

= The Haunting (1963 film) =

The Haunting is a 1963 British supernatural horror film directed and produced by Robert Wise and adapted by Nelson Gidding from the 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson . It stars Julie Harris , Claire Bloom , Richard Johnson , and Russ Tamblyn . The film depicts the experiences of a small group of people invited by a paranormal investigator to investigate a purportedly haunted house .

Screenwriter Gidding , who had worked with director Wise on the 1958 film *I Want to Live !* , began a six @-@ month write of the script after reading the book , which Wise had given to him . He perceived the book to be more about mental breakdown than ghosts , and although he was informed after meeting author Shirley Jackson that it was very much a supernatural novel , elements of mental breakdown were introduced into the film . The film was shot at MGM @-@ British Studios in the United Kingdom on a budget of \$ 1 @. @ 050 million , with exteriors and the grounds shot at Ettington Park (now the Ettington Park Hotel) in the village of Ettington , Warwickshire . Julie Harris was cast by Wise who found her ideal for the psychologically fragile Eleanor , though during production she suffered from depression and had an uneasy relationship with her co @-@ stars . The interior sets were by Elliot Scott , credited by Wise as instrumental in the making of *The Haunting* . They were designed to be brightly lit , with no dark corners or recesses , and decorated in a Rococo style ; all the rooms had ceilings to create a claustrophobic effect on film . Numerous devices and tricks were used in the filming . Wise used a 30mm anamorphic , wide @-@ angle lens Panavision camera that was not technically ready for use and caused distortions . It was only given to Wise on condition that he sign a memorandum in which he acknowledged that the lens was imperfect . Wise and cinematographer Davis Boulton planned sequences that kept the camera moving , utilizing low @-@ angle takes , and incorporating unusual pans and tracking shots .

The Haunting is notable for its lesbian character , Theodora . Although her character 's sexual orientation is left ambiguous in the source novel , the film makes it known subtly and it is one of the few motion pictures of that era to depict a lesbian as feminine and not predatory . According to Harris , however , film censors demanded that Theo never be shown to touch Eleanor in a sensual or suggestive way , to keep the lesbianism less obvious .

Upon release on 18 September 1963 , the film performed moderately at the box office and was well received , although the plot was widely criticized for being incoherent . Today it has achieved cult status and is considered by many to be one of the best horror films in cinematic history , and one of the most unsettling . In 2010 , *The Guardian* newspaper ranked it as the 13th best horror film of all time . Director Martin Scorsese has placed *The Haunting* first on his list of the 11 scariest horror films of all time . *The Haunting* was released on DVD in its original screen format with commentary in 2003 , and was released on Blu @-@ ray on 15 October 2013 . The film was remade in 1999 by director Jan de Bont , starring Liam Neeson , Lili Taylor , Catherine Zeta Jones and Owen Wilson , but this version was heavily panned by critics and audiences alike .

= = Plot = =

Dr. John Markway narrates the history of the 90 @-@ year @-@ old Hill House , which was constructed by Hugh Crain as a home for his wife . She died when her carriage crashed against a tree as she approached the house for the first time . Crain remarried , but his second wife died in the house from a fall down the stairs . Crain 's daughter Abigail lived in the house for the rest of her life , never moving out of the nursery . She died calling for her nurse @-@ companion . The companion inherited the house , but later hanged herself from a spiral staircase in the library . Hill House was eventually inherited by a Mrs. Sanderson , although it has stood empty for some time .

Markway wishes to study the reported paranormal activity at Hill House . He secures a lease from Mrs. Sanderson to occupy the mansion for the duration of his investigation ; conditional to his acceptance is that he take Luke Sanderson , her heir , with him . Markway has chosen two individuals to accompany him ? a psychic , Theodora , also known as Theo , and the meek Eleanor Lance , who experienced poltergeist activity as a child . Eleanor spent her adult life caring for her

invalid mother , whose recent death has left Eleanor with severe guilt .

