

Things that go 'spark' in the night

The Uncanniness of Electricity and Electronic Media in Ghost
Hunting Reality Television

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ABSTRACT

“Things that go bump in the night” have a notorious reputation for being frightening. Yet what is it about these instances that make them such? Why things “in the night” and not things “in the light?” Why not things “that appear” but instead things that make indefinable noises “that go bump?” Why despite the fact we are arguably frightened by such instances are we curious enough about them to investigate and tell stories about them? What is it about these “things that go bump in the night” that have capture our attention and are so relentless about not letting go? And perhaps most importantly, why is it that when it is electronic media that are the cause of these “bumps” that we are even more frightened and intrigued? The answer lies in the uncertain, unpredictable, and familiar yet unfamiliar nature of the uncanny; specifically the uncanniness of the paranormal and its connection to the uncanniness of electricity and electronic media. I address and expand upon these issues through a case-specific study of the uncanniness of ghost hunting reality television programming.

I will begin this exploration in **Chapter I** with the theoretics surrounding the uncanny. Chapter I analyzes the uncanny and sets a foundation on which the other chapters can build upon. It will address the uncanny within a Freudian (1919, 1933, 1939), Lacanian (1949, 1951, 1955, 1960, 1964, 1977, and Jentschian (1906) framework. **Chapter II** then continues by combining the framework of the uncanny from Chapter I with the subject of the ghost hunting reality television programming, the paranormal. It addresses why the paranormal is uncanny within itself (outside of the context of the programming), and how the Freudian, Lacanian, and Jentschian uncanny addressing in Chapter I is critical to understanding the paranormal. **Chapter III** then builds upon the momentum created by Chapter I and II and addresses the general uncanniness of electricity and electronic media. It explores the uncanny elsewhere of the television, and how electronic media are uncanny through the perceived consciousness and unpredictability of the nature of electricity. While the first three chapters consider the theoretical framework of the uncanny, the uncanny within the paranormal, and the uncanny within electricity and electronic media, Chapter IV and V offer a detailed application of these theories within the specific context of ghost hunting reality television. **Chapter IV** addresses the uncanniness of electricity and electronic media used in the medium. It considers how the use of the camera, lighting, and equipment crew can create uncanny instances for the viewer. It also addresses how the ability for sound to be separated from its source can be uncanny when transplanted through post production into the programming. Finally, Chapter IV addresses how post production gives time the uncanny ability to travel (in a spatial and temporal direction) within the programming. **Chapter V** then takes the uncanniness of electronic media and addresses it within the message. It considers how the use of electronic equipment by investigators in the programming is uncanny, linking the uncanniness of the paranormal in Chapter II with the uncanniness of electronic media and electricity in Chapter III. Chapter V also addresses how the presentation of evidence, and the evidence itself, is uncanny through its creation and presentation through electronic media. This thesis takes the reader on a journey through the uncanny and into the paranormal world of ghost hunting reality television programming. It explores the awe and mystery which reaches from the inner mind to those things that go ‘spark’ in the night.

INTRODUCTION

*From goulies and ghosties and long-leggedy beasties
And things that go bump in the night
Good Lord, deliver us!
(The Cornish and West Country Litany, 1926)*

“Things that go bump in the night” have a notorious reputation for being frightening. Yet what is it about these instances that make them such? Why things in the night and not things in the light? Why not things that appear but instead things that never visually appear but make indefinable noises and go bump? Why despite the fact we are arguably frightened by such instances are we curious enough about them to tell stories, poems, and in this instance say prayers about them? Why is it that these things that go bump in the night have capture our attention and are so relentless about not letting go? The answer to all of these questions, and more, lies in the uncertainty, unpredictability, and familiar yet unfamiliar nature of the uncanny.

But what does it mean for something to be “uncanny?” On a simple level, the uncanny refers to that which is “mysterious” and “uncomfortably strange” arousing “superstitious fear or dread” (“Uncanny,” 2010). The uncanny is described as a “species of the frightening” that is “in some ways a species of the familiar” (Freud, 1919, p. 124). It is “what one calls everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open” (Schelling in Freud, 1919, p. 132). In other words, the uncanny is an unfamiliar familiar which is both frightening and curious in its nature. Therefore, it could be assumed that the uncanniness of the bumps lies in their ability to be both familiar (in terms of sound) yet unfamiliar (in presence). It would be correct to assume it as such; however it would not be full in its definition. Thus the more general question must first again be asked: What is it about these instances that make them uncanny? To address this issue, I will explore the uncanny through a case study of ghost hunting reality television programming; a true example of documentation and exploration of these things that go bump in the night.

Ghost hunting reality television programming refers to the genre of television in which a camera crew documents the investigation of a haunted location by a group of professional (or very unprofessional) paranormal investigators. During each episode, the investigators explore a new location in the hopes of finding evidence proving the existence of the paranormal, ghosts, and the afterlife. I will address the entire genre of television (which, although it is growing is relatively small) through the two most popular programs: *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures*. *Ghost Hunters* is arguably the longest-running mainstream ghost hunting reality television program, being on its sixth season. It is an American paranormal reality television series that features paranormal investigators Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson, two former Roto-Rooter plumbers,¹ and their team of investigators, who assist clients by investigate purportedly haunted locations. Unlike most other ghost hunting reality television programs, *Ghost Hunters* approaches a location with the intentions to disprove the haunting; this means trying to find normal causes for the activity going on (such as leaky pipes) as opposed to paranormal activity. The other program I will be majorly addressing is *Ghost Adventure*, which is on its third season.

¹ One of the big attractions of the show originally was that both Grant and Jason would work as plumbers by day, and paranormal investigators by night. Now that the series has become successful they no longer work at Roto-Rooters (but are still honorary employees).

Ghost Adventures is also an American paranormal reality television series, and it features three main paranormal investigators, Zak Bagans, Nick Groff, and Aaron Goodwin as they investigate purportedly haunted locations. Unlike *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Adventures* investigates locations more recreationally and sensationally, and the main goal of the program is to find any alleged evidence, as opposed to trying to disprove the haunting of the location first.

Rather than purely investigate the uncanniness of the paranormal within these programs, I wish to take it a step further. I wish to also address the way in which the paranormal investigators interact with and explore the paranormal; through electricity and electronic media. I will begin this exploration in **Chapter I** with the theoretics surrounding the uncanny. Chapter I analyzes the uncanny and sets a foundation on which the other chapters can build upon. It will address the uncanny within a Freudian (1919, 1933, 1939), Lacanian (1949, 1951, 1955, 1960, 1964, 1977, and Jentschian (1906) framework. **Chapter II** then continues by combining the framework of the uncanny from Chapter I with the subject of the ghost hunting reality television programming, the paranormal. It addresses why the paranormal is uncanny within itself (outside of the context of the programming), and how the Freudian, Lacanian, and Jentschian uncanny addressing in Chapter I is critical to understanding the paranormal. **Chapter III** then builds upon the momentum created by Chapter I and II and addresses the general uncanniness of electricity and electronic media. It explores the uncanny elsewhere of the television, and how electronic media are uncanny through the perceived consciousness and unpredictability of the nature of electricity.

While the first three chapters consider the theoretical framework of the uncanny, the uncanny within the paranormal, and the uncanny within electricity and electronic media, Chapter IV and V offer a detailed application of these theories within the specific context of ghost hunting reality television. **Chapter IV** addresses the uncanniness of electricity and electronic media used in the medium. It considers how the use of the camera, lighting, and equipment crew can create uncanny instances for the viewer. It also addresses how the ability for sound to be separated from its source can be uncanny when transplanted through post production into the programming. Finally, Chapter IV addresses how post production gives time the uncanny ability to travel (in a spatial and temporal direction) within the programming. **Chapter V** then takes the uncanniness of electronic media and addresses it within the message. It considers how the use of electronic equipment by investigators in the programming is uncanny, linking the uncanniness of the paranormal in Chapter II with the uncanniness of electronic media and electricity in Chapter III. Chapter V also addresses how the presentation of evidence, and the evidence itself, is uncanny through its creation and presentation through electronic media.

A note on my approach will now conclude the introduction. It is imperative to understand that this research does not claim to address the real or fictitious nature of ghosts and the paranormal. Rather it assumes the existence of belief of the principles of the paranormal (as will be further addressed in Chapter II) within the programming. Therefore, it treats the relationship of the viewer to the show with that basic belief in mind. It does at no point attempt to answer the question as to whether ghosts are real or not. In addition, although it covers many aspects of the uncanny, it does in no way cover all aspects of the uncanny. The discussion concerning the fantastic has not been included as it is not within the scope of the project to do as such.

This being said, it is now time to embark on this journey through the uncanny and into the paranormal world of ghost hunting reality television programming. There is nothing wrong with your paper. Do not attempt to adjust the writing. I am controlling transmission. If I wish to make it **bolder, I will increase the weight of the font.** If I wish to make it *italicized, I will tweak it to an angle.* I will control ^{the vertical.} I will control t h e h o r i z o n t a l. I can change the color of the font to a dull blue or sharpen it to a bright red. For the duration of the next five chapters, sit quietly and I will control all that you see and hear. I repeat: there is nothing wrong with your paper. You are about to participate in a great adventure. You are about to experience the awe and mystery which reaches from the inner mind to those things that go ‘spark’ in the night.²

² This is a paraphrasing of the introduction to *The Outer Limits*, 1963.

CHAPTER I: THE UNCANNY

Mahandra: And what happens when you repress something?

Jaye: It goes away?

Mahandra: It comes back, all crazy and pissed off!

(Wonderfalls, "Wax Lion," 2004)

Before I address the nature and conditions of the uncanny, it is perhaps imperative that I explain in what way I will address it within the context of my research; within the framework of the medium and of the message. For the medium, I will address *how the structure of the way in which the use of electronic media, and by proxy electricity, within the program's production is uncanny*. This includes aspects such as the uncanny use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound and spatial and temporal manipulation through post-production. For the message, I will address *how the use of electronic media and electricity in the program's content is uncanny*. This includes aspects such as the perceived uncanny ability of electronic media to access and be manipulated by a haunted electronic otherworld. In this chapter it is not my goal to delve into exploring these two perspectives, but rather to provide an overarching foundation as to the character of uncanniness and the properties of the uncanny. In other words, this chapter will generally be about exploring and providing definitions and observations of the uncanny. It will not be until the second and third chapters that the context of the paranormal, electricity, and electronic media (including television) will be weaved into the framework for the theoretics on the uncanny constructed within the constraints of Chapter I.

