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**Haunted minds gather at Hill House: applying studies of
conversational implicature to Shirley Jackson's novel**

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Abstract

This research studies Shirley Jackson's novel *The Haunting of Hill House* from a pragmatic perspective, specifically by applying the notion of implicature. A pragmatic point of view opens interesting possibilities for both investigating the techniques of fiction and how readers interact with a literary text. Furthermore, it proves useful in unraveling the complexities behind the fictional work.

The reading was approached with "fresh" eyes in order to show that no previous information regarding the novel was required to fully appreciate its content and entertain the notion of the text's self-autonomy. The recognition and praise the book has received throughout the years was just acknowledged to indicate that *The Haunting of Hill House* is considered in many avenues as a fine piece of literature.

In the first section I will show the relevance of Grice's Cooperative Principle and his concept of "implicature". Next, I will introduce the author along with her novel and its characters. Then, an analysis of forty-nine dialogues taken from the novel will help illustrate Grice's theory. Finally, a study of said dialogues will assist in reaching some conclusions and unveil some themes underlying the characters' motivations and purposes at Hill house.

Summing up, the present work shows by way of observing H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims, and without a previous knowledge of the author, or the circumstances about the conception of the novel, that any reader, as shown in this paper, can reach a reasonably fair comprehension of the fictional work. In order to achieve that, the only means necessary is the reader's own knowledge of the language, along with the ability to work out the implicature of their reading. Likewise, no literary criticism or approach was considered for the purpose of this paper, for the average reader seldom resorts to this external knowledge.

Key words:

Pragmatics, implicature, Grice, Jackson, Hill House.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Coined in the 1930s by American philosopher, C. W. Morris, and further developed as a subfield of linguistics and semiotics in the 1970s, the term pragmatics is a relatively new field of research in the history of linguistic studies. Thus, “pragmatics deals with meaning and it is to be regarded as a crucial aspect of the whole, social, cultural and even cognitive context” (Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2016:2). Its meaning derives from the Latin word *‘pragmatics’* which comes from the Greek term *‘pragmatikos’*, meaning “fit for action”. Its focus is, then, on finding out what is not explicitly stated and how utterances can be interpreted in different contexts. Pragmatics has influenced fields as diverse as rhetoric, logic, film studies, psychology, sociology, education and literary theory, to name just a few. They all, to some extent, tend to incorporate a pragmatic perspective in their studies.

Pragmatics provides a way to make sense of certain texts even when, from a semiotic perspective, the text appears to be incomplete or have a different meaning to what is really intended. In a conversation, the speaker attempts to construct the linguistic message and its meaning, and the hearer interprets the message and infers such meaning. For instance, let us consider a sign on a shop that says “Baby sale - plenty of bargains”. An average person would conclude that what is for sale are not babies, but baby clothes. Pragmatics allows to find out the meaning beyond the words without a trace of ambiguity. The extra meaning is not in the semantic attributes of the words but on the general knowledge and the context shared by most people. Pragmatics is useful to interpret language in its actual context. In this work, I will focus on Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* and the interpretation of literary language, by making use of Grice’s implicature theory.

In the past decades, pragmatics has been rather influential in the field of literary studies. It has brought pragmatics closer to a text theory which takes into account the context of production and reception, and push it further than a structuralist analysis of the grammatical properties of the text. Nowadays, literature is conceived as a communicative act between writer and reader. (Trenchs-Parera, 2002:2). In the present study I aim at interpreting Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* by applying H. P. Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the notion of conversational implicature. A reader who might not have any previous knowledge of the author nor of the conventions of the horror novel, can definitely achieve a good enough understanding of the literary discourse through this type of pragmatic approach, assuming that this hypothetical reader relies on their knowledge of the language and their ability to make implicatures out of the reading.

Why the pragmatics of fiction

Fictional language exists in a wide variety of forms and formats, from novels to theatre plays to films and radio or television dramas. Broadly speaking, pragmatics is understood as the study of the use of language in all possible

contexts. We are concerned with the communication that is depicted in written fiction. The communication within the framework of the written text and which takes place among the characters of such fictions. In this sense, fictional data, or sentences that appear in fictional texts, do not seem to be very different to sentences that appear in other media. In fictional language, which can be considered a rich source of data and worth considering its investigation (Jucker & Locher, 2017:5), for instance, we can differentiate sender from recipients within a communicative event and following the act of communication. All this can be analyzed pragmatically.

And how does literature, that is, fictional language, relate to pragmatics? If pragmatics studies the role played by language users, it can be applied to the study of literary texts, since literary language users do also use language to convey meanings. Such question was put forward by Mey in his *Pragmatics: An Introduction* (1993:236). A discourse, regardless the media where it occurs, is intended, on the part of the language user, as a vehicle for communication where said language is naturally involved in a specific context. Conversational implicature, among other pragmatic approaches, was mainly developed in relation to spoken interaction; however, it also offers invaluable insight into literary analysis. Literary pragmatics moves in a special communicative context, and thus, has its own pragmatic specificity. Literary pragmatics has developed in the last few decades into an interesting field and, although it may be stated that its concepts are derived from those of general pragmatics, yet they have a specificity, conventions of their own and, thus, it occupies a field in its own right.

It seems clear that literature can be studied as conversation. Thus, pragmatic elements should be paid attention to when studying a fictional text. The dialogues in *The Haunting of Hill House* are similar to daily life dialogue. It can be argued that it is an imitation of everyday speech, therefore, pragmatic theories should be included in its analysis. Not discarding the fact that spoken and written communication have their own differences, it cannot be ignored that they share some similarities too. For instance, many pragmatic elements of actual conversation are relevant in the understanding of functional interactions. Another question is raised: could conversation in literary texts be appreciated if not resembling that of ordinary life? Theories such as the Cooperative Principle can be useful tools when analyzing a written text.

The role of the reader became prominent in the middle part of the twentieth century. In the 'reader response criticism' meaning is understood as being created through the participation of the reader (Chapman & Clark, 2019:10). Thus, the importance of pragmatics, and particularly of the application of Grice's theory as literary analysis. There was, indeed, a communicative encounter between the fictional text and the reader. Meaning is interactive and what the characters of the novel say, their interactions and conversations, is made explicit in the written form; in other words, the Gricean 'what is said'. The full significance of their lines has to be inferred by them as implicatures. So, what if meaning can be considered not just as a property of the text alone, but as a function of the reader's experience

in reading the text? Thus, meaning should be understood as not static, but rather as something dynamic, a sort of creation of the reader while reading the text¹.

Needless to say, a full and comprehensive study of the reader-response theory falls out of the scope of this paper, and it will only be a concern tangentially and as far as the role of the reader goes, since the main focus of this paper is on pragmatics². Indeed, we take Grice's Cooperative Principle as the framework to understand the working of the conversational implicatures of the novel and thus understand, among other things, the relationship among the characters and what their motivations might be. As a result, we expect to engage in a meaningful and fruitful "conversation" with the text. Just as Grice states, the intention of the speaker is not something the hearer can directly access, but rather an assumption for communication's sake (Grice, 1975:31). Likewise, readers can identify and ultimately recognize information represented in fictional texts, and their inferences be guided by pragmatic principles.

In a coherent text its components are significantly related to one another through inferences, so the reader can easily work out its meaning (Fairclough, 1995:3). In this manner, readers are compelled to imagine contexts where everything they are reading makes sense. The inconsistencies or ambiguities found in the novel, mainly in the conversational interactions among the different characters, can be understood by the reader if they are aware of the inferences needed for its comprehension.

All in all, we aim at making a strong case for using fictional data as a source for analyzing a text. A pragmatic perspective will help us to better understand fictional data. We must be aware of the multiple levels of communication in a fictional context: the intradiegetic level of communication (between the characters of the novel) and the extradiegetic level of communication (between the author and the reader). When characters are created in a novel, they mimic non-fictional characters in terms of their personality traits, appearance, style of speaking, behavior, and so on. The way they may be depicted, along with our own life experiences, will encourage us to engage (or the lack of it) with the story and its characters. It is important to understand that there is no neutral reading. Who is to say whether real-life contexts are gained by engaging with fiction, and not the other way around? This could very well be possible.

