

Abstract:

The thesis discusses the use of sound as a means of inducing anxiety in four selected British ghost stories that were published either during or closely after the Victorian period. Each story was analyzed focusing on the kinds of sounds the author employs, the nature and cause of the haunting, the response of the characters, also with the references to the historical background and context.

The primary texts were selected according to the diverse types of sounds that the authors use in them. The first chapter deals with “The Open Door” (1881) by Margaret Oliphant in which she employs a weeping child ghost looking for his mother, that haunts another child and his family. The following chapter comments on William Hope Hodgson’s “The Horse of the Invisible” (1910) where an allegedly cursed family is haunted by the sounds of an evil horse galloping and neighing. The story, which is part of the series which features the occult investigator Thomas Carnacki, combines detective and ghost story elements. The third chapter analyses “The Mass for the Dead” (1893) by Edit Nesbit, which follows a couple being haunted by choral music, told from the point of view of one of the lovers. The fourth chapter reflects on “A Wicked Voice” (1890) by Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), in which the main character, an opera composer, is haunted by the voice of a famous castrato. Finally, the conclusion provides an overall comparison of the four selected stories in terms of the prevalence of each element analyzed within the chapters.

The thesis employs a range of secondary sources, from Dorothy Scarborough’s classic treatise *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (1917) to most recent studies which deal with British supernatural fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Key Words:

Vernon Lee, William Hope Hodgson, Margaret Oliphant, Edith Nesbit,
ghost stories, narrative strategies, sound, anxiety