I. The Uncanny

What is the uncanny, and what makes an instance uncanny? On a basic level, "uncanny" is an adjective defined as "having or seeming to have a supernatural or inexplicable basis" or being "beyond the ordinary or normal" and "extraordinary." The uncanny is "mysterious" and "uncomfortably strange" arousing "superstitious fear or dread" ("uncanny," 2010). It is described as being "creepy," "eerie," "surreal," "nightmarish," "unsettling," and "macabre" (Gooding, 2008, p. 390). The uncanny "appears to express that someone to whom something 'uncanny' happens is not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned" (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8). These definitions fall in line with the Freudian uncanny which is described as a "species of the frightening" that is "in some way a species of the familiar" (Freud, 1919, p. 124). It is a "peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar" (Royle, 2003, p. 1). The uncanny "can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context" (Royle, 2003, p. 1). Thus the uncanny is the unfamiliar familiar, an instance where "the familiar can become uncanny and frightening" (Freud, 1919, p. 124). Although this provides a generic outline of the uncanny, the exploration into the uncanny does not stop here. What started with the first detailed investigation of the uncanny by Freud (1919) has continued on spreading itself across an interdisciplinary field of scholars. Each discipline has then built upon the guidelines originally set in place by Freud, furthering the understanding of the slippery concept.

Why is the uncanny so problematic in its definition? The uncanny can be defined as the unfamiliar familiar, but the difficulty lies in determining what is the familiar and in what ways it can become unfamiliar. Due to this loosely and personally defined nature for the uncanny, what

is “uncanny” or not becomes a difficult concept to define. Sigmund Freud (1956-1939) himself noted this, stating that the uncanny “is not always used in a clearly definable sense” and therefore “it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general” (Freud, 1919, p. 123). Ernst Jentsch echoes this, arguing that the uncanny is indefinable as “the same impression does not necessarily exert an uncanny effect on everybody” (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8). Beyond the struggles to provide a singular, structural definition, the individual perception of the uncanny provides an even bigger roadblock. One of the major difficulties arising in documentation and analysis of the uncanny is the fact that not all people find the same things uncanny (Jentsch, 1906; Freud, 1919; Royle, 2003). Even then, although the uncanny is a personal experience and can be “a feeling that happens only to oneself, within oneself,” at the same time the uncanny is “never one’s ‘own’: its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world ‘itself’” (Royle, 2003, p. 2). In other words, the uncanny is personal in the fact it is experienced through the perception of the individual. However, it is communal as it is the product of the relationship the individual has with themselves (and what is not oneself) and their environment (the world and others).

This provides a contrast between what is normal and what is beyond normal, allowing for personal identification of the uncanny. This identification can be done through the contrasting of the current perception of the individual (current-perception) to what has been perceived in the past and by the individual and then hidden from conscious sight (past-perception). In order to fully understand this complicated nature of the relationship between perceptions three aspects must be explored: “what is the relationship between the individual’s current-perception and unconscious past-perception;” “how can the unconscious past-perception be triggered by the current-perception of an instance;” and finally, on a different note, “what is the relationship of the individual to the world?”

To first address what is the relationship between the individual’s current-perception and forgotten past-perception we must return to Freud and his (1919) argumentation surrounding the unfamiliar familiar, and more specifically the return of the repressed. In this context the unfamiliar familiar refers to “a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home” (Royle, 2003, p. 1). For Freud the repressed is that which is forgotten but “not extinguished.” The repressed is a denial of emotions created through the inability to process instances in a person’s life which then remain as powerful emotions rejected to the unconscious. Memories are considered repressed where

“its traces are extant in the memory in their original freshness, but they are isolated by ‘counter-cathexes³.’ They cannot establish contact with the other intellectual processes; they are unconscious – inaccessible to consciousness” (Freud, 1939, p. 152).

The repressed can “only be recognized as belonging to the past ... when they have been made conscious by the work of analysis” (Freud, 1933, p. 78). Thus, the repressed are consciously inaccessible, but still existent within the subconscious. They have been overcome and forgotten, but not removed. This does not mean, however, that the repressed is inaccessible eternally. The repressed “material retains its impetus to penetrate into consciousness” (Freud, 1939, p. 152).

³ Cathexis refers to the investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea (“cathexis,” 2010). Thus, the counter-cathexes [alternate translation anticathexis] refers to the shift of such mental or emotional energy from one impulse to another of an opposite kind (“anticathexis,” 2010).

Freud argues the repressed is able to return when one of three conditions are present: (a) when a change in the distribution of emotional energy attached to an object diminishes the strength of the opposite emotional energy attached due to mental illness or sleep; (b) when the instincts attached to the repressed material are strengthened; (c) when current events are similarly experienced and akin to the repressed material that the current instances have the power to awaken the repressed (Freud, 1939, p. 152-153). In none of the three conditions does the repressed “succeed in reaching consciousness unimpeded or without change” as it “must always undergo distortions which bear witness to the not entirely overcome resistance derived from the counter-cathexis, or else to the modifying influence of a recent experience or to both” (Freud, 1939, p. 153). To rework this concept of repression and the return of the repressed into the unfamiliar familiar, it is through the familiar (the current event, the current-perception) that the unfamiliar (the repressed material, the repressed past-perception) finds an open door to make the familiar its home. It is through the return of these repressed materials that an instance has the potential to become uncanny. I will explore the concept of the return of the repressed more in Section II, *The Return of the Repressed*.

To then build upon this current framework for the uncanny, I move to addressing the triggering of the repressed and the identity of the individual within the context of the world. Freud (1919) argues there are many ways in which the repress can be emancipated, including

“doubles, déjà vu, the dead, the immediate granting of wishes, live burial, blinding, dismemberment, coincidences implying fate, inanimate objects coming to life, loss of distinction between imaginary and reality, and occasions when a symbol ‘takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes.’” (Gooding, 2008, p. 392)

Within this lists of instances some common attributes are noticed specifically concerning aspects of identification; the process of identification through the “intellectual mastery of the new thing” (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8) including the identification of the self in relation to the other. I argue, akin to Ernst Jentsch and Freud’s observations, that in many instances the inability to comprehend (or intellectually process) the state (knowledge) of an instance or object allows the instance to have the potential to become uncanny. This concerns instances such as “inanimate objects coming to life” and “loss of distinction between imaginary and reality.” The uncanny in this aspect concerns “the strange, weird, and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural” (Royle, 2003, p. 1). The uncanny is that which

wanders spectrally between readers, viewers, pages and screens, and the mechanisms of project and the ghosts they engender occupy disturbed mental spaces as explanations of phenomena become hallucinatory and psychopathological (Botting, 2005, p. 26).

I will discuss this concept in general, which I call the *indeterminate state* of an instance, further in Section III, *Indeterminate State*. To continue and address the identification of the self with the other, I will use Jacques Lacan’s (1901-1981) mirror stage as a metaphor to explain the uncanniness of intellectual mastery of the self. Lacan (1949) used the mirror theory to describe the process of identification of an infant with his or her reflection. I will use this concept to explore the process of identification of the *I* with a metaphorical reflection (a perceived instance acting as the mirror). Lacan is a necessary aspect to consider as the uncanny “involves feelings of uncertainty, particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced.

Suddenly one's sense of oneself ... seems strangely questionable" (Royle, 2003, p. 1). Although I will not address Lacanian theory in Chapter I, I will explore it in further detail in Chapter II.

II. The Return of the Repressed

The first aspect of the uncanny, the return of the repressed, is derived from Freud's observations on the uncanny in his 1919 essay entitled "The Uncanny." Freud begins by arguing that the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*) is a "species of the frightening" that is "in some ways a species of the familiar" (*das Heimliche*) (p. 124). In other words, the uncanny is a form of fear over something that is familiar, but contains unrecognizable attributes of the unfamiliar; the unfamiliar familiar. From this observation, as discussed in the previous section, Freud continued to explore the nature of the context of the familiar in the unfamiliar by delving into repression. He saw repression as a potential solution for the seemingly paradoxical nature of his observations on the uncanny:

If psychoanalytic theory is right in asserting that every affect arising from an emotion impulse – of whatever kind – is converted into fear by being repressed, it follows that among those things that are felt to be frightening there must be one group in which it can be shown that the frightening element is something that has been repressed and now returns (Freud, 1919, p. 147)

The return of the repressed refers to the return of something in our psyche that has been rejected and forgotten, but not overcome. It then returns when the emotions repressed are triggered in an instance, and gives the repressed emotions the power to come to the surface and reappear. In other words, the uncanny is that which has been repressed and has now returned in a distorted fashion (Freud, 1939, p. 153). Freud continues to argue that:

if this [the return of the repressed] really is the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why German usage allows the familiar to switch to its opposite, the uncanny, for this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed (Freud, 1919, p. 148)

This is not to say that everything that returns from repression is uncanny. Return of the repressed is a necessary condition for the creation of the uncanny; however it is not a self-sufficient one. There must be other conditions at work in order to have an instance become uncanny.

To further expand upon this observation, what is "frightening" about an instance of the uncanny is grounded upon an individual's internal repression of emotions. The origin of original repression is not necessarily individually based and may be a product of culture. Freud notes this by exploring the effect of older cultural beliefs on issues such as death and magic and the progressive disillusionment of these beliefs over time. He argues that when potential proof of older cultural beliefs return "we experience a sense of the uncanny" (Freud, 1919, p. 154). This aspect will be of important focus when exploring the uncanny in the paranormal.

However the means, it is through the rejuvenating of the repressed emotions that an instance becomes uncanny. Thus repression is an instance of the unfamiliar familiar in two ways. First, as discussed in Section I, the repressed is given the power to return in part by the

perception of an instance which is akin to the repressed material. Thus it is the perception of the unfamiliar (the distorted appearance of repressed emotion) in the familiar (the instance). Second, the repressed itself is both familiar yet unfamiliar. It is familiar as it is a part of the human mind, yet it is unfamiliar in the context it presents itself. Considering all of Freud's observations, he argues for a definition of the uncanny based on both aspects stating that "It may be that the uncanny ['the unhomely'] is something familiar ['homely'] that has been repressed and then reappears" (Freud, 1919, p. 152). Thus making the uncanny, as Freud cites Schelling, "something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open" (Schelling in Freud, 1919, p. 148).