1.3 H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle

In Grice's influential papers, he states that what a word means derives from what speakers mean by uttering it, "and may diverge from the standard meaning of the sign" (Grice, 1957:2016) . He sketched a theory of pragmatic implication. It is the hearer's tacit knowledge of a principle of the use of language

¹ What happens during the reading process? This question is addressed by Alejandra Giangiulio Lobo in her essay Reader Response Theory, and paraphrasing Charles E. Bressler, she states: "meaning has to be regarded from the interaction or transaction between the reader and the text" (Giangiulio, 2013:15)

² Reader response theorists understood meaning in relation to literature as inherently interactive. It came about as a result of the communicative encounter between text and reader. Therefore, "such theorists could be argued to have much in common with their contemporaries in linguistic pragmatics." (Chapman and Clark, 2019:10)

governing the speaker's use of language (Hancher, 1978:1). Grice states that when we communicate with others we assume that we will be conversationally cooperative, in order to achieve mutual conversational ends³. Our talk exchanges are "cooperative efforts" (Grice, 1975:45). This works even in situations when we are not socially cooperative, and it might be present from the beginning or develop during the course of the interaction. This is true even when in an argument, and therefore possibly angry, we will cooperate to achieve said argument. This cooperation, labeled by him the "Cooperative Principle", is shown in a number of maxims or categories:

- I. Quantity -> make your contribution as informative as required / do not make them more informative than required.
- II. Quality -> make your contribution true. Do not say what you believe to be false / do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- III. Relation -> be relevant
- IV. Manner -> be perspicuous. Avoid obscurity of expression / avoid ambiguity / be brief / be orderly.

Although it is expected that the speaker will follow the maxims of Grice's principle, they may occasionally not do so, and thus flout, or disregard, one or more of the maxims. This will not impede their interlocutor to carry out the conversation and assume a degree of cooperation between the two, speaker and hearer, and therefore search for meaning beyond the literal one. The result is an inference called conversational implicature.

The following examples of flouting the maxims are taken from Alba-Juez & Mackenzie's *Pragmatics: Cognition, Context & Culture* (2016):

A. Flouting the maxim of Quality ->

Charles: Look! It's raining! Why don't we rush to the beach and bathe in the middle of the storm? It would be very exciting, don't you think?

Lucy (rolling her eyes in disagreement): **Yes, VERY exciting!!**

-Implicature: through the rolling of her eyes, her intonation and the context, we can infer she is being ironic and meaning the opposite of what is uttered.

B. Flouting the maxim of Relation ->

C: Would you like to come to my home town with me this weekend?

D: **I have to keep on working on my project during the weekend or else I'll never finish.**

-Implicature: Although D is not directly answering C's question, C can infer that he is likely declining the offer.

C. Flouting the maxim of Manner ->

³ According to Grice, talk exchanges exhibited the following: 1. The participants have some common immediate aim. 2. The contributions should be mutually dependent. 3. The transaction should continue in appropriate style, unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate (Grice, 1975:48)

E: Have you ever met Richard?

F: No, what's he like?

E: **Well, he's not what one would call 'handsome'**

-Implicature: For reasons of politeness, E avoided being brief. E somewhat minimized the implicit negative judgement regarding Richard's looks.

D. Flouting the maxim of Quantity ->

A: I think Robert and Eunice are very honest people.

B: Well, I think Robert is honest, yes.

-Implicature: B is being less informative than required, and leaving her out implies that B does not think she is honest, unlike him.

According to Grice, other ways of not observing the maxims during a conversation are the following: (1) quietly violating it - the speaker who violates a maxim does not expect the hearer to realize he or she is doing so (for instance, lying), and this is quite different from flouting this maxim (or being ironic), if this happens, then it is clear that the speaker is intending the hearer to infer some extra meaning over and above what is said; (2) unwillingness to cooperate, but the speaker does not attempt to generate a false implicature or seem uncooperative; (3) clash of maxims - for example, the speaker may not fulfill the maxim of Quantity without violating the maxim of Quality; (4) openly failing - or "flouting", in Grice's words - to fulfill a maxim. (Grice, 1975:49); and (5) the speaker means to observe the Cooperative Principle, but fails to fulfill a maxim through ineptitude, nervousness and excitement, among others.

1.4 Types of implicature

The term implicature deals with 'what is inferred'. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, an implicature "denotes either the act of meaning or implying one thing by saying something else, or the object of that act". In other words, it is the connection between what is said and what is actually meant. The connector of both is a sort of inference that H. P. Grice called implicature. Grice wrote about two kinds of implicatures: conversational implicature and conventional implicature.

The conventional implicature is generated by "the conventional meaning of the words" or expressions used (Grice, 1975:44). For instance, taking the sentence 'he is poor but honest', by using the connector 'but' the speaker is committing himself or herself to supporting the idea that poor people lack honesty. Conventional implicatures seem to be more attached to the linguistic form of the utterance than conversational implicatures. They deal with non-cancelable aspects of meaning and are triggered by features of the natural meaning of the utterances.

Comparison between conventional implicature and conversational implicature:

Conventional implicature:

- a) Deal with conventional meanings of the words used.
- b) Always detachable from the content of the sentence.

- c) Not calculable by using pragmatic principle and contextual knowledge (given by convention).
- d) Conventional.

Conversational implicature:

- a) Non-natural, non conventional meaning.
- b) Cannot be detached from the sentence by just replacing the words by synonyms.
- c) All implicatures can be calculated.
- d) Non-conventional

It should be noted that a conversational implicature can be cancelled (conventional ones are not), that is, the inference can be defeated, by the addition of a clause that indicates the speaker might have opted out. Therefore, the most useful diagnostic is cancellability. They are not tied to the particular words and phrases in an utterance but arise instead from contextual factors and the understanding that conventions are observed in conversation.

For example, it can be said that the implicature 'Sammy and Chris fell in love and got married' is false, and our utterance will not sound self-contradictory: 'Sammy and Chris fell in love and got married. But not in that order!' This sounds more acceptable than what happens if tried to cancel an utterance's literal meaning: 'Sammy and Chris fell in love, and got married, but they didn't get married', which would be self-contradictory.

It is assumed that the speaker is always observing the Cooperative Principle, even though what is literally said might not coincide with the maxims. Observing the maxims at a non-literal level triggers a conversational implicature. Grice introduces another distinction, in this case between what he called particularized conversational implicature and generalized conversational implicature. Generalized implicatures⁴ can be triggered without the need of a special context, for example:

'I got into a car' -> not his car.

Particularized implicatures are triggered only if certain conditions are met and thus classified as particularized conversational implicature, for instance:

A: 'I'm looking for Lily. Have you seen her?'

B: 'Jack is very happy' -> Lily is now with Jack.

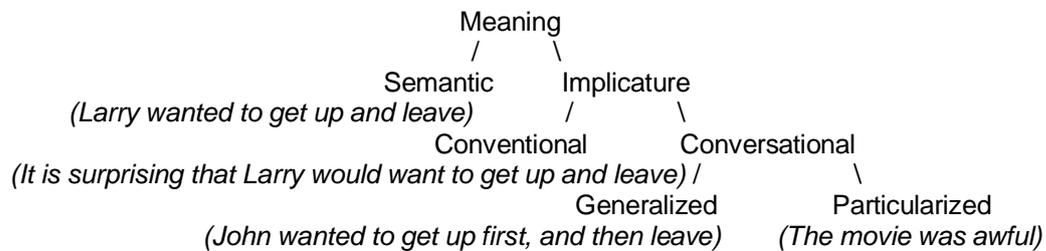
In the mechanics of implicature, we can see the following steps (Grice, 1975:50):

- 1) The speaker has said that p.
- 2) If by saying p, the speaker does not appear to be observing the maxims, literally, the addressee nevertheless assumes the speaker is observing the maxims.
- 3) For S to say that p, and indeed observing the maxims, S must think q.
- 4) S has done nothing to stop the addressee from inferring that q.

⁴ Generalized implicatures were only treated in passing by Grice himself.

5) Therefore, S intends the addressee to infer that q, and so in saying that p has implicated q.

Utterances are not implicatures. An utterance might have different meaning, and some of them might be implicatures. Let us take the following utterance: 'even Larry wanted to get up and leave!' (context: after being asked how the movie was)



How can we tell the difference between conventional implicature and literal, truth-conditioning meaning? One difference between the two is intuitive. Saying something when its semantic meaning is false makes the sentence false. However, saying something when its implicature is false makes the sentence misleading, or just weird, but not false. In summary, the properties of implicatures are the following:

- Non-detachable: they are attached to a precise context and do not depend on syntax.
- Calculable: the hearer can infer them to preserve the C. Principle.
- Non-conventional: the language has full freedom to convey new meanings in accordance with the context.
- Cancellable: they can be cancelled if additional (which deny the information) premises are provided.

