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The Manifestation of Uncanny in the Work of Jean Rhys Good Morning Midnight

# Introduction

According to Sigmund Freud uncanny is the psychological experience which has the potential to be fearsome and familiar at the same time. The manifestation of uncanny is common in literature. Shirley Jackson’s The Haunting of Hill House and Jean Rhys’ Good Morning Midnight are examples of it. These two novels present how uncanniness works in literature.

# Discussion

Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of uncanny in his essay Das Unheimliche in 1919. It is a psychological experience having the potential to be fearsome and familiar at the same time. These two contradictory traits work side by side.

The manifestation of uncanniness can be seen in various pieces of literature is a bit different ways. For example, Shirley Jackson's The Haunting of Hill House, the Hill House is showed as an evil place between homely and unhomely. Here the uncanniness is reflected in both theoretical as well as in literal dimensions. Sigmund Freud, as well as Anthony, have given significant structures for the understanding of the dual nature of uncanny. However, the difference lies in the manifestation where Sigmund Freud considers it a psychological phenomenon while Vilder accepts it’s manifestations within architecture. Due to its dual nature and existence in both physical and psychological nature, the manifestations of uncanniness also have its applications in domestic constructions (Bower 2 ).

In Jean Rhys’ novel “Good Morning, Midnight” uncanniness prevails everywhere. It is a semi-autobiographical novel, which reflects a remarkable resemblance between the author Jean Rhys and narrator Sasha Jensen. Jean Rhys was the daughter of a creole mother and Welsh father. She left the British West Indies and went to study in England. Then she got married and moved to Paris. Jean Rhys’ narrator Sasha Jensen too got married and moved to Paris however left Paris after the end of her married life. When she returned to Paris her feelings of alienation increased and she restricted herself in a dark and musty hotel room.

As uncanniness embodies two contradictory traits together, same is the case with the title of this novel which combines two opposing notions i.e. "Good morning" and "Midnight'. Sometimes the word uncanny is narrowly defined and associated with something gruesome however the true sense of it accommodates at once both fearsome and familiar senses. Unlike Shirley Jackson’s The Haunting of Hill House, in Jean Rhys’ novel “Good Morning, Midnight” uncanny is related to everyday things and life. Here uncanniness is manifested in the physical and psychological architecture of the building and narrative. Sasha Jensen, the narrator of this novel tries to avoid those places and situations which could activate her past memories however like the dual nature of uncanniness, she experiences both voluntary and involuntary recalling of her memories. For her, deep negative and pleasurable memories run side by side. She wants to recollect only the pleasurable experiences however the deep negative memory comes with it. Just like a trauma patient she considers the things of the past as of present and withness the uncanny nature of them. Things seem to her both intimate and unfamiliar (Zimmerman 74-75)

The dual and contradictory nature of uncanniness is found in many other aspects of this novel. Sasha Jensen feels lonely within the crowd. She keeps on spending her time from room to street and street to room. Similarly, the concept of the hotel embodies both public and private place.

# Conclusion

The use of uncanny enhances thematic and stylistic vigor and worth of literature. It embellishes and makes it sublime. Shirley Jackson’s The Haunting of Hill House and Jean Rhys’ Good Morning Midnight are two examples of such literature where uncanniness is significantly employed.

# Works Cited

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