Up until this point, the uncanny has been explored as a solitary instance (context) through Freud; however, it is also important to consider what Freud calls "unintentional return." Unintentional return is the way in which repetition can lead to the return of the repressed. Freud explores the concept through an example of the number "62" and a subject's encounters with that specific number. Although there is nothing noteworthy about receiving a coatroom ticket marked "62" or staying in hotel room number "62," Freud argued the repetition of the number "62" could be considered to be uncanny. The event of repetitively encountering a specific instance multiple times in a short period of time (such as encountering the number "62" several times in a 24-hour period) is a case of unintentional and unpreventable return to an instance (Freud, 1919, p. 144-145). To explore unintentional return further, Freud provides another example. This time he retells the uncanny experience of an institutionalized patient of his. The patient had been at the institution he was at once before, and he had had a positive effect from the previous visit, of which he attributed to the location of his room being next to the office of a well-mannered nurse. Therefore, upon the patient's return he requested the same room. However, he was told that an older man was already in the room and therefore it was not available. Frustrated, the patient yelled out "Then he should be struck dead!" Less than a fortnight later the older man staying in the room suffered a stroke leading the patient to find the occurrence of the old man's death uncanny. This experience was perceived by the patient to be uncanny due to the repetition of events. The patient first shouting that the older man should die, only to have the moment the older man died triggering within the patient's memories of when the patient wished the older man dead. This is then the return of the repressed, because the patient had repressed (and processed) the wish of the older man to be dead. However, the wish was so powerful that it was not removed from consciousness but rather stored in the unconscious. Thus, when an event similar to the statement occurred, the repressed emotions returned and the patient had the uncanny repetition through the return of the repressed. Freud also argued that were this cause and effect event to occur within a shorter period of time, such as a matter of days, or were it to occur more frequently, the occurrence would then be increasingly uncanny (Freud, 1919, p. 146).

I will now explore an example of the uncanny due to the return of the repressed, within the ghost hunting reality television program *Ghost Adventures*. *Ghost Adventures* is composed of three investigators, Zak, Nick, and Aaron, who investigate without any crews or technical assistance. When investigating a location they are literally "locked in" to a location as they bolt all doors out of the area with pad locks. In Season 1, Episode 6 entitled *Abandoned Psychiatric Hospital*, the three decide to investigate the quiet morgue area of the hospital. At one point Zak and Aaron leave Nick alone locked inside one of the old morgue body storage units in an attempt to allegedly provoke the spirits. As time passes Nick grows more and more uncomfortable, finally being pushed over the top once he hears an indescribable noise. He then

starts trying to kick open the door of the morgue, but is unable to open it from the inside, which frightens him more. Nick shouts for the others until they finally come and let a disturbed Nick out of the unit. Nick's experience was uncanny as it was the product of repressed fear similar to that of being "buried alive" (Freud, 1919; Gooding, 2008, p. 392). The moment Nick realized he could not escape the morgue chamber, and thus was trapped alive inside a condition which is usually reserved for the dead, repressed fears took control creating an uncanny situation. This is not just horror, but uncanny because it is a product of the repressed taking control of the situation and not of the situation entirely itself. In addition within the context of provoking spirits through this action, with unintentional return the repetitive noises in the morgue strike Nick as moments of unpreventable return. He has made a statement "I wish to provoke the spirits" and now there are actions which appear to correlate to his original statement within a short period of time. Therefore, this becomes an example of "coincidences implying fate" (Gooding, 2008, p. 392) where his reaction is an example of the provocation of "unease, with the "affective-ness" emanating from the proximity to our experiences and fears" (Allen, 2009, p. 92).

III. Indeterminate State

In Maria M. Tatar's article (1981) *The House of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny*, Tatar begins by citing an observation of Dr. Johnson, the subject of James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Specifically she remarks upon Dr. Johnson's thoughts as to the nature of ghosts, specifically the difference between imagination and what "imagination cannot possibly produce" (Boswell, 1934, p. 469).

Suppose I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you will certainly be punished'; my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might imagine I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved, I should, in that case, be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me. (Boswell, 1934, p. 469)

Tatar expands upon this quotation by explaining that the first ghost which Dr. Johnson suggests is "at once the specter of conscience and of consciousness" only reveals to Dr. Johnson that which he already knows. This therefore lacks the power to disturb him (Tatar, 1981, p. 167). The second ghost, although similar, holds more power than its predecessor as "the source of its existence cannot be traced to the mind of the imagination" as the ghost relays information that Johnson cannot have possibly had pre-existing knowledge of (Tatar, 1981, p. 168). What differentiates the first ghost from the second ghost is the presence or absence of conscious knowledge. In the first instance Dr. Johnson fails to be disturbed by the presence of such a spirit as, despite its unnatural presence, it provides already accessible knowledge. In the second instance, however, Dr. Johnson perceives the instance as being uncanny as, in correlation with its unnatural presence, it provides inaccessible knowledge. Rather than the unnatural presence of the ghost being the determining factor for the uncanniness of the situation, it is the "loss of distinction between imaginary and reality" (Gooding, 2008, p. 392). In the first instance where the ghost tells him something that he already knows, it is logical for him to write off the instance as a figment of his imagination, as all the information given to him was already internally known.

Thus he could rule out a need for external communication. However, in the second instance where the ghost tells him something that he does not already know, he is unable to write off the instance as imagination as his imagination would not be able to produce such information. Therefore, where as the first time he was able to distinguish between imaginary and reality (imaginary), the second time he was unable to distinguish between the two, as he has to consider the possibility of both (imaginary via repression or reality via paranormal). Both instances have the potential to be supernatural or paranormal, nevertheless Dr. Johnson only finds the latter, the one he lacks the knowledge to understand, uncanny. It is therefore that inability to distinguish that makes the second situation uncanny.

Following this example, I will now address indeterminate state. Indeterminate state is a general term for the collection of theories surrounding knowledge mastery (Jentsch, 1906; Freud, 1919; Royle, 2003). Indeterminate state is *the inconclusive moment of perception and analysis of an instance, in which the instance has not become identifiable as being of one state*. This is, in a way, the Schrödinger's cat of the uncanny. Schrödinger's cat is a reference to a theoretical physics experiment Erwin Schrödinger created in the attempt to explain the entanglement of quantum physics through the reality of an everyday object. In this experiment, which has always been purely theoretical, a cat is placed in a chamber along with a container of poison. Based upon a random occurrence (whether a radioactive atom decays or not) the container will either break open and kill the cat, or stay intact leaving the cat alive. Schrödinger argued that until the box is opened, to the world outside of the box, the cat is *neither alive nor dead*. He used this paradox to explain the bizarre happenings of quantum mechanics and quantum states within subatomic particles (Schrödinger, 1935). However, the basic concepts from this experiment, that something can for a moment be neither alive nor dead until identification, is an interesting observation to place within the realm of the uncanny. I argue the insecurity caused by an inability to successfully identify the consciousness (inclusive of intentions) or the state of being (such as alive vs. dead, animate vs. inanimate, imaginary vs. real) of an object or instance has the potential to create an uncanny situation.

To dive into more detail, the concept of indeterminate state is grounded within the observations of Jentsch (1906) on the perceived "*lack of orientation ... bound up with the impression of the uncanniness of a thing or incident*" (p. 8). Jentsch bases his argument on the principle that "the traditional, the usual and the hereditary is dear and familiar to most people" while "the new and the unusual" are approached with "mistrust, unease and even hostility" (p. 8). In other words, the traditional is the familiar while the new is the unfamiliar. He believes that this could be explained through the concept of intellectual mastery:

This [the familiar traditional and the unfamiliar new] can be explained to a great extent by the difficulty of establishing quickly and completely the conceptual connections that the object strives to make with the previous ideational sphere of the individual – in other words, the intellectual mastery of the new thing. (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8)

In other words, the reason the new is received with unease while the traditional is received with confidence is because the new has not yet been mentally processed while the traditional already has been. One has confidence over that which they already understand as opposed to that which they have not. Jentsch continues to describe the effects of this process stating that "disorientation [over an instance or object] remains concealed for as long as the confusion of 'known/self-evident' does not enter the consciousness of the individual" (p. 9). Thus, it is only at

the moment the individual consciously realizes the lack of mastery, thus the generation of fear or doubt, that the instance has the potential to become uncanny. This “uncanny mood” only lasts until “these doubts are resolved” which then “usually makes way for another kind of feeling” (p. 11). Although there are many ways in which the assessment of a situation can lead to uncanniness, Jentsch focused specifically on the “doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” (p. 11).

Jentsch uses the example of a traveler sitting on a tree trunk only to feel movement and find out that the trunk was actually a giant snake. In this scenario he argues that “as long as the doubt as to the nature of the perceived movement lasts, and with it the obscurity of its cause, a feeling of terror persists in the person concerned” (p. 11). In other words, as long as the individual has doubt as to the origin of the animation of that which they thought to be inanimate the person will experience an uncanny instance. He continues to explain that “if ... the movement has shown its origin ... [and] the state of things is thus explained, and then a feeling of concern for one’s freedom from personal harm arises instead” this presupposes “a kind of intellectual mastery of the situation as far as all other intensity is concerned” (p. 11). Thus, the fact the individual is able to identify the situation and realize the correlating risk (snake can attack, tree trunk cannot), the situation is no longer uncanny as intellectual mastery has occurred. This is an example of the inability to successfully identify the state of being of an object or instance.

In addition, Jentsch takes a more complex example addressing the reception of wax figures to the individual. He argues that in the darkness it is sometimes difficult “to distinguish a life-size wax or similar figure from a human person” (p. 12). Thus, the moment of first perception of a wax figure is uncanny as the individual cannot perceive whether it is animate or inanimate, thus, for a brief moment the object is *neither animate or inanimate*. This does not mean in actuality it is neither, but rather in the human mind it has not been processed and identified as either (as though the box has not been opened yet on the cat in the example). This inability to differentiate the state of being makes it uncanny. However, even once identified, the wax figure can retain its uncanniness after the decision has been made as to its inanimacy due to “secondary doubts which are repeatedly and automatically aroused anew when one looks again and perceives finer details” (p. 12). This is thus an instance where the unfamiliar familiar, the return of the repressed, and indeterminate state are inseparably linked. The representation of the familiar representation of a human in an unfamiliar representational medium (wax) triggers repressed emotions concerning “inanimate objects coming to life” (Gooding, 2008, p. 392). Thus, the repressed emotions take control and the individual’s behavior results in the continuous assessment of the state of being (is it animate or inanimate) of the wax figure. This has also a similar reasoning to the state of uncanniness of a skeleton or dead body. Dead bodies are uncanny due to the fact a “latent animate state always lie so close” (p. 15). In other words, the fact the body was once animate and is now inanimate is uncanny. Jentsch also pursues a final similar example of the difference in perception between a small toy (such as a doll that blinks) that is animated, versus a larger (life-size) mechanical figure performing the same task (an animatronics figure that blinks). Thus, the “finer the mechanism and the truer to nature the formal reproduction” the greater the uncanniness of the object or instance (p. 12).

