (with the real name Marybeth) is shown as a typical Gothic girl who likes to wear black, has a light skin like a vampire and long black hair. She has a worrisome past, when in high school she slept with a friend's father and everybody found out, later in life she was a stripper and that is where Jude found her. She had run away from her parents to her grandmother. Her parents did not have any particular interest in her. Georgia explains to Jude that once she tried to take her own life, swallowing a lot of pills, but that did not kill her, at which her father said that she could not even do that right. While living with Jude she does not have a job, most of the day she sleeps until the afternoon and wanders around the house.

Throughout the story we learn more about Georgia's past and her experiences, the time she tried to kill herself, the time she slept with a friend's father and all that happened in her life. She accepts it as part of her, the necessary times in her life that made her who she is now. She sees the bigger picture and keeps her mind on the future, not on the past. Although, she has her doubts about whether she will stay alive, she knows that Jude is worth dying for and she is not afraid of death like she was before. In the end, when Jude is on the road of the dead with Florida and Georgia, Georgia tells Jude that it is her time to go as well, sacrificing herself for him. In the beginning, she seems rational but at the same time she does not try to give logical explanations to the things that were happening, she just takes Jude's word for them. Being head over heels in love with Jude, Georgia believed everything he said and did everything he asked her to do. Georgia is the one who keeps Jude sane and motivated in difficult situations in the novel. She becomes bolder and less afraid of the supernatural and death throughout

Florida (with the real name Anna) was another girl who lived with Jude before Georgia. Jude picked her up when he was on tour. She lived with Jude for nine months, but during the last three months that she lived with Jude she started to have strange episodes.

She was not sleeping, constantly talked about something that no one understood and just wandered around without an aim. Before she moved out of her family home her stepfather Craddock regularly hypnotized her to make her forget what had happened to her when she was younger. When she was living with Jude it started to come back to her and Florida was not able to accept it. Jude did not know about her childhood and thought that she was just going crazy. When Jude could not handle it anymore, he sent her away. When Florida was home, everything came back to her after she discovered some pictures. She threatened the family that she was going to go to the cops after she saw that the same was happening to her sister's daughter. When Jude and everybody else thought that she had committed suicide, it was actually her sister and stepfather who had killed her. Many thought, though, that Florida killed herself because Jude left her.

The time Florida was with Jude is not depicted in the book as a present time. With flashbacks from Jude and information he gives to others, it seems that she was just a girl who had left her family behind and started a life with Jude. Her going "crazy" and wandering around makes her seem vulnerable and weak. The suicide made other characters feel sorry for her and believe that she could not handle her problems, which made her take her own life. As the story moves forwards and Jude learns what really has happened to Florida, she does not seem as weak after all. She herself could not control her mental state, as it had been controlled by her stepfather for many years. It took Florida a long time to get a clear picture of what was happening. When she finally figured it out she became stronger, and with the motivation of her little niece, she was encouraged to do the right thing. After all these years she stood up to her family, especially to her stepfather. In the end, when Jude was in the car with Florida on the road in hell, Florida was ready to free her spirit, she told Jude that she was okay, she did not blame him for anything and it was her time to go.

On the road of the dead, she was now ready to let go of her past and go on to a brighter future.

Georgia and Florida were in many ways similar, which was noted by Georgia in the novel as well. Florida had a habit of poking her thumb when she had bad thoughts; in the beginning when Georgia examined the suit and got punctured by a needle in the thumb. After that, she felt a connection to Florida. It is shown more clearly after Jude and Georgia used the Ouija board to connect with Florida. Georgia explained in the novel that she felt the connection with her. They both have pasts that have affected their lives later on. The difference can be seen how each of them handles her past. Georgia has made peace with her past and does not let it bother her. However, Florida's past was revealed when she was an adult, making it more complicated for her to manage what had happened. Florida's mind was affected by someone else, so she never had a chance to solve her past herself.

All in all, on the basis of the points introduced by Hogle it can be seen that there are some traditional Gothic characteristics used in this novel, although with some modifications.