The large , maze @-@ like mansion 's walls were constructed with angles slightly askew , resulting in off @-@ center perspectives and doors that open and close by themselves . The immense library contains the ramshackle spiral staircase from which the previous owner hanged herself ; the vast conservatory is adorned with eerie statues . During their first night in the house , Eleanor and Theo are terrified by supernatural occurrences outside Theo 's bedroom door . Deafening banging is heard against the door and the voice of a young girl is heard echoing with laughter . Despite the turbulence , Eleanor feels a tentative affinity to Hill House .

The team explores the house the next day , discovering a cold spot outside the nursery and encountering other supernatural phenomena . Markway reveals more about the hauntings that have allegedly occurred . Following another night of loud disturbances the team discovers the words " HELP , ELEANOR , COME HOME " on a wall , which causes Eleanor severe distress .

That night , Theo moves into Eleanor 's room and they fall asleep in the same bed . Eleanor is awakened by the sounds of a man speaking indistinctly and a woman laughing . Fearful , Eleanor asks Theo to hold her hand and she feels it being crushed . As Eleanor hears the sound of a young girl crying , she shouts at whoever is causing the child pain . Theo awakens with a start and turns on the light . Eleanor then sees that Theo had moved from the bed to the couch , and was not the one she felt holding her hand .

The following day Dr. Markway 's wife Grace arrives at Hill House to warn her husband that a reporter has learned of Markway 's investigation of Hill House . Markway is concerned when Grace announces that she plans to join the group for the duration of the investigation . She demands a bed in the nursery despite her husband 's warning that it is likely the center of the disturbances . That night the group experiences loud banging and an unseen force attempting to force its way through the living room in which they are staying . The banging then proceeds to move its way up towards the nursery , where the sounds of it destroying the room are heard . This prompts Eleanor to run towards the source ; however Grace is nowhere to be found . Her disappearance is then confirmed the following morning . Eleanor 's mental instability worsens as she falls further under the spell of Hill House . She enters the library and climbs the dilapidated spiral staircase . Once she reaches the top , Grace appears unexpectedly at a trap door and the startled Eleanor nearly falls to her death . Markway rescues Eleanor but just misses seeing Grace , who has disappeared back into the house .

Markway becomes alarmed at Eleanor 's obsession with Hill House in spite of the dangers it poses for her . Despite Eleanor 's pleas to stay , Markway insists that she leave at once and asks Luke to accompany her home . Before he can join her in the car , Eleanor drives off and speeds down the road toward the front gates . She soon feels the steering wheel move by itself and the car advances erratically . At first she struggles to regain control but then surrenders to the unseen force . Suddenly Grace appears from behind a tree and steps in front of the car . Eleanor crashes into the tree and is killed . Luke observes it seemed that Eleanor deliberately aimed the car at the tree , but Markway asserts that something was in the car with her . He notes that the tree that claimed Eleanor 's life is the same one that killed the first Mrs. Crain . Theo remarks that Eleanor got what she wanted ? to remain with the house .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

Robert Wise was in post @-@ production on West Side Story when he read a review in Time magazine of author Shirley Jackson 's novel , The Haunting of Hill House . Wise read the book and found it frightening ; he passed it to screenwriter friend Nelson Gidding , whom he had worked with on the 1958 film I Want to Live ! . Gidding did a full story treatment for Wise before proceeding to work on the adaptation . As Gidding crafted the screenplay , he came to believe that the novel was not a ghost story at all , but rather a compilation of the insane thoughts of the lead character ,

Eleanor Vance . He theorised that Vance was having a nervous breakdown , envisaging a scenario in which Hill House is the hospital where she is held , Markway is her psychiatrist , the cold , banging , and violence are the results of shock treatment , and the opening and closing of doors reflected the opening and closing of hospital doors . Wise and Gidding traveled to Bennington , Vermont to meet Shirley Jackson who told them that it was a good idea , but the novel was definitely about the supernatural . Nonetheless , elements of the insanity concept remained in the script , so that the audience was left wondering whether the supernatural events in the film were in Eleanor 's mind or whether they were real . It was also during their visit with Jackson that Wise and Gidding chose the title for the film . As they did not want to keep the book title , they asked Jackson if she had considered an alternative title . She suggested The Haunting , which Wise and Gidding immediately adopted .