Thus, Jentsch argues the practice of creating the uncanny can be seen in storytelling, where the storyteller

leave[s] the reader wondering whether a particular figure is a real person or an automaton, and do so in such a way that his attention is not focused directly on the uncertainty, lest he should be prompted to examine and settle the matter at once, for in this way, as we have said, the special emotional effect can easily be dissipated" (Freud, 1919, p. 135; Jentsch, 1906)

This, as with all the examples given, shows the desire for intellectual mastery as a form of protection against "the assault of hostile forces" (p. 15). These "hostile forces" refer to the new and in this instance protection refers to the ability to assess the situation successfully. When the situation is not able to be assessed it becomes uncanny due, in part, to one's "bafflement regarding ... the conditions of origin" (p. 15) and the questions of the state of being of an object. Jentsch thus acts is an important addition to Freud, as Freud himself based several of his observations of the uncanny on Jentsch, and the uncanny in general. Combining Freud's return of the repressed and the unfamiliar familiar with Jentsch's knowledge mastery provides an all-encompassing approach to the uncanny. It addresses the emotions and mental processes that result in uncanniness and it addresses the triggers that affect the mental processes (such as repression). It would not be complete to address one without the other.

I shall take the theory just explored and address it within the principle of the "uncanny valley." The uncanny valley refers to the "emotional reaction against the similarity of a robot to human appearance and movement" (Brenton et. al., 2005, p. 1). This is not to say there is a negative reaction against *all* similarity. As a machine becomes more similar to a human it actually becomes more appealing to the observer. However, when the machine becomes "disconcertingly close to human there is a very strong drop in believability and comfort before finally achieving full humanity and eliciting positive reactions once more" (Brenton et. al., 2005, p. 1). Since this original definition, it has been adapted to include virtual humans, referring to the graphical representation of a human in a video game or virtual world. For example, the animation team that designed Princess Fiona for the movie *Shrek* was forced to make her "less human" because "she was beginning to look too real, and the effect was getting distinctly unpleasant" (Brenton et. al., 2005, p. 2).

For this example, rather than addressing perception of a robot, I will address the perception of a virtual human character. The virtual human is uncanny on the basis of the same principles the wax human is uncanny. The perception of the virtual human triggers repressed fears concerning inanimate objects coming to life, which results in the continued assessment of the virtual human. Instead of the assessment focusing upon the animacy (as in many instances the virtual character is animated), the assessment focuses on the *consciousness* of the virtual human. This then evokes a new aspect of the uncanny, the fear of the "occasions when a symbol 'takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes'" (Gooding, 2008, p. 392). It is not within the scope of this example to get into discussion as to the level of consciousness of a computer (as the virtual human has a programming code that allows it to independently act). However, it is important to note that this makes the virtual human more difficult to judge as the ability for it to go outside its programming (and thus become the thing it symbolizes) is unclear. The triggering of repressed concern as to the consciousness of the human, and the inability to access the potential for the virtual human to become human makes it uncanny. In addition it is uncanny on another level, another version of the unfamiliar familiar. In CGI "as a character becomes increasingly realistic it is constrained to the physical attributes of

a real person and a viewer's tolerance for abstracted appearance and behaviour is reduced” (Brenton et. al., 2005, p. 3). Thus, this is a performance of the familiar (looks like a human) but unfamiliar (not acting as specifically as a human). Virtual human, in most instances, have movement (unlike the wax figure). This becomes an issue as the individual compares the virtual human to the physical human and is uncomfortable when the human does not appear to be performing in a correct manner. The study of Brenton et. al (2005) found this to be specifically true concerning facial expressions of the virtual humans.

I will conclude with an example from within the ghost hunting reality television program *Ghost Hunters*, season three, episode four *Whispers & Voices*. As with all of the *Ghost Hunters* shows, the team called The Atlantic Paranormal Society (TAPS) first investigates the purportedly haunted location. During the investigation they gather audio and video recordings and then they review the material searching for evidence. In the end of the show they conclude with a visit to the owners of the location (or those who asked them to investigate) and explain to them what TAPS found during their visit, and whether or not TAPS thinks the place is haunted. In *Whispers & Voices* at the end of the investigation of a Victorian mansion in Gardner, MA, Jason and Grant, the two lead investigators of TAPS, review the evidence collected with the owner of the Victorian mansion. One of the pieces of evidence revealed to the owner was a short Electronic Voice Phenomenon (EVP), an unexplainable voice recorded on one of TAPS’s audio recorders during the investigation, that appears to sound like a man laughing. After reviewing the clip the owner of the house appears unsettled and comments: “wow, that gives me a bit of a chill ... it’s almost like a whisper, and I think it’s the whispering part of it that makes me a little creeped out.” While the owner is attempting to try and find the words to explain why the whispering disturbs him, Grant responds with an idea. He suggests that the reason may be that due to the neutral nature of the whisper, “You can’t tell the motivation [of the laughter].” This pinpoints what the owner was feeling and he echoes the sentiment in his next sentence: “That’s exactly it Grant. You can’t tell the motivation.” This example is uncanny for a variety of reasons. First it is a familiar noise, laughter, in an unfamiliar context; sound without a physical source at the time of recording. Because the origin of the sound cannot be placed, nor whether the alleged entity that produced the laughter is conscious or not (which I will delve into further in Chapter II), it is also uncanny because the state of being cannot be determined. In addition, the laughter is uncanny because the intentions of the laughter are not clear. This is not to say that were the laughter apparently unfriendly or friendly that it would still not be uncanny. Rather, the inability to determine the state of the laughter is a different aspect of the uncanny in this specific situation.

IV. Exploring the Uncanny: The role of Bianca in “Lars and the Real Girl”

To tie both concepts together (indeterminate state with Jentsch (1906) and the return of the repressed with Freud (1919)) under the roof of the unfamiliar familiar, I will address the uncanny within the example of perceptions of a doll. Instead of using E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Olympia from *The Sand-Man* as both Jentsch and Freud did, I will look at a more modern visual example, the film *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007), directed by Craig Gillespie, and the doll Bianca. I chose *Lars and the Real Girl* not only because of its parallel ties to *The Sand-Man* but also to its ability to relate to ghost hunting reality television programming. This does not occur directly, as *Lars and the Real Girl* is not about ghost investigating, but rather indirectly concerning desire and acceptance of the unnatural and the identification with the desired.

In *Lars and the Real Girl* the protagonist, Lars, is portrayed as being a quiet, anti-social loner living in the converted garage behind the house he and his brother, Gus, inherited from their father. Lars finds it difficult to interact with others around him, such as his co-workers, church parishioners, and fellow community members. He is constantly doing everything he can to avoid social contact, to the point that his sister-in-law, Karin, has to tackle him in the driveway of the house just to get Lars to join them for dinner. Despite Lars' lack of interest in the people around him, one of Lars' co-workers is noticeably interested in him. Frustrated, she is constantly attempting to engage him while always being shut down by his social awkwardness. Everything changes one day when Lars introduces Gus and Karin to a "visitor" he has met via the Internet, a wheelchair-bound Bianca. Excited that Lars has finally made a friend, and even a girlfriend, Gus and Karin enthusiastically invite the two over to dinner. Once Lars and Bianca arrive it is clear that Bianca is in fact a lifelike doll which Lars apparently ordered from an adult web site. Concerned, they take Lars to the family doctor (who is also a psychologist) where, during "treatments" for Bianca's "low blood pressure" the doctor converses with Lars to try and get to the root of the problem. In the meantime, however, the doctor advises all of those who interact with Lars to treat Bianca as a real woman.

Despite hesitations, both Lars' family and the townspeople begin treating Bianca as though she were alive. Throughout the movie Lars' relationship with Bianca, and with the townspeople around him, changes as the psychologist explores his fears. She forces Lars' to approach and realize his fear of loss, fear of touch, and fear of emotional closeness. In a strange way, through their suspension of disbelief (the entertainment of the thought that Bianca is alive) Bianca begins to make friends and start living a life "on her own." She attends charity events, works as a part-time "model" in a clothing store, and even attends parties and dinners. In the process, Lars himself is forced to interact with more people as they interact with Bianca. This also involves him interacting with the woman who had feelings for him in the beginning, Margo. Lars experiences a range of emotions with his interactions with Margo, such as jealousy of others (when she dates another man), enjoyment of her company (when they begin spending time together), and finally frustration of not being able to be with her due to his relationship with Bianca. From this point on things with Bianca begin to go downhill, with Lars announcing that Bianca is being "unresponsive" and she is rushed to the hospital. While at the hospital, Lars announces that things are not looking good, and that Bianca is dying. The news spreads and quickly piles of flowers and gifts are sent to the homes of those whose lives have been touched by Bianca. In the end Bianca "dies" in the arms of Lars during a trip to the mountains, and she is given a funeral which all the townspeople attend, and she is buried.

To address Jentsch's research first, I argue that the sense of the uncanny is found in the increased inability to distinguish what is animate from what is inanimate, specifically Bianca. This is done in two ways, one the perception of the doll by Lars, and two the perception of the doll by the townspeople.⁴ In the first instance, Lars creates an attachment to the doll under the (self-induced) delusion that the doll is real. He has an increasing fascination with Bianca through that delusion, and therefore does not realize that she is an inanimate object, unlike the rest of the townspeople who realize Bianca is inanimate. This creates an uncanny instance in which the town is hesitant as to the state of being of the doll through the insecurity created by Lars' relationship with it. The story progresses and, although not as drastic as Nathaniel's in *The Sand-*

⁴ This is similar to Olympia in the sense of the perception of Olympia by Nathaniel (the main character) and the perception of Olympia by her creators.

Man, Lars begins to realize (even if not literally) that the doll Bianca is not as animate as the other girl that is catching his eye, Margo. Thus, he begins to lose his sanity and begins to phase Bianca out of his life. At this point, the roles of the townspeople and Lars have become reversed, as the townspeople have begun to make Bianca a bigger and bigger part of their life. Therefore, when Bianca begins to die the relationship the townspeople have to Bianca becomes uncanny. Although Lars perceives the relationship with Bianca as being finished, the townspeople have begun to have feelings and affection for the doll, leading them to become upset and in disbelief that the time of Bianca is over. In both of these instances, the fine line which divides the animate from inanimate (as Bianca, for being inanimate, certainly has the life of an animate) is blurred to the point that it is not fully clear whether Bianca is or is not inanimate, albeit not in a sense of horror such as films like *Chucky*, because she is in part defined by the actions of those around her. Unlike the doll in *Chucky*, Bianca is recognizable as being grounded in reality, and is uncanny through her ability to trigger repressed emotions, as opposed to Chucky's ability to scare.