2. Shirley Jackson and The Haunting of Hill House

2.1 The author and her novel

Shirley Jackson was born in San Francisco in 1916. She gained critical acclaim for the first time for her short story "The Lottery", published in 1949. In addition to *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), her novels include *The Road through the Wall* (1948), *Hangsaman* (1951), *The Bird's Nest* (1954), *The Sundial* (1958) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). Besides writing over a hundred of short stories, she also wrote works of nonfiction, such as *Raising Demons* (1957) and *Life Among the Savages* (1953), where she chronicles the vicissitudes of combining her work as an author and as a housewife and mother of three children. She passed away in 1965, in Vermont.

In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Dr. Montague, a paranormal researcher, is looking for solid evidence of the existence of what is referred to in the field of Parapsychology as "haunting", that is, a location (a home, in this case) which is presumably the place of a number of anomalies which science cannot seem to find a plausible explanation for. Thus, he puts together a team of three individuals: Eleanor, a lonely girl who experienced paranormal disturbances herself;

Theodora, a woman with psychic talents; and Luke, the adventurous future heir of the estate. All with the aim to first-hand witness the occurrences at an old mansion, Hill House, with a long story of tragic events. The implication of the early history of the estate was, it seems, the domain of a ruthless and dominant male figure, Hugh Crain, the original proprietor, as an extension of his madness and ultra-orthodox Christian devotion. Dr. Montague comments that Crain “made his house to suit his mind” (Jackson:75). Crain raised his two daughters in a fantasy world filled with guilt, eternal damnation and hellfire.

The inspiration for writing *The Haunting of Hill House* came to Jackson after reading about a group of 19th century psychic researchers who gathered at a house allegedly infected with paranormal phenomena. According to biographer Ruth Franklin in her book *A Rather Haunted Life*, Jackson wrote in her notes ‘The house is Eleanor’, as she stated everywhere in her notes and lectures. About the genesis of the novel, she goes on saying that ‘she does not believe in ghosts’ (Franklin, 2016:415). However, the novel makes it clear that there is something in the house that brings the disturbance out in Eleanor.

The Haunting of Hill House is indeed a gothic work, making use of gothic tropes such as haunted mansions, well-off families, and disputes over property. However, it should be noted that the story “moves freely between humorous, light-hearted reflections on domesticity and family life, and the oppressive” (Roberts, 2017:67)

2.2 The Haunting of Hill House: critical overview

The book has received a large and well-deserved praise over the years. In 1959, Edmund Fuller reviewed Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* for the *New York Times*, claiming that Jackson “proves again that she is the finest master currently practicing in the genre of the cryptic, haunted tale” (Fuller, 1959).

More recently, author Stephen King names the novel among his ten favorite horror novels or short stories of all time (Wallace et al. 2008:225). In his book *Danse Macabre* (1981), he lists *The Haunting of Hill House* as one of the finest horror novels of the late 20th century and provides a lengthy review. The book was a finalist for the National Book Award, which would be Jackson’s first and only nomination (Franklin, 2016:424). In the *New York Times*, the critic Orvill Prescott, called it “the most spine-chilling ghost story I have read since I was a child (Franklin, 2016:424). Neil Barron, in his *Horror Literature – A Reader’s Guide*, mentions Jackson’s work in a similar vein, and claims that is “by common consent, the single best contemporary ghostly novel” (Barron, 1990:171). In his *Paperbacks from Hell*, author Grady Hendrix labels Jackson as “the empress of American horror fiction” (Hendrix, 2017:11).

Likewise, the science-fiction and horror author Lisa Tuttle, in an essay for *Horror: 100 Best Books*, writes that Jackson penned “the great modern novel of supernatural horror” (Jones & Newman, 1998:179). Acclaimed filmmaker, Guillermo del Toro included *Hill House* in a series of classic horror novels that he himself curated for Penguin in 2013.

Furthermore, *The Haunting of Hill House* has been adapted to the big screen on two different occasions, and both times under the title *The Haunting*: in 1963 by Robert Wise to critical acclaim⁵ (the author's included), and quite unconvincingly in 2009. The book has also been adapted for TV series, theater and radio.

2.3 The characters: background information

The story is told from a third person limited perspective of a narrator who has access to the thoughts and emotions of a single character (Eleanor), and thus describes the events from the point of view of said character. Her progression from a naive, innocent outlook to full insanity is gradually documented, taking the reader on an unrelenting roller-coaster of emotions and unfulfilled wishes and dreams. It should be pointed out that if the house is to be considered a character at all, it is, thus, expressed through Eleanor herself; yet this is never clearly defined by Jackson, and it is ultimately up to the reader's interpretation. All in all, this narrator (again, Eleanor) turns out to be an unreliable one. She is prone to fancies of all sorts, self-centered and judgemental, which it all makes for an erratic storyteller.

Eleanor Vance, 32, is invited, along with other guests, to spend "all or part of the summer at a comfortable country house" (Jackson:5) under the purpose to "observe and explore various unsavory stories which had been circulated about the house for most of its eighty years of existence" (Jackson:5) as stated in Dr. Montague's letter. She is invited because of a weird occurrence which happened in her childhood in the form of a shower of stones inside her house for three days after the death of her father. She has taken care of her bed-ridden mother most of her life as of late, the last eleven years of her life to be more precise, interrupted with her mother's passing. She has grown vulnerable, dependent, isolated, and she feels she wasted most of her adult life with her sole dedication to looking after her mother. She has no job, no friends, a sister she despises and no prospects in life. She tends to escape reality by letting her imagination fly free and construct fantasies. The letter she receives with great joy, since "Eleanor had been waiting for something like Hill House." (Jackson:7). On her drive to Hill House, she daydreams of finally finding a place where she will be appreciated and wanted. Eleanor's stream of consciousness portrays a woman afflicted by rage, anger, solitude, insecurities of all sorts and desperation for love and attention.

Theodora, on the other hand, "was not at all like Eleanor" (Jackson:8). Certainly, she is outspoken, self-confident, cheerful, audacious, and, even, flirty. At first she befriends Eleanor, but she becomes cold, mean and distant. She becomes a mirror to Eleanor, but the kind that reflects back all of Eleanor's flaws. She avoids using her last name and insists on being called just by her first name. Theodora is invited to join Dr. Montague's team for her psychic skills under conditions of strict control in a laboratory years ago. She is labeled a clairvoyant of sorts. She, also, seems to be running away after a "violent quarrel" (Jackson

⁵ Nancy Holder, a USA Today bestselling author and former Trustee of the Horror Writers Association, included the film in her particular list "thirteen movies she wishes she'd never seen because they're too scary (yet continues to watch repeatedly)" (Wallace, Howison & Bradley, 2008:61-62)

p.9) with the partner, whose sex is unknown, with whom she shared an apartment. She is the only character without a last name.

Luke Sanderson is the nephew of the owner of Hill House and the heir to the estate. He is described as a “liar” and “also a thief” (Jackson:9), and is sent to the gathering under the premise to be the guardian of the property while the investigation takes place. He occasionally uses his dark humor to humiliate others. Luke likes to gamble and his stay at Hill House is seen as a chance to put all his responsibilities on hold. All through the novel he lightens the tension caused by the allegedly paranormal phenomena and never seems to be affected by it.

Dr. John Montague is a doctor in Philosophy with a degree in Anthropology, aiming for an air of respectability among his colleagues, who looked at him with dubious eyes due to the doctor’s “truest vocation” (Jackson:4), the world of the supernatural. Dr. Montague is short, round and bearded. His intentions with regard to Hill House were inspired by the methods of the nineteenth-century ghost hunters. Indeed, “he had been looking for an honestly haunted house all his life” (Jackson:4). His wife makes a surprising appearance towards the last segment of the story, with a bossy attitude towards the residents of Hill House, and his husband is no exception. It is not hard to imagine the doctor may be trying to run away from something, or someone, too. He embodies the painful line that seems to divide the world of the supernatural (his true passion, and for which he feels misunderstood) and the world of the psychological (where he, sometimes, fails to comprehend the real motivations of others).

Mrs. Montague is Dr. Montague’s wife. Bossy, demanding and condescending. She attempts to take over her husband’s investigation when she unexpectedly shows up at Hill House. Her husband considers her a good wife, but he seems evidently annoyed by her attitude towards his work. She has great contempt for her husband and the rest of the members of the team.

