

## Supernatural elements in A.C. Wise's short story "The Dark House"

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the supernatural elements in A.C. Wise's short story The Dark House, focusing on how these elements shape the narrative and contribute to its eerie and unsettling atmosphere. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how supernatural motifs, such as the haunting presence, the house's malevolent influence, historical curses, recurring misfortune, unexplained sensations, occult voices, and supernatural artifacts, enhance the horror and psychological depth of the story. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study identifies and examines recurring supernatural themes that are central to the creation of tension and fear. The findings underscore the significance of these elements in amplifying the overall horror and emotional complexity of The Dark House, making it an exemplary piece of supernatural literature.*

**Keywords:** *supernatural elements, short story, A.C. Wise, horror, psychological depth.*

### A. Introduction

Literature is a form of art that captures human ideas, emotions, imagination, and experiences through the expressive power of language. It encompasses a range of writing styles, including both fiction and non-fiction, that carry aesthetic value and evoke profound emotions and reflections on life. Some of the key characteristics of literature include imaginative use of language, a distinctive writing style, and the ability to convey complex ideas and emotions. Literary works are born from the artistic and creative efforts of writers, serving as a medium for sharing their insights and emotions. As Girsang et al. (2023) emphasize, "Literary works are a medium for an author to express his ideas or emotions which can contain messages or aesthetic values that he wants to convey to the reader or listener. Literature has three main genres: poetry, prose, and drama" (p. 241).

One of the primary forms of literature is prose, which differs from poetry in that it is not bound by metrical structure or rhythm. Prose tends to flow more naturally, mirroring everyday speech patterns and allowing writers to communicate ideas more clearly and directly. In prose, the use of grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs is essential for conveying stories or ideas in a coherent and understandable manner. Merleau-Ponty (1973) noted that "great prose is the art of capturing a meaning that had never been objectified before and making it accessible to all who speak the same language."

In the realm of storytelling, supernatural elements play a vital role, especially in horror or fantasy genres. These elements involve forces or creatures that defy logical or scientific explanation, emphasizing emotions like terror, fascination, or shock. Supernatural phenomena aim to captivate, surprise, or disturb readers by introducing elements that exist beyond the natural world. Filomeno (2019) defines supernatural occurrences as "a force, entity, object, or location that exists outside the realm of scientific explanation for the laws of nature," often manifesting through phenomena such as possessions, omens, or magical powers. Vídalín (2015) adds that "it is in the essence of the supernatural that it is something beyond our understanding, though we may sneak glimpses of its truth."

The purpose of this research is to examine the supernatural elements in A.C. Wise's short story *The Dark House* and provide insights into how these elements shape the narrative. The study aims to deepen readers' understanding of the thematic and structural role that supernatural forces play in the story.

Supernatural elements in literature often include manifestations of ghosts, witches, fairies, or other mystical entities, and these elements frequently play a crucial role in determining the fate of the main characters (Nurmalasari & Adha, 2016). A.C. Wise's short story *The Dark House* is a compelling work of horror that artfully integrates various supernatural elements to create an atmosphere of mystery and fear. These elements not only serve as critical plot devices but also contribute significantly to the story's climactic tension.

One of the most prominent supernatural elements in Wise's story is the titular dark house itself. The house is portrayed as having a supernatural energy, capable of manipulating time and space, and possessing a malevolent force that entraps and tempts the characters. The house serves as more than just a setting—it is a living entity that influences the characters' thoughts and actions. Spirits or ghosts also feature as supernatural components in the narrative, representing not only spectral apparitions but also unresolved traumas from the past. The presence of these ghosts forces the characters to confront their deepest fears, heightening the psychological horror of the story.

The house's eerie influence distorts the characters' perceptions of reality and affects their mental and emotional states. The internal conflict that arises from this confrontation with the supernatural leads to a tense and frightening narrative experience. As Malik (2019) points out, "the supernatural component cannot be dismissed by a character as only an illusion. Instead, it adds to the action." In *The Dark House*, Wise masterfully uses these supernatural elements to maintain suspense and mystery throughout the story, keeping readers engaged and on edge until the very end.

## **B. Method**

The purpose of this study is to apply descriptive qualitative research. In this approach, the researcher collects data, analyzes it, and ultimately draws conclusions based on the findings. As noted by Sugiyono in Thohir (2020), the descriptive qualitative method involves analyzing data by describing the information collected, which is typically in the form of words rather than numbers. Similarly, Gay (2006) defines qualitative research as the process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting detailed narrative and visual data to gain insight into a particular phenomenon.

Additionally, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain that qualitative research investigates the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials. The aim of qualitative research is to

promote a deep understanding of specific phenomena such as environments, processes, or beliefs. In this study, the researcher collects, analyzes, and interprets data, subsequently providing a comprehensive description.

The data analysis method used in this research follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman, known as the Interactive Model. As explained by Miles and Huberman, and cited by Herdiansyah (2008), the Interactive Model involves four stages of qualitative data processing: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification (Sugiyono, 2008, p. 45). In this study, the researcher further develops this model by integrating descriptive and narrative analyses to enhance the overall analysis process.

### C. Findings and Analysis

The supernatural elements in A.C. Wise's *"The Dark House"* play a pivotal role in shaping the eerie and unsettling atmosphere of the story. These elements intertwine with psychological and historical themes, intensifying the horror and deepening the sense of dread. Here's a detailed analysis with textual evidence.