SUMMARY

The five typical Gothic characteristics brought out by Jerrold E. Hogle are the settings which are usually old and antique, the supernatural figures that disturb the lives of the characters, complicated characters, women who are shown as weaker but discover their real potential, and exaggerated language and images. The aim of Gothic fiction is to make the reader feel uneasy, the genre contains elements of bizarre and mystery where only the imagination was the limit. The Gothic today is getting more complex and it is appealing to the reader because of the horror and the supernatural.

Horror does not explain why events are happening or how some supernatural characters came to be. Most supernatural beings in writings have some kind of powers, they can travel between worlds, and they can appear as humans or some other beings. Especially in ghost stories the supernatural has a specific connection to the past. The most common reason for the ghosts' manifesting to the world of the living is revenge.

When taking into account the first four features/characteristics presented above, the novel *Heart-Shaped Box* by Joe Hill contains important features of a typical Gothic novel with a few modified elements. The settings have some characteristics of the typical Gothic setting. Although the events are not happening in an old castle or graveyard, the house that the characters are in is isolated from the outside world. However, the settings change throughout the novel, the haunting does not take place only in the house, but also in a diner and on the road.

In this novel the ghost is not connected to the place, but to the person. The supernatural figure Craddock is a typical ghost figure in the sense that his main intention is revenge. He is portrayed as a human, the only difference is the black marks on his eyes. He has the abilities to travel between the worlds of the living and the dead, and his main ability is controlling people mentally which is connected to his profession when he was

alive. Interestingly, he is able to use contemporary technology to communicate with the living.

The novel shows the main character as changing. Jude finds himself in the border zone of the rational and irrational. At first Jude tried to rationalize what was happening, but as the events escalate the rationality breaks apart. Jude develops as a person in the course of the novel. He starts to open up to people and accept his past. The past is a reoccurring topic in the novel, the characters go through development, more specifically, they start to face their pasts and resolve which ever problems or guilt there were. The characters learn more about themselves and start to change for the better.

In an early typical Gothic novel, the main character is a woman who is chased by a villain and a man who loves the woman accompanies her throughout the events. However, in *Heart-Shaped Box* the main character is a man who is accompanied by a woman who is in love with him. The two woman characters, Georgia and Florida, are rather similar to each other in the novel. They both have a troublesome past that connects them. They are the support for Jude and they both make peace with their pasts.

Thus, we can see that although *Heart-Shaped Box* is a 21st century novel set in contemporary America, it still employs characteristic features of the Gothic genre that have been slightly modified.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Hanna-Liis Raiend

Manifestations of the supernatural in Joe Hill's *Heart-Shaped Box* / Üleloomulikkuse avaldumine Joe Hilli teoses "Heart-Shaped Box" ["Südamekujuline karp"]

Bakalaureusetöö

2018

Lehekülgede arv: 32

Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärgiks on uurida, kuivõrd Joe Hilli teos "Südamekujuline karp" vastab tüüpilistele gooti romaani tunnusjoontele. Töö koosseeb kahest osast: teoreetiline ülevaade ja raamatu analüüs. Esimeses peatükis vaadeldakse, mis täpsemalt on gootika žanr ning selle tüüpilised tunnusjooned, ning sellest tulenevalt käsitletakse küsimust, mis on õudusromaan ning üleloomulikkuse ilmingud, täpsemalt keskendudes kummitustele. Teises peatükis on teost analüüsitud, lähtudes neljast tüüpilisest gooti kirjanduse tunnusjoonest: tegevuspaik, kummitus ning seos elevate ja surnute maailma vahel, tegelaste areng ning uskumused ja naistegelased ning nende emotsionaalne areng. Joe Hilli raamatut võib selle põhjal pidada tüüpiliseks gooti romaaniks, üldised tunnusjooned tõusevad raamatus esile, kuid on tehtud väikseid muudatusi, mis teevad raamatu nüüdisaegsemaks ja omapärasemaks.

Märksõnad: gooti romaan, Joe Hill, õuduskirjandus, kummitused

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