Arthur Parker is Mrs. Montague’s companion and headmaster at a school for boys. He is patronizing and arrogant. He does spare no efforts in showing off his manliness and an air of superiority, particularly towards other females. He is, however, obliging to Mrs. Montague and she turns to him for confirmation on her statements. He is definitely the opposite of Dr. Montague.

Mrs. Dudley is the housekeeper and the cook of Hill House. For the most part, she keeps to herself and follows a rather rigid schedule, even her sense of order is obsessive-compulsive. She insists on not staying in the house after sunset.

Mr. Dudley is the caretaker of Hill House and Mrs. Dudley’s husband. His demeanor is obscure, big-headed and even threatening. Neither him nor her wife stay at Hill House after dark.

3. The study of implicature in the characters’s conversations.

3.1 Research method

This study utilizes a qualitative research method in which a pragmatic approach is applied. It aims at investigating the different strategies applied by the characters in *The Haunting of Hill House* in relation to the maxims of the cooperative principles flouted in their conversational interactions.

The data is in the form of utterances in conversations and dialogues. The researcher has focused primarily on conversational implicatures, and therefore the dialogues with implied meanings based on the aforementioned were identified and selected.

The four characteristics taken into account when selecting the dialogues were: calculability, cancellability, non-detachability and non-conventionality, according to Grice (Grice, 1975). The data was collected such as follows:

- 1) Through the reading of Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*.
- 2) Observation of the flouting of the Gricean Maxims, thereby spotting the conversational implicatures triggered.
- 3) Selection and organization of the collected data to be analyzed. Creation of tables.
- 4) Detailed analysis and classification of the: quote, context, speaker and hearer, maxim flouted and implicature. In total, forty-nine utterances were analyzed.

It should be noted that those conversational implicatures that seemed redundant, and therefore deemed irrelevant for the purpose of the present study, were not taken into consideration.

4. Analysis

4.1 Results

QUOTE #	CONTEXT	QUOTE UTTERANCE /	CHARACTER	MAXIM FLOUTED	CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE
1	Eleanor is trying to gain access to the premises of Hill House and the caretaker is reluctant to let her in.	"You ever hear anything about this place? (p30)	Mr. Dudley, the caretaker	Quantity / Manner	'If you had, you wouldn't have come all the way here'
2	The caretaker "snickered disagreeably (...) grinning"	"Me, now," he said, "me, I don't hang around here after dark" (p32)	Mr. Dudley, the caretaker	Quantity	After dark equates danger
3	In a distant fashion and with a cold	"I don't stay after I set out dinner". "Not	Mrs. Dudley, the	Quantity	After dark equates danger

	tone, speaking, "apparently, to the wall"	after it begins to get dark. I leave before dark comes" (p39)	housekeeper		
4	Eleanor is chatting with Theodora and sharing with her her encounter with the caretaker at the gates of Hill House.	"Did you meet the amiable old retainer at the gate?" "We had a lovely chat" (p46)	Eleanor	Quality	Irony (she had an awful time)
5	Theodora chats with Eleanor while in Eleanor's room.	"I never really thought there would be a Hill House. You don't go around expecting things like this to happen" -"But some of us go around hoping", Eleanor said. (47)	Theodora	Quality	"Things like this?" Amazing opportunity to run away from their reality
6	Theodora and Eleanor are talking about (and mocking) Mrs. Dudley, the housekeeper, and her creepy manners.	"She probably watches every move we make, anyway, it's probably part of what she agreed to". -"Agreed to with whom, I wonder? Count Dracula?" (p48)	Theodora	Quality	Irony

7	Eleanor and Theodora are enjoying the views from the gardens of Hill House: the brook, the grass, the water, the flowers, the hills...	"I'm sure I've been here before." Eleanor said. "In a book of fairy tales, perhaps." -"I'm sure of it" (p52)	Theodora	Quality	'Sure, give me a break'
8	Theodora, in a conversation with the others, giggles and goes on uttering the following words: see quote # 8	"Mrs Dudley is probably the only true surviving member of the family (...) I think she is only waiting until all the Sanderson heirs (...) die off in various horrible ways (...)" (p66)	Theodora	Quality	Irony
9	The doctor complains about how house is confusing him, but without disclosing why, and claims, "we probably ought to agree not to wander around the house alone"	"The house. It watched every move you make." And then "My own imagination, of course" (p85)	Dr. Montague	Quality	Initially floated the quality maxim, but then canceled it ("my imagination")
10	Luke and the doctor were waiting for Eleanor and Theodora to join them for breakfast.	"We had begun to wonder if you were the coffee-and-a-roll-in-bed types" (p97)	Luke	Quality	Sarcasm ('you were quite lazy')
11	Entering the	-"Do the	Mrs.	Relation	'Ever thing

	kitchen, Mrs. Dudley goes on saying: "the linen belongs in the linen drawers in the dining room. The silver belongs in the silver chest. The glasses belong on the shelves"	dishes belong to the house?" -"They belong on the shelves," Mrs Dudley said (p101)	Dudley		has its place' / 'stop silly asking questions'
12	The doctor is explaining where the tragic events allegedly took place ("a most suitable spot for suicides", he adds, to Theodora's amusement.	-"Can you see the little trap door up there in the shadows? (...) "It leads out onto a little balcony, and of course that is where she is commonly supposed to have hanged herself (...)" -"Thanks, I can visualize it perfectly" (p103)	Theodora	Quality	'Too much information'
13	"One entire end of the drawing room was in possession of a marble statuary piece (...) It was huge and grotesque. Theodora: "it's a family composite". It seems to represent a masculine figure (Hugh	"Don't let him tread on your shoes", the doctor said and laughed. "Remember what happened to Don Juan" (p109)	Dr. Montague	Manner	Don Juan kills Donna Anna's father. Later, the statue of the <i>comendador</i> rises. The statue, in a deep handshake, dragged Don Juan into hell.

	Crane, the patriarch) in the center and his two daughters on both sides. With his comment, Dr. Montague is referring to the figure of Hugh Crain.				
14	Theodora wonders where Mrs. Dudley may have been.	"I suppose she's gone up to hang herself from the turret", Eleanor said (p111)	Eleanor	Quality	Sarcasm (she is referring to Mrs. Dudley)
15	Eleanor is watching Theodora do her nails. Theodora says: "Mascara. You don't think half enough of such things, Eleanor."	"Well," Theodora said with determination, "by the time I'm through with you, you will be a different person; I dislike being with women of no color" She laughed to show that she was teasing" (p116)	Theodora	Manner / Quality	Sarcasm / teasing (maxim is cancelled)
16	The team is moving around the house, room by room, exploring every corner. The doctor says: "we shall see the tower from a window" - and shivered as	- "Could there be a draft across that doorway?" - "A draft? In Hill House?" Theodora laughed (p118)	Theodora	Manner	Sarcasm (maxim is cancelled with her laughter)

	he passed through the door.				
17	The doctor, along with the others, is walking down the hall, to a large room on the end which had been the nursery. They find a cold spot in the hallway.	"The very essence of the tomb, as Theodora points out. The cold spot in Borley Rectory only dropped eleven degrees" (p119)	Dr. Montague	Manner	Reference to the so-called 'most haunted house in England'
18	At bedtime, Eleanor and Theodora hear something knocking on the doors. They stand right behind the doors while the banging goes on for a while.	"I'm going to complain to the janitor about the radiator" (p130)	Theodora	Quality	Sarcasm
19	"Did anything happen in here while we were outside?" the doctor asked. Then Theodora explains to him their experience the previous night (quote # 18)	"Nothing in particular. Someone knocked on the door with a cannon ball and then tried to get in and eat us, and started laughing her head off when we wouldn't open the door. But nothing really out of the way" (p133)	Theodora	Manner	Sarcasm
20	At breakfast,	"It is	Dr.	Relation	Exaggeration