= = = Script = = =

Writing the screenplay took about six months . During this period , Gidding worked alone , and although he passed some of his work to Wise to show him that work on the screenplay was progressing well , he and Wise did not otherwise collaborate on the screenplay . The screenplay made other changes to the story . The number of characters was cut down , the back story was significantly shortened , most of the supernatural events depicted in the novel were kept off @-@ screen , and the greater part of the action was set inside the house to heighten the audience 's feeling of claustrophobia . Eleanor 's role as an outcast was also emphasised . The character of Theodora was given a sharper , slightly more cruel sense of humor in order to make her a foil for Eleanor but also to heighten Eleanor 's outsider status . The role of Luke was made more flippant , and Dr. Markway (Montague in the novel) was made a more confident character . The screenplay was finished just after Wise completed work on West Side Story .

Wise approached United Artists with the project , but after much delay they turned him down . Wise 's agent then suggested that , since Wise owed Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer (MGM) a film under an old contract , Wise should take the project there . MGM agreed , but would only give Wise a \$ 1 million budget . Wise knew he could not do the film at MGM 's Culver City Studios (now the Sony Pictures Studios) , so took it to England , as the Eady Levy gave tax breaks and financing to films made there as a way of subsidizing and promoting the British film industry . Someone suggested to Wise that he approach MGM 's Borehamwood Studios subsidiary . Wise had been asked to come to the United Kingdom for a Royal Command Performance of West Side Story , and during the trip made the financing pitch to MGM Borehamwood . They offered a budget of \$ 1 @.@ 050 million . With the Eady Levy support , this allowed the film to go forward with production in the United Kingdom .

= = = Casting = = =

Although Susan Hayward was reported to be in the running for one of the two female leads , Julie Harris was chosen for the role of Eleanor Vance . Wise had seen Harris on stage , and felt she was right for the part of the psychologically fragile Eleanor . Harris agreed to do the film in part because the role was complex and the idea of the house taking over Eleanor 's mind was interesting . But she also chose it because she had a long @-@ standing interest in parapsychology . English actress Claire Bloom was cast as Theo . In part , however , the decision to cast Bloom and Johnson was because of Eady Levy requirements that the cast be partly British . To make Bloom 's character appear more bohemian , beatnik clothing designer Mary Quant was hired to design mod clothing specifically for the Theodora character .

Richard Johnson , under contract to MGM , was cast as Dr. Markway . Wise saw Johnson in a Royal Shakespeare Company production of The Devils . Impressed with his acting , he offered him the role . Johnson later said he received invaluable film acting advice from Wise . Wise told him to keep his eyes steady , to blink less , and to try not to time his acting (Wise said he would take care of that in the editing room) . Johnson also credited Wise with helping him to craft a much more

natural acting performance . Russ Tamblyn , also under contract with MGM , initially turned down the role as Luke because he felt that the character was " a jerk " , although he thought that the script was very good . The studio forced him to reconsider , threatening him with suspension . Tamblyn told the British cinema magazine Film Review in 1995 that while reading the script a second time , he realised the character was much more interesting . " This is the ironic part , " he said , " it turned out to be one of my favourite films that I 've been in ! "

Stunt performer Connie Tilton appears twice in the film . She portrays the death of the " Second Mrs. Crain " by flinging herself backward down a flight of stairs . Uncredited actress Freda Knorr is seen in shots before and after the fall ; it is her face audiences associate with the " Second Mrs. Crain " . Tilton also appears when Abigail Crain 's Nurse @-@ Companion hangs herself at the top of the spiral staircase in the library . Although uncredited actress Rosemary Dorken is seen climbing the stairs and going past the camera , it is Tilton 's body that suddenly appears in shot again as the Nurse @-@ Companion hangs herself .