To then argue alongside Freud, I must first explain how Freud differed from Jentsch in the argumentation over Hoffmann's literature. Freud argued in the case of "The Sand-Man" that it is not the animate/inanimate debate that is the driving force behind the perception of the uncanny, but rather a fear of castration (which he derives from the central mythology of the Sand-Man removing the eyes from children). Thus it is a fear of repression, not a fear of indeterminate state that causes the uncanny. However, I would say in these instances, *they are not mutually exclusive* (Cavell, 1988) as they are separate but equal aspects of the uncanny. Within *Lars and the Real Girl* I argue there is also a case, just as equal of repression, within the relationship of Lars to Bianca, and the viewer in relationship to that relationship. Lars is using Bianca as a mirror (Lacan, 1901)⁵ to project his insecurities and repressed feelings. Everything that Bianca is has been created through his repression. If Lars is afraid of something, Bianca is also afraid of it. If Lars experienced something, Bianca experienced it also. As the psychologist determines in many instances, Lars uses Bianca as a projection, perhaps as in a Lacanian sense, to better understand the world around him. In addition this makes Bianca a representation of Lars' desire to have a relationship. The close he gets to attaining the relationship with Margo, the more he is attaining his desire, and the less interested he is in pursuing Bianca. Delving into the full meaning of *Lars and the Real Girl* or *The Sand-Man* is not within the scope of this paper, but understanding that, despite Jentsch and Freud (with a hint of Lacan for now) being on opposite sides of the cause for the uncanny within this story, it is not impossible for the uncanny to be cause *both* by the return of the repressed and the perception of an instance of indeterminate state.

In summary, I have shown how the uncanny, the unfamiliar familiar, can be explored on three levels, all of which are inter-related: (a) the relationship between the individual's current-perception and unconscious past-perception; (b) how the unconscious past-perception can be triggered by the current-perception of an instance; and (c) the relationship of the individual to the world. First I addressed how Freud's return of the repressed can account for the relationship between the individual's current-perception and unconscious past-perception. Second I showed how Jentsch's indeterminate state can account for the insecurity of an instance or object, and how that process of identification, placement, and assimilation of knowledge can create an uncanny instance. I also argued that in most cases the indeterminate state is generated from the

⁵ I will address Lacan further in Chapter II.

first half of this observation, the return of the repressed. Finally, I briefly noted the Lacanian principles that begin to explore the relationship of the individual to the world. I will explore this in the following section in greater detail, specifically addressing Lacanian theory in context to the paranormal.

CHAPTER II: THE PARANORMAL AND THE UNCANNY

Scully: I mean, Mulder, it doesn't take an advanced degree in psychology to understand the ... the unconscious yearnings that these imaginings satisfy. You know, the-the longing for immortality the hope that there is something beyond this mortal coil... that-that we might never be long without our loved ones. I mean, these are powerful, powerful desires.

I mean, they're the very essence of what make us human...

[A door slightly opens by itself]

Mulder: Tell me you're not afraid.

Scully: All right. I'm afraid... but it's an irrational fear.

(The X-Files, Season 6, Episode 6)

As the next step in our journey, I will add a layer to the theoretical outline of the uncanny addressing the uncanniness of the paranormal. Although “the paranormal” is a broad field, as it encompasses all that is “beyond the normal,” I will specifically focus on the paranormal of the afterlife; this referring to the haunted or, in layman’s terms, the paranormal manifestations of ghosts and energy.

I. The Paranormal: From Energy to Entities

What is the paranormal? Although the origin of the word refers to the contrast of an event to normalcy (as the paranormal is literally “beyond the normal”), the definition more frequently refers to the contrast of an event to *scientific* explanation. In this way the paranormal is “the adjective used for phenomena lying outside the range of normal scientific investigations” (“Paranormal,” 2010a). It is “of or pertaining to the claimed occurrence of an event or perception without scientific explanation” (“Paranormal,” 2010b) which is “not scientifically explainable” (“Paranormal,” 2010c). In other words, the paranormal is that which cannot be explained through pre-existing established science. Specifically in the instance of ghost hunting reality television programming, as the name would suggest, the paranormal refers to the presence of a scientifically unexplainable afterlife; in other words, ghosts.

A ghost, on a basic level, refers to “the soul of a dead person ... wandering among or haunting living persons” (“Ghost,” 2010). It can be a “disembodied spirit” (“Ghost,” 2010) or “a human (sometimes animal) figure, witnessed by someone, which [the ghost] cannot be physically present” (Townsend, 2009). More technically, a ghost is allegedly the trapping of energy “that is released at [the] time of death by pre-existent electromagnetic fields” (Bugera, 2010). Bugera argues that as the human body is controlled by electrical impulses, and energy cannot be destroyed, upon death, as the energy has to go somewhere, it is released into the atmosphere.

When a person dies a slow or natural death the energy is released more slowly and in a less concentrated state than if a person were to die a sudden or violent death. This is why I believe hospitals are not the most haunted places even though more deaths occur in them than anywhere else. (Bugera, 2010).

Thus, the ghost, and the paranormal universe in general, is deeply connected to energy. This connection to energy (and electronic media) will be explored further in Chapter III. However, for this chapter the focus will be on the paranormal and the presence of the ghost (the

haunting), not on the composition of the ghost. A haunting is allegedly “a series [of] unexplained experiences generally associated with a particular physical location” most often attributed to the presence of a ghost (Townsend, 2009). Of these unexplained occurrences, there are four commonly recognized patterns of events (haunting). These are: *intelligent*, *residual*, *poltergeist*, and *demonic* (Ellis, 2009; Hawes, 2009). These four types of hauntings are important to consider because they affect the presence of gaze, and the indeterminability of state of being which will later play indirect roles in the uncanniness of the message.

A. Intelligent Haunting

Intelligent hauntings are defined as being “ghosts who have not yet crossed over, have unfinished business, or are too emotionally attached to a person or place and can’t move on” (Ellis, 2009). They are entities that “are aware of their surroundings” and “can move around freely” (Hawes, 2009b). They “will acknowledge the existence of human beings” (Hawes, 2009b) and often try and communicate with the humans they encounter (Ellis, 2009; Hawes, 2009b). Although an intelligent haunt is limited in what it can do, if enough energy is gathered allegedly they are able to manipulate objects. In rare cases the intelligent haunt can also manifest itself in the visible light spectrum in the form of an apparition (Ellis, 2009; Hawes, 2009b). In some instances intelligent hauntings may also be dangerous. Akin to residual hauntings, there is not much one can do to remove an intelligent haunting from a location. However, in most instances, according to investigators, the intelligent haunting is rather harmless, as it is just trying to get attention from whomever it encounters (Ellis, 2009; Hawes, 2009b).

B. Residual Haunting

Unlike an intelligent haunting, a residual haunting is defined as being a “playback of past events” where the apparitions witnessed are “impressions or recordings of events that were so traumatic that they have become imprinted on the very materials of the space in which they occurred” (Ellis, 2009). A residual haunting is like “having an impression made in time” (Hawes, 2009d) in which the event occurring (the paranormal activity) is oblivious to additional activity or its environmental surroundings. Residual hauntings often occur at the same time and same place, and, according to most paranormal investigators, pose no danger as there is no intelligent entity controlling the energy that is creating the residual haunting (Ellis, 2009; Hawes, 2009d).

C. Poltergeist Haunting

A poltergeist, like an intelligent haunting, is also able to interact with the environment and objects around it. Poltergeist hauntings, however, are noticeably different as they usually concern spirits whose main goal is to generate a lot of activity (such as knocking and banging, moving objects, manifesting voices, etc.). These types of hauntings are very rare and are difficult to classify as “no two are ever really the same” (Hawes, 2009c). Often the activity is attached specifically to a person or a place, and the spirit(s) can only be released once the cause of their anger is discovered, allowing them to “pass over” and leave the person or place in peace (Hawes, 2009c). Poltergeists can be malevolent or even aggressive.

D. Demonic Haunting

A demonic haunting is an aggressive haunting that “likes to make contact by pushing, shoving, hitting, and even scratching” (Hawes, 2009a). They are identifiable through smell (such as the stench of rotting flesh or sulfuric acid) and often take the shape of a half-man, half-animal form. They are very strong and use their strength to “break down a person’s free will in order to make way for possession” (Hawes, 2009a). Although a person can, in many instances, chase away a demonic spirit through religious tradition, there is no way to completely and reliably get rid of the demon.

II. The Uncanniness of the Paranormal

The paranormal, in specific the paranormal involving ghosts, is uncanny on four levels: (a) in terms of a haunting (residual or intelligent), the culturally repressed presence of that which was once dead returns, and thus provides a literal version of the return of the repressed; (b) due to the nature of the paranormal being “para” (beyond) normal, the alleged paranormal activity has, in many instances, an indeterminate state; (c) humans in general use ghosts (and the paranormal activity surrounding them) as a mirror to fulfill their desire to place themselves out of the fragmented into a whole context of death; (d) the presence and reception of gaze is uncanny.

A. The Paranormal and the Return of the Repressed

A haunting is literally the return of the (culturally) repressed. Upon the death of a person, typically the body is cremated or buried, and through this process, although not completely forgotten, they are frequently culturally repressed from humanity. The deceased, although recognized as having a presence in some eastern cultures, are not recognized as having a presence in most western culture.⁶ Thus the dead are not involved or included in the activity of daily life due to the taboos surrounding it. Therefore, upon the instance of a haunting, in western culture the haunting announces the familiar unfamiliar return of what culturally was viewed as lost (repressed). Not only is this the return of what was repressed, but in its return the familiar (the dead) appears in an unfamiliar context (not being dead). We recognize the human aspects in the form of a haunting, although we do not recognize the shape and form in which it exists. It is for these reasons, as Freud (1919) suggested, the dead and death are uncanny. In this way then hauntings are uncanny as “any incommensurable tension generated by locating the horror in the home is relieved of its propensity for the uncanny” (Allen, 2009, p. 90). This is the invasion of the familiar (the home) by the unfamiliar (the activity of the haunting).