	the doctor goes over the list of the most famous haunted houses: Ballechin House, Borley Rectory, Galmis Castle...	incredible experiencing it, absolutely incredible (...) I could not have believed it. My wife will never believe me. Food has a new flavor - do you find it so?" (p138)	Montague		(not really about food, but his mood)
21	Eleanor says smiling, "all three of you are in my imagination; none of this is real"	- "If I thought you could really believe that" (...) "I would turn you out of Hill House this morning. You would be venturing far too close to the state of mind which would welcome the perils of Hill House with a kind of sisterly embrace" - "He means he would think you were batty, Nell dear" Theodora said (p140)	Dr. Montague	Manner	Meaning she might have lost her mind (Eleanor) Theodora cancelled the previous maxim.
22	The doctor continues, "always asking me what to do today. Can't you amuse yourselves with your	"You are still like a pack of children", the doctor said, smiling too (p142)	Dr. Montague	Quality	'Immature', but cancelling it with his smile

	toys? Or with each other? I have work to do.”				
23	Breakfast time, in the dining room.	-“Now,” the doctor said again more severely, and they were quiet. “I want more coffee,” he said, appealing. “Don’t we all?” -“You mean go right in there and ask Mrs Dudley?” Eleanor asked. -“Roughly, yes,” the doctor said. (p143)			“Roughly, yes” said the doctor, working out the implicature
24	The doctor asks Luke to head to the kitchen and bring him more coffee.	“Insolent graybeard,” Luke said. “Do not look surprised (...) if you lose your Luke in this cause; if I don’t return (...)” (p144)	Luke	Quality	Exaggeration / sarcasm
25	They find a large writing on the wall written in chalk: “HELP ELEANOR COME HOME” The doctor says “none of us wrote it.” Eleanor is in	-“Did I do something to attract attention, more than anyone else?” -“No more than usual, dear,” Theodora said (147)	Theodora	Manner	‘Yes, you normally do’

	awe and asks "then why me?"				
26	Eleanor explains "it seems foolish to spend a morning as glorious as this has been looking at a frigid place on a floor. We must plan to spend more time outside."	- "Is there still a world somewhere?" Eleanor asked wonderingly (...) - "We are on a desert island," Luke said (p151)	Luke	Quality	'We are isolated'
27	Eleanor and Theodora are having an argument about their "affairs", as Eleanor puts it. Theodora then laughs and replies, referring to Eleanor leaving her life behind to make it to Hill House.	Eleanor said awkwardly: - "I'm no good at talking to people and saying things." Theodora laughed: - "What are you good at?" she demanded. "Running away?" (p174)	Theodora	Manner	'Avoiding real life?'
28	Mrs. Montague and Arthur, carrying their bags, arrive to Hill House.	"Wouldn't you think there'd be someone here to help us with this door?" (p180)	Mrs. Montague	Manner	'This is no proper way to meet us'
29	Dr. Montague to his wife, "how nice that you got here; we'd given you up."	"I said I'd be here today, didn't I? Did you ever know me not to come when I said I would?" (p180)	Mrs. Montague	Quantity	'I always keep my word. It annoys me I have to remind you this'

30	The doctor insists, "we'd given you up."	"I believe that I told you that I would be here today. Of course, it is perfectly possible that I am mistaken, but it is my recollection that I said I would be here today" (p181)	Mrs. Montague	Quantity	She insists when told by her husband "we'd given you up". She is still annoyed.
31	Mrs. Montague suggests to "have a little session" after dinner with <i>planchette</i> (a <i>Ouija board</i> session)	"What else was there?" Luke asked hastily. "I am so interested in hearing what -ah- <i>planchette</i> had to say" (p190)	Luke	Quality	'He is not interested at all'
32	Mrs. Montague says, " <i>planchette</i> has been very kind tonight (...) There are definitely foreign elements present in this house (...) There is also a name, spelled as Helen."	- "Now, Helen," Mrs Montague went on, "wants us to search the cellar for an old well." - "Don't tell me Helen was buried alive," the doctor said (p190)	Dr. Montague	Quality / Manner	Sarcasm.
33	Arthur is inspecting the bedrooms before bedtime.	"I shall, if you like, save you the trouble of glancing into the closet and under the bed"	Arthur	Manner	Patronizing attitude.

		(p195)			
34	<p>“I just hope she didn’t go and make anything mad, with her <i>planchette</i>,” Theodora said. “Sorry, Doctor Montague. I don’t intend to speak rudely of your wife.”</p>	<p>"She is a good wife, and takes good care of me. She does things splendidly, really. Buttons on my shirts. (p198)</p>	Dr. Montague	Relation	He is admitting she annoyed everyone, but implying that by pointing out she is a good wife nevertheless.
35	<p>They hear a pounding coming up the stairs, “crashing on each step.” They all get tense, and stand by the door.</p>	<p>“How weary one gets of this constant pounding,” Theodora said ridiculously. “Next summer, I must really go somewhere else” (p199)</p>	Theodora	Manner	‘Just another paranormal phenomena’
36	<p>“Now the house shivered and shook, the curtains dashing against the windows, the furniture swaying, and the noise in the hall became so great that it pushed against the wall (...) and perhaps the smashing of windows.”</p>	<p>“Another day,” the doctor said, and in spite of his appearance his voice was wan. “Another night,” she said. (p204)</p>	Dr. Montague	Manner	
37	<p>In reference to quote # 36</p>	<p>“What happened?” Eleanor</p>	Theodora	Manner	Ridiculing and mocking, for being surreal,

		asked (...) "Hill House went dancing," Theodora said, "taking us along on a mad midnight fling. At least, I think it was dancing; it might have been turning somersaults" (p205)			their experiences in the house.
38	Mrs. Montague is referring to her night	"If by profitable you meant comfortable, John, I wish you would say no" (p207)	Mrs. Montague	Quantity	In just a line: she did not spend a good night.
39	"I'm coming with you," Eleanor tells Theodora. "Coming where with me?" Theodora replies.	"I am not in the habit of taking home stray cats," Theodora said lightly. (p208)	Theodora	Relation / Quality	Instead of saying 'no', and referring to Eleanor, whom she describes as someone with no clear direction in life.
40	Referring to quote # 25	Theodora laughed. "Perhaps Nell would rather stay here and write on walls" (p210)	Theodora	Manner	Accused Nell of being the writer.
41	Eleanor is referring to her mother. She passed away while on her care. "She knocked on	"I've wondered ever since if I did wake up. If I did wake up and hear her" (p212)	Eleanor	Manner	She did not care. A sense of regret.

	the wall and called me and called me and I never woke up. I ought to have brought her the medicine.”				
42	The doctor is trying to have a moment of solitude and peace to work on his notes.	“Interesting.” The doctor sounded weary. “If you will excuse me, Arthur, I have all these notes to write up” (p221)	Dr. Montague	Quality	‘Please, be quiet’
43	The doctor insists in telling Arthur, politely, to leave him alone.	“Arthur. Can you read, or something” (p221)	Dr. Montague	Manner	‘Leave me alone’
44	Eleanor, in a careless move, climbs up a narrow platform that leads out onto the turret. Luke is requested to climb up and fetch her.	“Of course it will be all right, “ Like said grimly. “Probably it will only be my neck that gets broken. Hold on, Nell” (p234)	Luke	Quality	Sarcasm
45	Luke reaches Eleanor and asks her to do everything he tells her to get her down safely.	“Perhaps I will just push you over the edge, “ Luke said. “Let you smash down there on the floor. Now behave yourself and move slowly” (p235)	Luke	Quality	Sarcasm
46	The doctor makes up his	“Luke will bring your	Dr. Montague	Manner	‘You must go’

	mind with regard to Eleanor's safety. She must leave the house for own her sake.	car around," the doctor said gently. In spite of what he was saying, his eyes were considerate and friendly. (p237)	e		
47		"You always think, John, and that's your trouble. Naturally I examined the room at once" (p238)	Mrs. Montague	Manner	'You do not act'
48	Theodora is packing Eleanor's stuff and Luke is checking her car. They are sending Eleanor home.	"Walled up alive." Eleanor began to laugh again at their stone faces. "Walled up alive," she said. "I want to stay here." (p240)	Eleanor	Quality / Manner	'I would rather die than go'
49	Luke and Theodora are chatting away while walking outside.	"A mother house", Luke said (...) "a housemother, a headmistress (...)" (p211)	Luke	Manner	Referring to Eleanor ("poor silly Nell"). Does the house take a maternal role?

Table 1. Conversational implicatures

Maxims Flouted	QUANTITY	QUALITY	RELATION	MANNER
Occurrences	7	22	4	23

Table 2. Maxims flouted

Characters	Eleanor	Theodora	Dr. Montague	Luke	Mrs. Montague	Arthur	Mr. Dudley	Mrs. Dudley
# of maxims flouted	4	16	13	7	5	1	2	2

Table 3. Characters and number of maxims flouted

4.2 Implications of flouting a maxim

The flouting of maxims takes place when speakers intentionally cease to apply them to persuade their listeners to infer the hidden meaning behind the messages. In this case, said speaker is creating a certain implicature. On the other hand, a violation of a maxim causes misunderstanding on the part of the listeners and the speaker is seen as uncooperative.