= = = Filming = = =

Wise called The Haunting one of his top ten or twelve favorites among the films he made , commenting that it was his favorite filmmaking experience . Ettington Park , (now the Ettington Park Hotel) , with its grounds near the village of Ettington , Warwickshire , was used for exterior shots of Hill House . According to actor Russ Tamblyn , Wise approached a society that kept track of British haunted houses , and they gave him a list of such places . Production designer Elliot Scott was sent around the country to look at each house , and Wise personally selected Ettington Park . Some of the cast and crew were housed in Ettington Park during exterior shooting . However , the location did not sit well with Harris and Bloom who upon arriving at Ettington Park thought it was " scary looking outside " , and Wise had to reassure them . Interior sets were constructed and shot at the MGM @-@ British Studios in Borehamwood , Hertfordshire . The interior sets were designed by Elliot Scott , credited by Wise as a " major contributor " to The Haunting . The sets were designed to be brightly lit , with no dark corners or recesses , and decorated in a Rococo style . All rooms had ceilings to create a claustrophobic effect on film . Actor Richard Johnson said that the sets created a subdued feeling among the cast and crew .

Wise says that his contract with MGM specified that the picture could only be shot in black @-@ and @-@ white , which Wise preferred for this genre of film . He attempted to make Ettington Park look more sinister through various lighting effects and camera settings , but this failed . Wise and Boulton then hit on the idea of using infrared film for establishing shots of the house . Infrared film stocks were quickly rushed to the location shoot from Belgium . The new film worked . Wise felt the infrared film brought out the " striations of the stone " and made the mansion look like " more of a monster house " . Wise very much wanted to make The Haunting a tribute to Val Lewton , the producer and writer under whom Wise had directed his first film (the supernatural horror picture Curse of the Cat People) . Wise says that Lewton 's theory of horror was that people were more afraid of the unknown than things they could see . The decision to show little that was supernatural was made very early in the picture 's pre @-@ production . Wise and cinematographer Davis Boulton also wanted to make distances in the film (such as hallways) look longer and darker than the audience would anticipate . Wise approached the Panavision company , and wanted an anamorphic , wide @-@ angle lens . The only lens Panavision had was a 40mm . Wise learned that the company was working on a 30mm lens , but it contained distortions and was not ready . Wise kept pressing , and eventually Panavision turned over the 30mm lens on the condition that Wise signed a memorandum in which he acknowledged it was imperfect . Wise and Boulton also planned shots that kept the camera moving , utilised low @-@ angle shots , and incorporated unusual pans and tracking shots . This led to some of the most active camera movements in Wise 's film career . To accentuate the feeling that the house was alive , exterior shots were filmed so that the windows appeared to be eyes .

During the shoot , Harris suffered from depression , and believed that her co @-@ stars did not take the film as seriously as she did . At times , she would cry in her makeup chair prior to the day 's

shoot . Bloom did not speak to Harris while filming continued , which worsened her depression . Afterward , Bloom told Harris that the lack of interaction had helped her build her own performance and the two women reconciled . Harris incorporated her own depression into her performance . Wise heightened the sense of character conflict by having the characters " step on one another 's lines " , allowing one character to begin talking before the other had finished . On occasion , the characters simply talk at the same time .

To enhance the actors ' performances during scenes in which they react to off @-@ stage voices or sounds , Wise and his sound editors created a " pre @-@ scored " soundtrack of voices and noises . These were played back during filming , and Wise says they greatly enhanced the acting performances . Although some sounds were replaced during post @-@ production , the " pre @-@ scored " sounds were left on the soundtrack just as the actors heard them . Sound editors collected and created sounds in an empty manor house for a week to create the pre @-@ score . Some of the sounds are very low in the bass range , which can cause physical sensations at high volume .