To delve into greater detail, the perception of the return of the repressed can be uncanny for two reasons: (a) over the personal relationship the person had to the ghost pre-death; and (b) over the culture and personal relationship the person has to the notion of death in general. On the first level, upon witnessing the haunting the person’s repressed personal relationship with the spirit (as well as the repressed possibility for interaction with the spirit) return. “The uncanny nature of bereavement is thus shown: we cling to what we have lost, but know we must let go, eventually” (Allen, 2009, p. 102). This includes the desire of the person to communicate with the deceased, emotions attached to the passing of the deceased, and so on. This is then contrasted with the insecurity of witnessing these familiar desires within an unfamiliar form (the dead returning). On the second level, beyond the personal nature, the occurrence also triggers repressed emotions concerning death in

⁶ As all of the ghost hunting reality television programming takes place within the context of western culture, I do not delve into the differences between eastern and western perceptions of the uncanny within the paranormal.

general that most cultures have learned to fear. This is the concept that I will continue to focus upon in more detail in Section C. It is generally accepted that death is the end of physical interaction, however, when there is an instance presented to us that fights against that notion, it brings the repressed feelings and insecurities we had about death to light. Through this process it forces us to consider what death means and face the anxieties and desires we have with regards to death in general.

B. The Paranormal and Indeterminate State

Although the paranormal is that which is *beyond* normal, in order for an instance to be deemed paranormal, the state of the instance must be determined. This creates a natural connection between the paranormal and knowledge mastery (the identification of the state of an instance). The indeterminate state is the moment of perception and analysis of an instance in which the instance has not become identifiable as being of one state of being. Within this definition, I argue that there are three main moments of indeterminate state in the analysis of the paranormal. First is the moment in which the instance has not yet become identifiable as being either normal or paranormal. Second is the occurrence of the paranormal within the normal (the familiar unfamiliar). And finally, this includes the inability to identify the intentions and consciousness (the state of being) of the instance. I will explore all of these forms through an analysis of the alleged paranormal activity within *Ghost Hunters* Season 5, Episode 17, *Fort Henry*. This episode consisted of an investigation of Fort Henry in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The alleged paranormal activity I will address in this episode are the two instances in which a heavy metal door in the fort closes and opens (in one instance on command) allegedly without any scientifically explainable forces (thus leading the group to categorize it as paranormal rather than normal).

First, this allegedly paranormal instance is uncanny as upon witnessing it the audience cannot instantly determine whether the activity is paranormal or not. A door has the potential to be closed by normal force (such as the wind, or a person). In this instance, the door is still closed by force (which is not, on the surface, un-normal), yet in this instance the force is unspecified and unperceivable. As there is no visible source for the force (and therefore the normal origins can be ruled out) the instance becomes paranormal as it is beyond normal explanation. For the audience the moment of perception of the door shutting itself is neither normal nor paranormal. This is because it takes further investigation and thought to determine the nature of movement. Although some will eventually determine whether or not it is normal or paranormal, others will never be able to determine whether the door is either and thus the moment will remain unintelligible for them, and thus uncanny. This is not to say that determining the moment removes the uncanny from the instance, but rather in this instance the indeterminability is one of the aspects that can create an uncanny instance.

There is also the aspect of the unfamiliar in the familiar. The alleged paranormal activity is using normal material (the door) in an unfamiliar way (the movement of the door due to allegedly paranormal force). Thus indirectly it brings another questionable indeterminate state; as to whether the door is animate or inanimate and then whether the force that caused the movement of the door is animate or inanimate. In addition, within this scenario of the door allegedly paranormally opening and closing, further questioning can arise as to the state of being. If what is being witnessed is paranormal, is it conscious or not? Is it intelligent or residual? Is it friendly or malicious?

C. *The Desire for the Paranormal as Mirror*

We, as humans, are limited in our ability to comprehend our relationship (both on an individualistic level and on a mass level) to the biological, sociological, and psychological aspects of existence. Due to this limitation we possess a fragmented understand of our existence. This being acknowledged, to compensate for our fragmented relationship we pursue more coherent relationships through the acquisition of intellectual mastery. Just as the child attempts to comprehend the new world revealing itself in front of him after birth (before the symbolic is introduced) through the correlation of himself and his body to the reflection of his image in the mirror (Lacan, 1949; Lacan, 1951) we as adults continue to do the same. The process of identification is uncanny as although the mirror triggers identification (and knowledge mastery), it *forces* this identification as we are *confronted* with the image and forced to acknowledge it. These mirrors then forcefully offer an image for correlation concerning our placement within the symbolic, which we use in an attempt to understand ourselves both as a population and as individuals.

The mirror stage is a phenomenon which “marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child” and “typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image” (Lacan, 1951, p. 14). In other words, the mirror stage is a form of identification of the infant in which the mirror acts as a model for the ideal image of the child which the child uses in order to compensate for the perceived fragmentation of the child’s own body. Upon encountering the mirror, at first the child is aggressive toward the image as the contrast between the wholeness of the image (the ideal I) and the child’s perception of his own inability to coordinate his body. Due to the child’s desire for completion, rather than see the image as a threat the child identifies with the image, in the process becoming whole himself. The mirror stage thus “describes the formation of the ego via the process of identification” with the ego being “the result of identifying with one’s own specular image” (Evans, 1996, p. 118). This is what Lacan describes as a sense of mastery over the self. The mirror is, in a sense

an image of coherence – of what makes the world and our place as complete subjects in it make sense. It becomes a process of identification of our internal self with that external image. (Sonvilla-Weiss, 2008, p. 38).

Lacan argued that “the mirror stage is far from a mere phenomenon which occurs in the develop of the child” (Lacan cited in Evans, 1996, p. 118).

The mirror is that which allows us to identify internally with external concepts. When we are faced with the paranormal mirror, specifically ghosts, the ghost acts as a mirror confronting us with our fragmented viewpoint and the coherent vantage point waiting on the horizon. As with the child and its reflection, when we are faced with such a coherent, whole image of the afterlife⁷ we naturally feel aggressive toward it, as it embodies that which we do not. In order to come to terms with the spectral specular image, we identify with it and through identifying with it perceive wholeness of our bodies. We secure a notion of internalized coherence, despite the narcissistic desires behind the quest for wholeness.

⁷ Note this does not imply references specifically to full body apparitions, but rather to any paranormal activity.

This process of identification within the paranormal investigators on the ghost hunting programs, can be seen in discussion by the investigators over their personal experiences with the paranormal. It can also be seen in their desire to have personal experiences with the paranormal. In both *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures*, the lead investigators (in *Ghost Hunters* Jason and Grant and in *Ghost Adventures* Zak, Nick, and Aaron) all attribute their call to investigate and understand the paranormal due to a personal encounter with the paranormal. In the instance of Jason and Grant, especially after their encounters, despite no official training, they identified enough with the paranormal that they set up their own organization, TAPS. This organization is full of information both Jay and Grant have gathered from their experiences and encounters over the years. This suggests that, through identification of themselves with the paranormal (as the specular image), they feel a level of comprehension, even if in the imaginary and not the real, that others who have not had this moment of identification do not have. In the case of the investigators in the show, in *Ghost Adventures* the crew is only composed of three people, and thus, all have had experiences. In *Ghost Hunters*, which employs many more investigators, those that have not had experiences wish for an experience and intensely desire that moment of identification. One member that joined the team in Season 2, Dave Tango, on many occasions, discusses his desire to experience something paranormal, as he states “I’m back in here because I want to see it for myself. I want to see something happen. Something to prove to me that... you know... this isn't all in vain” (*Ghost Hunters*, Season 2, Episode 23).

In this way, the process of identification via the specular image of the specter becomes the object of our desire. It creates within us a tense balance between our desire to *see* the specular image and our desire to *seek* the specular image. Lacan (1977) believes that desire is different from need or demand in that it can “never be satisfied; it is constant in its pressure, and eternal” (Evans, 1996, p. 38). Thus, it is the ability to pursue the desired that allows for it to be desired, and that subconsciously desire is most interested not in fully attaining the object of desire, but rather in keeping a distance and continuing the pursuit of the object (Lacan, 1977; Evans, 1996). With this in mind, in addressing the desire to *see* the paranormal (as specular image) the desire to *seek* the paranormal must also be addressed. It is the inability of attainability of the object, never being able to fully understand the paranormal, that creates a playful twofold relationship.

The goal of the investigators was to have an encounter with the paranormal, and through that encounter, those who witnessed the paranormal appear to have identified the placement of themselves within the paranormal. This can be noted by both the increase in ghost hunting programming and the longevity of it (as *Ghost Hunters* for instance has had two spin-off shows and is on its sixth season). In these instances although the paranormal was encountered, its ability to be sought and to be desired to be sought was not hampered. Thus it is implied that, rather than truly encountering the object of desire, they are *glimpsing* the object of desire. This allows them, through the imaginary, to form an identification with the specular image, however it does not allow them to form a strong enough identification or intellectual mastery of the instance that they no longer desire the object. Therefore, although the object of desire was found, the temporary and unstable nature of the object of desire⁸ allows for it to be continuously desired as it is never fully had. This then allows for the paradox of identification of the self through a paranormal instance (an intense process) while never actually witnessing a “reflection” in detail. As many other aspects of the paranormal continue to be fragmented, the quest for identification is one of a continuous

⁸ Unstable concerning the fact that the experience had by the investigators are recounted as being brief moments of glimpsing a paranormal instance, and not a lengthy interaction or conversation.

process as they are only ever able to encounter a mirror that reflects back an only slightly less fragmented image. Therefore in this instance the desire to see and the desire to seek are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they interact playfully with each other as they are allowed small victories of completion (which fuels the desire to pursue the desired). The desire to see and the desire to seek are not mutually exclusive.

The child then misrecognizes its specular image as being a “stable, coherent, whole self” (Felluga, 2003b), while in actuality the specular image is not a realistic correspondence to the real child. This makes the real child impossible to realize, leaving the image seen by the child and identified with by the child as an image of fantasy. As the real is not attainable, this image of fantasy, although it is fantasy, is still able to provide a compensation for the sense of abstraction perceived by the child. In this way so is the spectral specular image an image of fantasy. Despite its impossibility to be realized, it is still capable of providing compensation for the sense of abstraction perceived by us. This provides us with a new perception of coherence as opposed to the old perception of fragmentation, but also provides continued reinforcement of coherence upon encountering the paranormal, which allows for the continued drive of desire.

D. The Paranormal Gaze

As explored in the previous section, the spectral paranormal is in some instances an object of desire; thus this requires the consideration of the aspect of gaze concerning the desired. Gaze refers to the “uncanny sense that the object of our eye’s look or glance is somehow looking back at us of its own will” (Felluga, 2003a). Thus, in reference to the paranormal, gaze refers to the instance of paranormal activity concerning the state of being of the object. This concerns first the indeterminate state of the object; whether or not the instance has the capability to gaze back at us – and not knowing whether it is or not. Second, it concerns the uneasiness that comes from the moment when we determine that the object is or can in fact stare back at us. The uncanny insecurity that arises from realizing an object is, or has the potential to, stare back at us, changes the way in which we are able to identify with that object. This is the case concerning the various types of haunting. When paranormal activity is deemed to be residual, there is no gaze. There is nothing conscious there as it is only a fragmented memory which cannot interact with or observe anything around it. Thus, this is less unsettling as there is no gazing done by the haunting. However, if the activity is deemed to be demonic, intelligent, or poltergeist, then there is a consciousness present, and thus there is an ability for those entities to be gazing back at us when we look.