In the following examples from the novel the hearer assumes that the Cooperative Principle is observed “at the level of what is implicated” (Grice, 1975:52).

1) Flouting of the maxim of Quantity:

1a) Make your contributions as informative as required. **Quote # 1:** When the caretaker stops Eleanor at the gates of Hill House and asks her if she “ever hear anything about this place”, the information is definitely insufficient and the tone is even threatening. He cannot say anymore, or is unwilling to do so, thus causing discomfort and uncertainty to Eleanor, whose implicature let her know she is not welcome there and she should not have come all the way to Hill House.

1b) Do not make your contributions more informative than required. **Quote # 20:** In other instances, the same effect is achieved when the contribution of the speaker is more informative than required, for example: “I believe that I told you that I would be here today. Of course, it is perfectly possible that I am mistaken, but it is my recollection that I said I would be here today”. These words, uttered by Mrs. Montague, are more informative than needed. She is obviously flouting the maxim of Quantity to let Mr. Montague infer that she is upset when confronted by her husband’s words of surprise, “we’d given up on you.” Grice argues that such an implicature could be explained not by referencing the second maxim of Quantity, but the maxim of Relation (Grice, 1975:53).

2) Flouting of the maxim of Quality (make them true)

2a) Irony and sarcasm. **Quote # 6:** Theodora mocks Mrs. Dudley, the housekeeper, when, in a conversation with Eleanor, she replies that Mrs. Dudley might be commanded by “Count Dracula”. It is obvious that Theodora does not believe so; to begin with, Dracula, as we know it in popular culture, is a fictional character. She is tapping into the atmosphere of the estate, its past too, dark and sinister, and Dracula is well known by all as possessing those attributes. Needless to say, the housekeeper might as well be of service for such an entity. **Quote # 44:** Eleanor, when the others are busy, goes into the library and climbs up a wobbly staircase that leads to the attic, risking her health and safety and putting Doctor’s Montague research on jeopardy.

2b) Hyperbole. **Quote # 20:** Dr. Montague names some allegedly haunted houses in the U.K., such as Bachellin House, Borley Rectory and Galmis Castle, when having breakfast, and emphasizes how good food is, as if having “a new flavor”. He is in such a state of euphoria after the encounter with the paranormal

that comparing those famous haunted estates to Hill House, a mansion that might have after all its share of paranormal activity, makes tasting food a whole new experience. He seems to be exaggerating here.

2c) Meiosis. **Quote # 19:** Theodora says that “nothing really out the way” happened after experiencing an eventful night of paranormal phenomena right outside her bedroom. Meiosis is a figure of speech that attempts to downplay or undermine the effect or meaning of something. Theodora employs figures like this one to minimize the importance of a tense situation.

2d) Metaphor. **Quote # 39:** Theodora, in a heated exchange with Eleanor towards the end of the novel, says “I am not taking home stray cats”, in reply to Eleanor’s proposal of going with her after their stay at Hill House is completed. She does not openly answer with a ‘no’, instead she utilizes a metaphor, letting her interlocutor know her proposal is just not only rejected, but also criticizes her life choices.

2.1) Flouting of the maxim of Quality (make them true):

Quote # 6: Eleanor is referring to Mrs. Dudley’s surreptitious ways when she claims “she probably watches every move we make” as part of an agreement, to which Theodora replies “with whom, Count Dracula?” Here she resorts to irony alluding to a widely well-known horror character.

3) Flouting of the maxim of Relation:

Quote # 11: Mrs. Dudley is the housekeeper in Hill House. It is not disclosed how long she has been doing housekeeping for the Crain family. She arrives early in the morning to serve breakfast and leaves well before sunset. She moves around the house as a ghost, appearing and disappearing at will, and does her chores with obsessive compulsion. In that vein, when asked if the dishes belonged to the house, her answer is crystal clear: “they belong on the shelves”. Mrs. Dudley refuses to discuss anything pertaining to the owners of the house and with her response the implicature indicates so.

Quote # 34: Dr. Montague is obviously embarrassed by his wife’s appearance at Hill House: her demeanor is quite bossy and condescending, getting on everybody’s nerves. The doctor is aware of such things and, to the best of his abilities, attempts to excuse her for her modals and points out how good of a wife she is: “she does things splendidly. Buttons on my shirt,” he remarks. Although his observation may seem rather ridiculous at first glance, given the circumstances, these words illustrate a man who is willing to put up with her spouse’s behavior if she is “a good wife.”

4) Flouting of the maxim of Manner:

4a) Be perspicuous. **Quote # 40:** In the middle of an argument, Theodora laughs and says, “perhaps Nell (Eleanor) would rather stay here and write on walls.” Early in the story, Luke alerts the others with his discovery: someone had written with chalk on the walls of the hallways of Hill House: “HELP ELEANOR

COME HOME.” Theodora is not clearly stating what she is intending to say, but she inferred that is Eleanor herself who wrote those words on the wall.

4b) Avoid obscurity of expression. Quote # 13: Dr. Montague uses the figure of Don Juan, a legendary Spanish nobleman and philanderer, and hero of many poems. The archetypal Don Juan is popular enough to be known as an unscrupulous pursuer of women, but it might not be too evident to everybody how such figure can apply to the specific context of the scene in the novel. The doctor, more often than not, utilizes references to writers, philosophers and the paranormal throughout the novel, evidencing a well-read and educated man. The other members of the team do not always follow him, however, this does not prevent him from resorting to such references.

4c) Avoid ambiguity. Quote # 36: “Another day, another night”. Dr. Montague’s voice is “wan”; in his tone, “and in spite of his appearance,” he feels exhausted and weary. The doctor is referring to just another day filled with events which were difficult to explain under the laws of logic. His ambiguity reflects concern for the state of things at Hill House.

4.3 Interpreting the conversational implicatures

The aim here is to apply Grice’s basic two-person model to the structure of conversational implicature found in fiction (both fictional characters, speaker and hearer) and explore the ways in which those characters implicate meaning through what they say. Thus, the reader may gain access to the conscience of any given character and understand their motives and *raison d’être*.

4.3.1 What do they tell us about the characters

4.3.1.1 Eleanor

Eleanor starts off by resorting to irony and sarcasm, flouting the first maxim of Quality, and as Grice indicates, it is obvious that whatever is said it is something she does not believe (Grice, 1975:53). As soon as she steps into the mansion, she reveals her happiness for being there and feels likewise welcome by the first guest she encounters there, Theodora, e.g. **quote # 4**, which is a good indicator of that. The tone is friendly, and chatty. She labels the tense conversation she engages with the caretaker as “amiable”. Eleanor, indeed, finds resistance and suffers the imposing presence of Mr. Dudley, as he initially prevents her from entering the premises. However, that does not intimidate her, ultimately gaining access to Hill House.

Eleanor seems to question what she has said to the other guests, the very moment she utters her words to them, showing an alarming sense of insecurity whenever the occasion arises. Her interactions with her colleagues diminish as her inner dialogue takes over. She has to work out a total of eighteen conversational implicatures, mainly directed at her by Luke and Theodora. It must be pointed out that she does so with a varying degree of good sense.

She also exhibits a guilty conscience regarding her mom's passing in her conversation with others, of which **quote # 41** is a fine example. In said quote, Eleanor addresses the years she spent looking after her bed-ridden mother, the never-ending nights where she wondered what she was doing with her adult life. In one of those nights, she negligently fails to wake up to her mother's call for help. She even goes on questioning if she woke up at all (did she indeed wake up but her choice was not to aid her ill mother?).

Eleanor, perhaps because of the aforementioned situation, the years consumed in assisting her mother, feels somewhat detached from 'real life'. She seems not to have a prospect for the future beyond her stay at Hill House, and Theodora, on several occasions, brought it up in the open. Eleanor, in **quote # 27**, admits not being good "at talking to people". Theodora's response is a sharp accusation: "what are you good at? Running away?" In her conversations with Eleanor, and even early on, Theodora utilizes all sorts of sarcastic comments on her interlocutor's lifestyle. In **quote # 39**, Theodora forcefully discards Eleanor's invitation of sharing an apartment after their stay at Hill House. "I am not in the habit of taking home stray cats", she utters mercilessly. Their initial play on words, closeness, secret-telling, and intimacy, turns into a sour and bitter relationship between the two.