= = = Effects and editing = = =

Some effects were achieved in ways that are not immediately obvious . In one scene , a supernatural force pushes against the parlor door and bends it inward repeatedly . Though the door appears to some viewers to have been made of latex , it was in fact made of laminated wood (with a strong crew member pushing a piece of timber hard against the door) . Two physical effects were used to make the spiral staircase in the library appear frightening . In one scene , the camera appears to ascend the staircase at a rapid rate . However , the point of view is backward , looking down the staircase , as the camera used the staircase 's handrail as a dolly track , being lowered slowly by means of a wire . When the sequence was run in reverse at high speed , the effect was frightening . In another scene , the staircase appears to become unstable and give way as Luke Sanderson ascends it . Later , Eleanor goes up the staircase in a trance @-@ like state . She is rescued by Dr. Markway , even as the staircase seems ready to collapse . The collapsing staircase effect was designed by a metalworker at the Borehamwood studios . The effect was created by tying portions of the steps and railing to a cable that ran inside the staircase 's central pole . When the cable was slackened , these elements moved freely . When tightened , the staircase appeared solid and stable . The effect was so disturbing to the cast that Robert Wise had to ascend the staircase while it was shaking in order to prove it was safe . Other effects also relied on simple cinema tricks . Early in the film , the audience sees Abigail Crain lying in bed , aging from a young child to an old woman . A camera was fixed over the bed , and four different actresses (each a different age) posed in the bed beneath the camera . Dissolves were used to show the aging process . In another scene , the characters come across a " cold spot " in the haunted mansion . To show the physical effect on the characters , the makeup department applied special makeup to the characters that appeared invisible in normal light . To show the effect of cold on the skin , filters were gradually drawn over the lights on the set , revealing the " cold effect " makeup .

The camera work and editing work together to further heighten the frightening qualities of the film . Eleanor is often viewed from above , and in one scene the camera closes in so tightly on her that she is forced backward over a railing . Eleanor 's viewpoint is often juxtaposed with eerie views of the house , as if both viewpoints were the same . Many of the editing choices in the film are also used to heighten the audience 's discomfort . There are a number of rapid cuts in the film that throw off the viewer 's sense of spatial orientation , and Dutch angles are used to imply that reality is off @-@ kilter . Cutting on action ? showing the characters exiting a room to the right , only to show them entering the next room from the left ? is often violated , so that the viewer cannot get a clear sense of which rooms and hallways are connected to one another . The audience also lacks temporal clues . There are few shots in which they can see out a window to determine whether it 's night or day . When Eleanor is rescued by Dr. Markway on the unstable spiral staircase , some of the windows nearby show strong sunlight streaming in , while others show darkness outside .

The Haunting is notable for its lesbian character , Theodora . Although the character 's lesbianism is subtly mentioned in the novel , the film makes it explicit . The film is also one of the few Hollywood

motion pictures to depict a lesbian as feminine and not predatory . Theodora 's lesbianism helps to create conflict in the picture . Had Theodora been heterosexual , Eleanor 's growing attraction to Markway would not have threatened her . But with Theodora a clear lesbian , Markway becomes a threat that causes conflict between the psychic and the investigator . Originally , Gidding 's script had contained a scene early in the film in which Theodora is shown in her apartment in the city . It is clear from the context that she has just broken off with her female lover : " I hate you " is written on the mirror in lipstick . Theodora is yelling curses at her out the window and more . However , Wise decided to cut the scene , believing it to be too explicit for a film that worked hard to make things implicit . According to Harris , film censors demanded that Theo never be shown to touch Eleanor , in order to keep the lesbianism less obvious .

= = Reception = =

The Haunting was released on 18 September 1963 . Audiences were frightened by it . Film critic Dora Jane Hamblin related how four of her female friends , expecting a ho @-@ hum film , took out make @-@ up during the film 's first few minutes with the intention of fixing their faces . The film proved so frightening , she said , that the women were jumping out of their seats and losing their items . In Houston , Texas , a local cinema promoted the film as so chilling that it held a contest to see which of four patrons could sit all the way through a midnight screening ; the prize was \$ 100 . Despite these stunts , The Haunting was only an average success at the box office .