In Season 2, Episode 19 of *Ghost Hunters* entitled *Haunted Lighthouse*, the TAPS team visits the St. Augustine Lighthouse in Florida to investigate claims of paranormal activity by workers and visitors in the area. During this investigation of the lighthouse itself, the TAPS team captures some of its, self-determined, “best evidence” on video. The video allegedly shows an entity moving up the lighthouse stairs above them until it gets to the top where it then allegedly appears to look over the railing back down at the investigators standing on the stairs below. In this instance, the moments where the ghost appears to be “watching” the investigators are the most uncanny, as what the investigators are gazing at appears to be gazing back at them. This is more unsettling than were they to be watching a repetitive movement of a residual haunt, which could not observe their presence. Upon review the investigator that found the tape, Steve, commented: “This one – let me set this up for you. What you’re actually gonna see is a little disturbance here, and then something peek [sic] over the railing. See there?” He then proceeds to show the tape of which after watching everyone proceeds to comment on how amazing it is they caught it on tape.

However, on top of the positive comments of a successful investigation, Jason adds “That gives you chills right up the spine.” Later on when revealing the clip to the lighthouse keeper, Grant echoes again the same sentiments, “Look at that. Peeking right over at us. It gives me chills right now” emphasizing that it is the gaze, and not the movement (as there were other clips of movements that did not get such a strong reaction as this clip), that makes it unsettling.

CHAPTER III: ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND THE UNCANNY

*There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man.
It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity.
It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between
science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and
the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination.
It is an area which we call the Twilight Zone.
(The Twilight Zone, 1959)*

Why are electronic media uncanny? Even more specifically, why are electronic communicative media, such as the television, especially uncanny? Due to the effect electronic media has had on culture and the human psyche, electronic telecommunication has “forever and irretrievably altered human consciousness itself” (Sconce, 2000, p. 4). Due to their nature, electronic communicative media hold the potential to project a “living” presence where the media themselves (the television, the radio, etc.) appear to be speaking directly to the viewer (Sconce, 2000, p. 3). These electronic media, though sound and image, have the ability to create “virtual beings that appear to have no physical form” (p. 4). These virtual beings give media the appearance of being a gateway to an “electronic otherworld” (p. 4). From the telegraph to the telephone to the television and the Internet, these telecommunicative media have all been received in similar ways, with similar yet different (based on the nature of the medium) hesitations. In all instances, all telecommunicative media are perceived as providing access to a disembodied and disassociated electronic otherworld. The inability to understand what access and communication to and with this electronic otherworld implies, combined with the inability to understand how these technologies work, feeds the cultural fear and curiosities surrounding these media. With each technological advancement, each medium has gone a little further in its ability to access the electronic otherworld. Messages that had previously “been more or less grounded in the immediate space and time of those communicating” were now able to defy the old laws of communication and allow for physical connection to be achieved despite physical separation.

Although this electronic otherworld is not by name related to the paranormal, indirectly these electronic media are seen as “another technology for conjuring the dead, the alien, the interdimensional, the uncanny” (Sconce, 2007, p. 126). For this reason, in look at ghost hunting reality television programming, the use of electronic media is an interesting aspect to consider. This is because the television is already perceived to be a technology for contacting the otherworld, and electricity, which powers the fear behind the inability to understand these electronic media, is channeled as proof of the paranormal through the electronic tools of the ghost hunters. In building upon these historically uncanny reactions to these electronic telecommunications, I will look at the influence of electronic media in ghost hunting reality television programming on the audience. In the later chapters I will look at these electronic media both as the medium (television as a conduit for the program) and within the message (electronic equipment within the program). In preparation for those chapters, in this chapter I will address the medium and the content of the medium. However, I do not mean this traditionally. Rather, I will first address the electronic otherworld (the medium) accessible

through electronic media (specifically the television). I will continue to address the composition (the content) of the electronic otherworld, electricity. In both sections I will address why the space and the electricity which is perceived to exist in the space is uncanny.

I. The Uncanny Elsewhere of Television

Television was not the first of the new technology to maintain a status of being an “occult” medium (as the telegraph, radio, and telephone preceded it). Nor was it the first to be perceived as a gateway to “electrical disembodiment and disassociation,” (Sconce, 2000, p. 126). It was, however, the first of these technologies to move *beyond* a singularly audial presence to a combined audial and visual presence. Television offered the “illusion of live and instantaneous virtual teleportation to another time and place through sound and vision” (p. 127). Television’s “electronic vision” was perceived of exposing “seemingly material worlds ... conjured out of nothing more than electricity and air” (p. 126). This in turn made the “electronic elsewhere” more palpable, more accessible than the previous technology, allowing the “ghosts” to not only speak through the media as with radio, but to actually reside within the media. Whereas radio “broke through” (p. 127) to the paranormal otherworld, the television appeared capable of hosting and generating its own paranormal world which was able to reside within the television. This was a world that was “there” yet “not-there,” that was present but distant, perhaps even “living” yet “dead” (p. 127). This paradox of presence, the familiar shapes and objects projected in an unfamiliar methodology, was uncanny to the new viewers of the medium. Because of these hesitations surrounding the medium, as with the radio, there grew a response of initial fear and assessment of risk.

The television forced its viewers to assess their understanding of spatial and temporal dimensions, and their understanding, or in many instances lack of understanding, of the environment around them. In addition to triggering repressed fears concerning this lack of knowledge and understanding, it also triggered repressed desires concerning the desire to know and understand more. In 1945 the television was being pegged as “the eyes of tomorrow” in which the television could become “a living electronic extension of human vision” which could “extend our mastery of the world” (p. 128). The television thus had a dual nature. It had the surface level which did extend a person’s ability to master the world, as it presented environments which otherwise would not have been accessible, but it also had the subconscious level, the mirror level (Lacan, 1977), where the television forced the viewer to fear it or to identify with its ability to transpose time and space. In other words, through its ability to transpose time and space it was able to appear to acquire knowledge without constraint. As televisions began invading the home they began invading viewers’ identities, becoming an extension of consciousness, leading to fulfillment of a fragmented view. However, as with all media, this did not occur before the viewer felt threatened by it. It was reported that many viewers at first felt a certain uneasiness when in proximity to a television; however, today very few viewers feel uneasy around a functioning television. The fears of the television being a “zone of suspended animation, a form of oblivion from which viewers might not ever escape” (p. 131) are gone. Instead they are replaced through the identification process, where the television is now part of our identification, and, as McLuhan suggests, a true extension of our being (McLuhan, 1964). We have gained intellectual mastery over the basic concepts, and thus are able to include the television in our repertoire of tools, extending our perception knowingly in our question for further intellectual mastery.

This being said, as the television becomes a more accepted part of our existence, how then can it still be uncanny? Philosophically, as can be seen in the previous argument, at least at one point in the life of a viewer the television challenges the viewer to confront repressed fears and desires concerning the extension of being the television offers. However, culturally the television has become generally accepted, while the Internet has taken the place as the new medium of hesitation and assimilation. Still, despite the depletion of novelty, the television is still uncanny as it will never cease to remind us that we do not fully understand it. Just as the child does not fully understand his reflection yet accepts it, we do not fully understand the television (and also radio, telegraph, etc.) although we accept it. This prompts the perception of the potential of risk that makes electronic media uncanny. When the television is functioning in a proper, normal manner,⁹ we are not reminded of our lack of comprehension and understanding. We are not forced to confront our fear of loss of control over a situation. However, when we witness a television performing in an abnormal way, through horror films such as *Poltergeist* or through ghost hunting shows where they use electronic media, specifically television, to contact or find proof of the paranormal, we are forced to confront those repressed emotions, partly of desire and curiosity, and partly of fear, that we do not understand it fully, and our perceived coherence is in reality still fragmented.

II. Electronic Media and the Uncanniness of Electricity

As explored in Chapter II, we have a desire to understand and access the paranormal. As has been begun to be explored in Chapter III, electricity and electronic media appear to be successful tools for partially achieving that goal. As previously explored as well, the desired is also subconsciously desired to *be* desired and not acquired. Thus, it is interesting that the tools that are used to explore the paranormal are, in a way, placed in-between the investigators/observers and the paranormal; therefore, it is very rare for anyone to have perceivable personal contact with the desired. I believe this is the case for two reasons. First, due to the uncanny lack of understand of electricity, investigators and viewers may assume that the presence of electricity or the abnormal sounds of an EVP are paranormal. This is due to the fact that as to how these pieces of equipment work and what they are detecting is not fully understood. This inability to finalize intellectual mastery allows investigators and viewers to get close without getting too close. A haunting EVP gives hope and fulfillment and allows for small sets of identification and forced confrontation with a variety of repressed emotions; however, it does not provide ample enough evidence to make searching unnecessary. In all of these examples, the one thing that ties them all together is the presence of electricity. Thus that begs the question: Why electricity? Why in general are electronic media uncanny?

Electricity is uncanny because it is at no point clear to a human observer whether electricity itself is conscious or unconscious in its actions, or whether the inanimate objects electricity animates, upon animation, are conscious or unconscious in their actions. Due to this lack of clarification electricity has an indeterminable state, in most instances providing the “lack of orientation” (Jentsch, 1906, p. 8) necessary to give the object or incident its uncanniness. The inability of the observer to fully develop an intellectual mastery of a concept or object leads to the potential for “psychical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise” (Jentsch, 1906, p. 11). As described in Chapter I, uncanniness most regularly arises from

⁹ By normal manner I am referring to the basic functions of a television: showing programming chosen by the viewer; playing music; playing movies; etc.

obscure psychical uncertainties as to “whether an apparently living being really is animate” or “whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” (Jentsch, 1906, p. 11). As an extension of this uncertainty, uncanniness also regularly arises from obscure psychical uncertainties as to whether an apparently animated living being really *is* conscious, or whether a lifeless inanimate object perceived to be unconscious may actually *be* conscious. When perceiving electricity in action in especially telecommunicative electronic media, the observer is faced with two psychical uncertainties: (a) is the electricity that is animating the electronic media conscious or unconscious in its actions (does the electricity consciously know it is providing a power source for the electronic media); and (b) does the electronic medium upon animation by electricity, become a living, conscious entity? These two uncertainties are intrinsically tied together, and are seemingly the same question, however, fundamentally they both address a different uncertainty, and a different fear, and thus are deserving of being mentioned separately. Although this also begs discussion as to whether or not what is generated and activated by electricity is real (in the Lacanian sense) it is not within the scope of this project to address it.¹⁰

To address the nature of electricity: is electricity conscious or unconscious? Although this question is both philosophically and scientifically impossible to answer, the pure fact that this question *is impossible* to answer is the answer itself. Because we are unable to have an intellectual mastery of electricity, specifically over whether electricity is alive or lifeless, electricity becomes uncanny. Although we can accept basic facts even without complete mastery of a concept (such as the fact the sun will rise in the morning), and thus can live with electricity without constant unease, when we are faced with electricity in new, different, or direct ways, we are reminded once again of its uncanny nature to us. To then address the animate or inanimate nature of electronic media: are electronic media conscious or unconscious? Scientifically most scholars would believe they are not. In the end we may be able to rationalize that electricity is not conscious, however, when electronic media perform outside of the familiar, we are faced again with these repressed insecurities and have to address the fact the object we thought was inanimate is potentially actually animate. We are reminded just as we, as humans, are powered by “electricity” and are living that other objects which are powered by “electricity” may also have the potential to become living.