Therefore, Hill House is conceived as an escape, a sanctuary of sorts, where Eleanor can leave her past behind (a past she definitely resents), and build a new future, perhaps a new beginning. However, her own personal take on 'freedom' is an illusory form, without any foundation in reality. And eventually Theodora lets her know the hard way. Towards the end of the novel, Eleanor, now lost in constant daydreaming, and when everyone is asleep, enters the library and climbs up the wobbly staircase that leads to a trapdoor. Perhaps she is trying to get attention (in **quote # 25** Theodora implies she, in fact, does so), but in so doing she puts her life at risk. Her last words, **quote # 48**, are a tragic statement that foretells her final demise: "walled up alive... I want to stay here."

4.3.1.2 Theodora

Theodora storms in Hill House with an air of self-confidence, reassurance and magnetic personality. Her poise does not go overlooked by the other guests, particularly Eleanor, who feels drawn to her from the very beginning. Theodora assumes a commanding stance, and initially takes Eleanor under her wing. She comes closest to caring for Eleanor, but she is also the character who threatens her fragile self-esteem. She is determined, as shown in **quote # 15**, to change Eleanor's look claiming she dislikes "women of no color". Likewise, she resorts to irony and sarcasm, the most by any other character, to lighten up situations and flouting the maxims of quality and manner, as seen in **quotes # 6, 8, 12, 16, 19 and 35**.

She can be impertinent and insolent if given the opportunity. For instance, when Eleanor asks the others if she has been attracting attention, her response is cold and dry, as in **quote # 25**: "no more than usual, dear." Her seeming liking

to Eleanor turns into boredom and a somewhat condescending attitude towards her. They grow apart as the days go by and the anxieties and insecurities of the team are brought to the surface.

Towards the end of their stay, her words to Eleanor even reach a conclusively accusatory tone. Whether playful or sincere, Theodora's interaction with Eleanor is indicative of someone (Theodora) who has chosen the other (Eleanor) as her favorite target. She does not hesitate to accuse Eleanor of being the author of the mysterious writing on the wall early on in the novel, as exemplified in **quote # 40**.

We do not know much about Theodora, other than she had an argument with her roommate, and run away. If Eleanor compulsively dreams about finding a place to start a new life after her mom's passing, Theodora seems not to worry about her whereabouts once the investigation is over. On Eleanor's persistence over the prospect of living together, Theodora shuts it down with the same coldness: "I am not in the habit of taking home stray cats" (**quote # 39**) .

As evidenced in her conversation with her colleagues, she is a free spirit, with no attachment to other human beings or circumstances of any sort, and when pushed to the limits (the quarrel with her former roommate) she is resolved enough to take matters into her own hands.

4.3.1.3 Dr. Montague

Dr. Montague is responsible for assembling a group of individuals which will assist him in testing the existence, or lack of, of so-called paranormal phenomena. He exhibits his politeness and courtesy by way of mostly using indirect questions, as shown in **quotes # 21, 22, 42, 43, 46**. He is also prone to let the others know he is a well-read man, with multiple cultural references (e.g. **quote # 13**). The doctor leaves no room for eccentricities of any kind, as a man of science. Thus, in **quote #9**, he states that the house "watches every move you make. And then my own imagination, of course." He indeed floated the maxim of Quality but ultimately canceled it himself.

When his wife arrives at Hill House, the doctor disapproves of Mrs. Montague's manners. The doctor's wife's demeanor gets in everybody's nerves right away, and all Mr. Montague can do is resort to sarcasm to let his team know she is, after all, a good wife: "she is a good wife, and takes very good care of me. She does things splendidly, really. Buttons on my shirts" (**quote # 34**). The explanation-excuse he gives may sound somewhat odd and out of context, but either the doctor emphasizes the tasks that were genuinely taken care of by women when the novel was written, in a highly patriarchal society, or he indeed had a difficult time finding a reasonable excuse for his wife's behavior.

Mr. Montague is, above all, a man of science with an open mind. He is also keen on finding 'something' at Hill House, and that is what drives him. "It is incredible to find oneself experiencing it, absolutely incredible," he goes on saying in **quote # 20**. He is, therefore, well versed in the paranormal, with constant allusions to some other notoriously haunted houses in England, such as Borley

Rectory (**quote # 17**). He is reluctant to share his inquisitiveness with his college colleagues, though, for fear of being ridicule and, possibly, ostracized. <

He also see the others as his “children”, and he thus plays the role of both a father figure (**quote # 22**, where he calls them “a pack of children”), and as a guiding figure, too, during their time at Hill House. He inquires the rest of the team, usually indirectly, to help him with some of the chores at Hill House (**quote # 23**). He moves around with determination in the face of Eleanor’s nervous breakdown and, firmly but gently, (**quote # 46**) makes it clear that she must leave the house for her own sake.

4.3.1.4 Luke

Luke is the heir of Hill House. His sole responsibility during the research is to cooperate with the other members of the team and, as the future inheritor, be there at all times. His wit, humorous persona and chatty demeanor work as a counterpoint to the more solemn and by-the-book Mr. Montague. Essentially, he is a non-believer and turns to his lively presence and sarcastic sense of humor to cope with an investigation he is hesitant of (**quotes # 24 and 44** are good examples of such). He develops an early liking for Theodora, both sharing some similarities in character and in terms of their sense of humor and how to downplay the occurrences at Hill House. For instance, after Mrs. Montague’s arrival, Luke questions her dubious ways of contacting any entities in the house, mocking her with finesse and sarcasm (**quote # 31**).

Perhaps unexpectedly, and while the rest cower behind the door, he takes up the role of the ‘knight in shining armor’ and he goes up the iron stairway to try to rescue Eleanor (**quote # 45**), which he does, but cannot save her from herself. Ultimately his somehow flaky presence does not get in the way of the doctor’s research, even empathizing with Mr. Montague’s endeavor.

4.3.1.5 Mrs. Montague

She storms into Hill House bringing along her faithful companion Arthur, a sort of personal assistant, towards the end of novel, and definitely leaves an impression on all the others. She is bossy, cold and unfriendly to her husband. At any opportunity, she belittles him in front of everybody. In **quote # 28**, upon her arrival, she insistently demands being helped with her luggage and with everything else, flouting this way the maxims of Quantity and Manner.

She does not only talk down to her husband, she even attempts to ridicule him, **quote # 29**. Whenever she is annoyed, she lets everybody else know her mood. She sports an air of superiority and arrogance, condescending too, only appreciated by Arthur. In **quote # 47**, she deems her husband as too passive, blaming him of not being a man of action and resolution, quite the contrary he goes to great lengths to show before her wife’s appearance.

She is keen on the paranormal, just like the doctor but, unlike him, she disregards any scientific method and relies upon her Ouija board to unravel the mystery behind Hill House, which she does on her own will and without being asked to.

4.3.1.6 Mr. and Mrs. Dudley

Both characters represent elements of the Gothic literature: the figure of the housekeepers of the old mansion⁶. They are gloomy, sparing with words and even threatening. In **quotes # 1, 2 and 3**, rather early on, they anticipate and warn Eleanor of the potential threat the house may harbor. Their style is dry, non-friendly, avoiding conversation, and not disclosing much information to doctor Montague's team. They are orderly in their ways, to the point of lacking flexibility and social skills to pleasantly communicate with their guests. It could be argued that it is all due to an absolute absence of imagination on their part, thus seeing the world in a very ordered manner (**quote # 11**). Mrs. Dudley keeps the orderliness of the house, while she finds the more unconventional domestic practices of Eleanor and Theodora as threatening.

4.3.2 Themes

4.3.2.1 Haunted minds gather at Hill House

Some of the characters seem to be escaping from something. It could well be a momentary escape from toxic environments: “all of the guests escape momentarily from toxic family structures with their trip to Hill House” (O’Neil, 2020:56). No solace is found, however, in this new environment. Luke talks in **quote # 49** about “a mother house (...) a housemother, a headmistress”. The house seems to take on a maternal role for some members of the group. Particularly, in the aforementioned quote Luke is conversing with Theodora about Eleanor’s insecurities, her running away, and her wish for finding a new home. **Eleanor**, in her conversation with the others, brings up the circumstances surrounding her mom’s passing. Richard Pascal, in his article *Walking Alone Together*, plays with the appealing notion that Eleanor’s struggle in Hill House is an act of defiance of a “voracious mothering force embodied by Hill House” (Pascal, 2014:7). And although Eleanor seemed to have found shelter in Hill House, her struggle turned ultimately unsuccessful.