The Haunting opened to mixed reception , the consensus generally being that it was a stylish film but had major flaws in the plot and lacked excitement . Variety called the acting effective , Davis Boulton 's cinematography extraordinarily dexterous and visually exciting , and Elliott Scott 's production design of the " monstrous " house most decidedly the star of the film . However , the unnamed reviewer felt Gidding 's screenplay had " major shortcomings " in that the plot was incomprehensible at points , and the motivation for the characters was poor . Bosley Crowther of The New York Times cited The Haunting as " one of the most highly regarded haunted house films ever produced " but surmised that " there is really no point to it " . Writing in The Atlantic magazine , critic Pauline Kael called the film " moderately elegant and literate and expensive " , but criticised Russ Tamblyn for being " feeble [and] cowardly @-@ comic " . She considered the film to be superior to Alfred Hitchcock 's The Birds , also released in 1963 , yet didn 't consider it to be a great film . Kael said of it , " It wasn 't a great movie but I certainly wouldn 't have thought that it could offend anyone . Yet part of the audience at The Haunting wasn 't merely bored , it was hostile- as if the movie , by assuming interests they didn 't have , made them feel resentful or inferior . I 've never felt this in an audience toward crude , bad movies ... But the few scattered people at The Haunting were restless and talkative , the couple sitting near me arguing @-@ the man threatening to leave , the woman assuring him that something would happen . In their terms , they were cheated : nothing happened . And , of course , they missed what was happening all along , perhaps because of nervous impatience or a primitive notion that the real things are physical . "

The film 's stature and following has grown steadily since its original release , and it now has cult movie status . Director Martin Scorsese placed The Haunting first on his list of the 11 scariest horror films of all time . Richard Johnson says that Steven Spielberg considers The Haunting one of the " seminal films " of his youth , and Robert Wise says that Spielberg told him The Haunting was " the scariest film ever made ! " Richard Armstrong in Rough Guide to Film (2007) called it " one of the most frightening films ever made " , and said Julie Harris ' performance is played " with an intensity that is frightening in itself " . In 2010 , The Guardian newspaper ranked it as the 13th best horror film of all time . However , not all critics think so highly of the film ; Yoram Allon and Neil Labute have stated that they believe the film is " frankly overrated " , and professional filmmaker Russell Evans has argued that few people truly find the film shocking or disturbing . As of October 2014 , review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes scores the film with an 86 % rating based on 36 reviews . The film was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Director (Robert Wise) .

In 2010 , Cinema Retro magazine hosted a screening of the film at Ettington Park . Richard Johnson was a special guest at the event and participated in a Q & A prior to the screening .

Johnson said that he had never actually stepped foot in the hall during filming , and that this was the first occasion he had actually been inside the premises . The movie was mentioned in Dan Simmons ' 2002 novel A Winter Haunting .

= = Remakes = =

A remake of the film was attempted in the early 1990s by noted horror author Stephen King . King pitched the project under the name Rose Red to Steven Spielberg . The project went into turnaround and a complete script was written , but Spielberg demanded more thrills and action sequences while King wanted more horror . King and Spielberg mutually agreed to shelve the project after several years of work , and King bought back the rights to the script . King returned to the project in 1999 , completed a revised script , and successfully pitched the script to producer Mark Carliner . King 's revised script aired as a miniseries titled Rose Red in 2002 , but bears only superficial resemblance to The Haunting .

The Haunting was formally remade in 1999 under the same title . Legendary horror director Wes Craven initially worked on the project , but abandoned it . This adaptation , directed by Jan de Bont and starring Liam Neeson , Catherine Zeta @-@ Jones , Owen Wilson , and Lili Taylor in the roles of Markway (now named Marrow) , Theo , Luke , and Eleanor , was widely panned .

= = Home media = =

In 1990 , media mogul Ted Turner announced he would begin colorizing black @-@ and @-@ white motion pictures to make them more pleasing to audiences watching his cable networks . The announcement generated extensive controversy . Touring Turner 's colorization facilities as a member of the Directors Guild , Wise learned that Turner was colorizing The Haunting . Wise was able to prevent the colorization by pointing to his contract , which stated the picture could only be in black @-@ and @-@ white .

Warner Home Video released the film on VHS in pan @-@ and @-@ scan format in 1998 . It was released on DVD in its original screen format in 2003 . The DVD release included voice @-@ over commentary from Wise , Gidding , Bloom , Harris , Johnson , and Tamblyn . The film was released on Blu @-@ ray with the same commentary track on 15 October 2013 .