#### a. The Haunting Presence

One of the most prominent supernatural elements is the recurring ghostly figure captured in Benson's photographs. Sometimes the figure appears as a girl, other times as a woman, signaling a haunting presence within the house. The fact that Benson captures these apparitions, despite no physical presence in the house, suggests a supernatural entity at play. This ghostly presence not only frightens Benson but also fosters a pervasive unease for anyone who encounters the house.

**Evidence:** *"The faces that appeared in his photographs, sometimes a girl, sometimes a woman... There wasn't anyone in the house behind him... So was it a ghost? I tried for scoffing, but it didn't quite land."*

#### b. The House's Malevolent Influence

The house itself emerges as a malevolent force, possessing its own will and consciousness. Benson's decision to transform the house into a studio and gallery, and eventually live there alone, implies that the house exerts a powerful influence over him. This influence is supernatural, with the house seemingly "alive," constantly watching and creating a sense of being monitored. Its dark history draws people in, suggesting that supernatural forces are actively manipulating those who come into contact with it.

**Evidence:** *"He spent years making the house a studio and gallery... even lived there alone after his parents died."*

*"The house seemed to have a life of its own, breathing and watching, always waiting."*

#### c. Historical Curses and Recurring Misfortune

The house is depicted as a place cursed by history, where cycles of misfortune repeat. Jared's explanation of the house as a place where "bad things always happen" reinforces the notion of a supernatural curse. The description of the house as "bone-white" and "un-pristine" evokes imagery of decay and death, suggesting that the house carries the burden of its dark past. This

curse-like quality suggests that the house's malevolence is rooted in its history, extending beyond the natural world.

**Evidence:** *"There are some places where bad things always happen, and they keep happening, no matter what you do. Ergo, haunted."*

*"The house had been bone-white then, an un-pristine color like ivory or old lace... youth carrying the seeds of age."*

#### d. Unexplainable and Mysterious Feelings

Although there is nothing overtly strange about the house, Benson experiences a deep sense of unease, which cannot be explained rationally. This unexplainable tension adds to the atmosphere of suspense. The house being "seen" in various places throughout the exhibition creates the impression that it has a presence that transcends its physical boundaries. This establishes an early sense of mystery, making the reader question the house's nature and its impact on those who enter.

**Evidence:** *"Even with that explanation, though, something unsettled me about the house without it being overtly strange. And once I'd noticed the house, I saw it everywhere, scattered throughout the exhibition..."*

#### e. The Presence of Occult Voices

Benson hears a girl's voice that seems to come from nowhere, raising the possibility of a supernatural presence. The voice couldn't belong to a real person, as there's no physical space in the house for anyone to hide. This unearthly voice amplifies the sense of terror and mystery, leaving the reader wondering about the voice's origin and its connection to the house.

**Evidence:** *"Benson was the last one out, and as he got to the door, he heard a girl's voice behind him. She said, 'Don't leave me,' or something like that. The house was basically only one room back then, so there wasn't anywhere for anyone to hide, and he swore the voice didn't belong to any of his friends."*

#### f. The House's Scary Effect

The house's terrifying effect on its inhabitants suggests that it may be cursed or inhabited by malevolent spirits. The continuous misfortunes occurring in the house point to supernatural forces at work. This sense of inexplicable danger adds suspense and mystery, creating the feeling that the house is a place where ordinary logic no longer applies.

**Evidence:** *"There are some places where bad things always happen, and they keep happening, no matter what you do. Ergo, haunted."*

#### g. Supernatural Artifacts and Symbols

Recurring supernatural motifs, such as ghostly figures and shifting masks captured in Benson's photographs, contribute to the eerie atmosphere. These artifacts are not merely artistic expressions; they reflect the house's supernatural influence. The shifting nature of the figures—sometimes appearing as one thing, other times as something entirely different—suggests an elusive, fluid supernatural presence that resists explanation. This unpredictability amplifies the fear and suspense surrounding the house.

**Evidence:** "A woman putting wash on a clothesline... One pointed ear of a mask that sometimes looks like a rabbit and sometimes looks like a pig rises between the church pews."  
"He photographed the house in all seasons, at all times of day and night, in black and white, and color."

Through these supernatural elements, A.C. Wise creates a compelling narrative that intertwines horror, suspense, and the unknown, keeping readers captivated and intrigued until the story's conclusion. The interplay of these elements establishes "*The Dark House*" as a masterful work of supernatural fiction, where the unexplained haunts both the characters and the reader alike.

## D. Conclusion

The objective of this research is to elucidate the paranormal elements found in A.C. Wise's short story "*The Dark House*." The primary method employed for data collection is qualitative, focusing on analyzing the supernatural elements that are most prominent in the narrative. The researchers chose to focus on the supernatural aspects because they play a significant role in the story's atmosphere and progression. Seven key supernatural elements are identified: The Haunting Presence, The House's Malevolent Influence, Historical Curses and Recurring Misfortune, Unexplainable and Mysterious Feelings, The Presence of Occult Voices, The House's Scary Effect, and Supernatural Artifacts and Symbols. Supporting data is presented to substantiate the conclusions drawn. These mystical components heighten the reader's excitement and curiosity, keeping them engaged as they anticipate the story's unfolding events.

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