There seems to be a case for a dependency on parental figures for healthy childhood development. Without a motherly presence, “the mother’s absence becomes a haunting presence that bears directly on the daughter’s difficult struggle to achieve self-hood as well as to express her unacknowledged rage or her sense of precariousness in the world.” (Rubenstein, 1996:311). As pointed out early on (**quote # 41**, where she feels not only guilty, but also traumatized), Eleanor despises her previous life as a caretaker of her invalid mother, while at the same time feeling guilty for not being there when her mother needed her. Their mutual dependency was shattered after her mom’s passing, and Eleanor’s underdeveloped identity came to the surface in painful ways.

Eleanor believes she has found the home she never had (she, indeed, felt lost without one), as it is stated in **quote # 48**. Eleanor, Theodora, and Luke all take on the roles of children, and Dr. Montague plays the father figure here (**quote**

⁶ The *Haunting of Hill House* is indeed a gothic work, making use of well-established gothic tropes such as haunted mansions, isolated, well-off families, and disputes over property. However, Jackson moves freely between comic reflections on domesticity, family life and the oppressive.

22); the trio suggests playing hide-and-seek, and the doctor tells them not to wander around too much, calling them a “pack of children.” The drama between these four plays out much as it would in a family drama, and the pseudo-family relationships connect with Eleanor’s quest to find a home occupied by people she can care about and who care for her. However, the group that gathers at Hill House quickly turns against her once her flaws and weaknesses are revealed, agreeing to expel her from the house. The novel ends abruptly once Eleanor crashes her car into a tree. Was the story after all about Hill House or about Eleanor? She seemed, dramatically and fatally, to fulfill her dream: “I want to stay here” (quote # 48) are nearly her last words. She foresaw her ultimate demise.

The free-spirited **Theodora** had a quarrel with her roommate before her trip to Hill House. The details are not available to reader; all it is known is that there were some discrepancies between the two of them and she had no choice but to leave the apartment. This is another case of someone running away from her surroundings at a given time.

Dr. Montague’s personal endeavour, proving the existence of a reality beyond our natural science, comes with a price: he keeps it to himself for fear of being ridiculed by his colleagues in the anthropology department. His intentions with regard to the house derived from the methods of the nineteenth-century paranormal researchers; he was going to live in Hill House and report whatever anomalous happened there: He talks on several occasions about Borley Rectory, for instance in **quote # 17**, allegedly the most haunted house in England, proving a definite interest in the subject matter. He hoped to borrow the respect he thought he deserved in the field, and this was his opportunity to achieve that.

His wife, as she makes an unexpected appearance at Hill House, is controlling and judgemental of everything the doctor does or says (**quotes # 28 and 47**), so Mr. Montague could also approach his three month rental of Hill House as an opportunity to stay away from his dominating spouse. Due to her annoyance to the rest of the guests, Mr. Montague feels the need to excuse his own wife’s behavior, in **quote # 34**, to the others.

In summary, a strong argument could be made in favor of Dr. Montague’s and his crew’s presence in Hill House in the form of dissatisfaction with their lives.

4.3.2.2 Trapped in a patriarchal society

In *The Haunting of Hill House*, Shirley Jackson shows a strong depiction of oppression towards women. Eleanor, the protagonist, goes through a mental breakdown that seems to indicate women are weak. She lacks individuality and acts in clear desperation for acquiring one of her own. This aligns with the tendency in American Gothic literature where the role of the men is that of strength and superiority over women. When Eleanor and Theodora are outside investigating the backyards of Hill House, Dr. Montague calls them “a pack of children” (**quote # 22**). The doctor sees them as immature as they run around the premises and make up funny stories about their respective families. Eleanor, particularly, is seen as fragile. Her lack of strength perhaps led her to her fatal car accident at Hill House. Arthur, Mrs. Montague’s companion, offers himself to Eleanor and Theodora to look under their beds and glance “into the closet” (**quote**

33), while carrying a gun, a symbol of his masculinity. A man will save them from the ghosts of Hill House, he meant to show.

It is doubtful Dr. Montague cared for Eleanor's mental health when he decided to expel her from Hill House (**quote # 46**); all he seemed to care for was his investigation. This is a general view of society on women whose mental health is neither considered nor regarded. It could be argued that her final nervous breakdown was the consequence of her exposure to a house that finally deteriorated her sanity due to her lack of identity and individuality, both not absent in strong men.

4.3.2.3 The Paranormal

"The supernatural elements cannot be interpreted as misperceptions or evidence of madness on the part of some 'unreliable narrator'" (Tuttle, 2005:180). The novel makes it clear that something in the house brings out the disturbance in Eleanor⁷. In the exchange among the characters it can be noted the following:

1) The dramatic drops in temperature: Theodora in **quote # 18** jokes about complaining "to the janitor about the radiator", which happen inadvertently and without a reasonable cause in different spots in the house. Likewise, in **quote # 17**, the doctor talks about the "cold spots" present also in this kind of houses.

2) The noises: Theodora claims in **quote # 19** that "someone knocked on the door with a cannonball and them tried to eat us." At night, her and Eleanor had witnessed the thunderous banging on the bedroom door with them inside, leaving them trembling, speechless and paralyzed with awe. Mr. Montague reports the occurrences of unidentified noises in the hallways and the moving of furniture, to which he utters with resignation "another day (...) another night" (**quote # 36**). Theodora refers to the "constant pounding" in **quote # 35** and "how weary one gets" because of it.

3) A mysterious message written on the wall of the hallway, which no one claimed authorship for: "Help Eleanor Come Home." (**quote # 40**)

4) Some other haunted mansions: the doctor compares what is happening in Hill House with some of the other classic haunted houses in the U.K. (**quote # 20**), such as Borley Rectory, Ballechin House and Glamis Castle.⁸

⁷ Jackson was inspired to write *The Haunting of Hill House* after reading a report about 19th century psychic researchers who spent some time in a house they thought to be haunted in order to study paranormal phenomena. The investigators recorded their experiences in the house to present them to the Society for Psychic Research (Green, 2022)

⁸ These estates mentioned by Mr. Montague form a sort of trinity of the haunted locations in the U.K. Paranormal researcher Harry Price was contacted in 1931 to carry out a thorough investigation in Borley Rectory, an isolated rural parish in Essex. On his arrival he was convinced that Marianne, the previous tenant, and mentally unstable, was somehow responsible for the activity. However, Price was drawn to the commercial opportunity that the story offered and published *The Most Haunted House in England* in 1940. Ballechin House was a home built in the Georgian era in the county of Perthshire in Scotland. Glamis Castle was built in the Scottish lowlands and it mainly housed royalty since its inception.

4. Conclusions

This paper was conducted to study the conversational implicature found in forty-nine dialogues in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*. Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims were used as a framework to identify and analyze the data focusing on the flouting of the conversational maxims. As a result, Grice's theory proved useful in explaining the conversational implicature of fictional dialogues. The findings in the present study revealed that the language triggers conversational implicatures through the use of different mechanisms, mainly: sarcasm, irony, guessing, confirmation, politeness, indirect questions, indirect requests, emphasizing or changing the topic of the conversation. Moreover, the characters generate said conversational implicature to serve their conversational purposes. Hence, they do not always observe the Cooperative Principle when they interact with their interlocutors; however, the latter infers the implied meanings based on the utterances, the contexts, their background knowledge or the knowledge of the conversational maxims.

It may be concluded that these pragmatic theories would thus assist ESL readers in the reading and understanding of the fictional dialogues and the deeper appreciation of literary works. Moreover, this approach facilitates the reader's task of grasping what the author of any given literary text may attempt to convey, just by relying on the actual utterances rather than on any previous knowledge regarding the author, or the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the text. Whenever a new situation arises within the imaginary world of the story, the working out of the implicature on the reader's part may be the only means to make sense of the progression of the narrative. This may be confirmed or canceled as the story moves on. Thus, the reader plays an active role in the action. A literary text should constitute a solid unit, be self-explanatory and, also, be made readily available for the reader's interpretation. That is to say that nothing else should be needed for a full comprehension of the text.

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