Therefore, due to these insecurities, electronic media and electricity are uncanny as to their ability to be exceptional conduits for the return of our repressed fears of being faced with an object or instance we cannot fully understand and master. As electricity is not well understood (beyond how to attempt to manipulate it) every time we are faced with electricity we are forced to face our inability to understand it and that it has the potential to do something unexpected. Thus our fear of not understanding also becomes our fear of not being able to correctly assess risk in a situation in which we do not fully understand and are able to identify even the potential risk. In this way electronic media, and by proxy the electricity that powers them, are examples of such objects that act as mirrors for our repressed emotions of fear and insecurity. These repressed emotions concern our perception of lack of control over the object, the electronic media, and the action the object is performing through the conduction of electricity. These insecurities are in part why malfunctioning or abnormally functioning electronic media have a high potential to become uncanny. On the first level, malfunctioning

¹⁰ In further research I hope to address in more detail throughout the research the context of the Lacanian real, imaginary, and symbolic, however, due to time constraints this was not possible to delve into detail in this paper.

equipment is uncanny because it is a *familiar object performing in an unfamiliar way*. The perceiver is not initially afraid of the object because she recognizes the object; however, she becomes uneasy and insecure around the recognizable object when the object begins behaving in an unclassifiable abnormal way. Particularly in the case of telecommunicative electronic media, the misbehavior of the object often concerns the perceived animation or consciousness of the medium, which as discussed before, is one of the categories that notably produce uncanny situations.

Moving back to the discussion over identifiable risk during misbehavior of the object, electronics in general have the potential to become uncanny more than non-electric objects. This is due to the inability to identify the risks of electronics over the risks of non-electric objects. Electronic media do not have to stray far from normal operation to become uncanny, because normal operation itself is not fully understood (in terms of risk or comprehension). Due to the fragmentation of our understanding of electronics, electronics are able to perform actions which trigger repressed fears easier than objects we have mastery over. Take for example the difference between perception of an electronic mixer and a wooden spoon and the potential for misbehavior of the object. Statistically, we are not afraid that a wooden spoon may begin mixing ingredients by itself. However, we may be afraid that an electronic mixer may begin mixing by itself. We know the mechanics of a wooden spoon, we know the physical properties of the wooden spoon, and we know the risks of a wooden spoon. However, most of us do not know the mechanics, physical properties, and all-inclusive risks of an electronic mixer. Therefore, part of us has to consider the potential for the electronic mixer to turn on by itself as opposed to considering the wooden spoon moving itself. We know electricity animates, but we cannot fully guarantee where and when it will animate, even if on some level we do control the animation (through pushing a switch or button). In addition, we also have the fear of electronic objects animating when not plugged in, or not stopping when unplugged, once again showing our repressed fear over that which we do not understand or comprehend. It is this fear we are forced to encounter when we face electronic objects malfunctioning. Taking this back to telecommunicative electronic media, these electronic media have a higher potential to become uncanny. This is because originally we set the communicative channel to a specific channel and know who we are communicating with; however, that can change easily. We are not fully in control of communication, as it uses electricity to communicate, thus the potential for something to change or perform in an unfamiliar way is higher. In this instance it is not clear that consciousness could not “exist in seeming independence from either a sender or a receiver” (Sconce, 2000, p. 144).

The question also exists, why then is electricity used as a determinate for evidence of the paranormal and ghosts? In part, I believe electricity has been picked because it appears to be a source of life, a “soul of the world” to borrow phrasing from Goethe (1825), that is not fully understood in its mechanism or power. Thus it has the potential to not only be a source of life or animation, but it also has the potential to be molded into whatever placement we desire it to be, without fear of ever actually achieving the desire we construct from it. We can say “this EMF detector is reading electricity in the area that appears to have no source” and thus assume the energy source to be paranormal, or we assume the energy source to be natural. There is no wrong answer when nothing can be proved one way or another.

Concerning the uncanny nature of electricity, electronic media, and the paranormal, I will address how editing and filming techniques create and alter the space visible through a

medium, television, uncannily in Chapter IV, concerning aspects such as the addition and removal of diegetic and non-diegetic audio or the manipulation of time through the increasing or decreasing of the amount of frames per second. How the use of electronic media within paranormal investigations is uncanny will be further discussed in Chapter V, concerning aspects such as retroactive discovery, the moment where after the investigation material is found that was not witnessed first-hand by any investigators. I will further explore the aspects of the uncanny and its relationship to electricity within the medium (reality television programming) and the message (ghost hunting).

CHAPTER IV: GHOST HUNTING REALITY TELEVISION AND THE UNCANNY: THE MEDIUM

Diane: TV people?

Carol Anne: Uh-huh.

Diane: Do you see them?

Carol Anne: Uh-uh. Do you?

Diane: Uh-uh.

("Poltergeist," 1982)

I. GHOST HUNTING REALITY TELEVISION: THE MEDIUM

It was Marshall McLuhan (1964) who wrote "the medium is the message" (p. 7). The message is, of course, also the message, but McLuhan argued the medium was not receiving enough attention for the message it passed in and of itself. McLuhan writes

This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves – results from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology. (p. 7)

What McLuhan implies by this is relatively simple. Media act as extensions to ourselves and our consciousness. This is apparent by electronic media's historically perceived ability to extend the senses, such as television's ability to become "a living electronic extension of human vision" (Sconce, 2000, p. 128). Therefore, how we use that media to project a message is a reference to how we perceive that message itself. In this way it is important to consider "not only the 'content' but the medium and the cultural matrix within which the particular medium operates" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 11) as "any medium has the power of imposing its own assumption on the unwary" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 15).

To continue along our voyage into the uncanniness of ghost hunting reality television programming, the question must then be posed: What is the medium? The "medium" in this instance is actually "the media;" it is both the medium of television as an electronic machine and the medium of reality as a genre. The message, the process and results of the paranormal investigations, is socially constructed to the audience first through the framework of reality that reality programming provides. The message is then physically presented to the audience through the medium of television. The two media work together to produce one medium, reality television, which is inclusive of both the social and technological aspects of the reality context of the programming and the electronic otherworld the programming resides in. Thus, before it can be addressed how the message is uncanny, it must first be approached as to how these media that construe the message are uncanny within themselves.

It has been contended that new media, including reality television, have brought about a means of escape from "mundane reality into a new simulated reality" (Biressi & Nunn, 2005, p. 98). Reality television is programming "built around regular people doing extraordinary things or living in unusual situations" even though "the people appearing on reality shows are often far from regular" (Huff, 2006, p. 32). It is "a hybrid form, drawing on (and reworking) generic codes and conventions derived from a variety of sources" of non-fiction narratives (Casey, 2002, p.

143) that has “absorbed a multitude of other genres, including soap opera, adventure, and variety” (Simon, 2005, p. 179). Interestingly what can be gathered from this variety of definitions and observations of reality television is that reality television is, in fact, not reality. In all aspects, reality television is an enhancement or a representation of reality. Reality television provides a “new” reality where the “ordinary” (reality) is introduced to the “extraordinary.” It is a television genre built upon non-fictional television framework (such as documentation or journalism), but enhanced through fictional television framework. Thus leading to the notion that reality television seemingly “has nothing to do with reality and everything to do with television” (Biresi & Nunn, 2005, p. 3). This is the construction that Lacan (1977) discusses concerning the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic. Because reality is not “real” it is symbolic as everything is a representation of something else. In instances, such as reality television, although it is portraying the symbolic it is portraying it in an exaggerated fashion, thus making it the imaginary rather than the symbolic.

It is thus argued that reality television is seemingly not reality. But this leads to the question: What is reality? However, can reality be defined? Perhaps more accurately the question should be: What is it that defines reality? Parallel to the argumentation between the necessity for the definition of “live” to be in correlation to that of “reproduction” (Benjamin, 1936; Sterne, 2003), reality “has no fixed meaning until it has been represented” (Casey, 2002, p. 146). In other words, reality cannot be defined until it has something to be contrasted with, as “what we call reality does not exist outside of the process of representation” (Casey, 2002, p. 146). Thus “reproduction highlights the possibility of reality having an immediate self-presence in the first place” and “authenticity and presence become issues only when there is something to which we can compare them” (Sterne, 2003, p. 220). Therefore, although reality can be defined as that which is real or referring to the real, in order to understand what is real it has to be understood first what is not real. However, even with the ability to contrast reality with its antithesis, a definition is far from stable. This is due to the fact that the representations that, through their existence, define reality are constantly changing over time in variance with “whose point of view is being put forward” (Casey, 2002, p. 146). Thus, as reality and what is real is defined in correlation to what is not real, which is constantly changing, so will the definition of what is real change as well. However, what makes something a representation of reality, in the first place, is difficult to define as well. Arguably, “representation cannot capture the real event because what is being represented – that is, the initial event – is dubious in the first place” (Simon, 2005, p. 179). This is, in part, what makes reality and reality television “a very malleable fluid concept” (p. 179). Although it claims to be reality, it is actually a carefully constructed projection of reality. This reality’s goal is to affect the viewer by transmitting “its ‘moving fantasies’ from barren brain to barren brain, a mechanical process of stimulation that turns [viewer] into mechanical effects of machines themselves” (Botting, 2005, p. 7). This makes them “little more than mechanical puppets jerked by the strings of fiction’s repetitive and formulaic apparatus” (Botting, 2005, p. 7). In other words, the viewers are powerless, while the producers of the show are powerful. This creates an uncanny relationship between those who control the medium, and those who partake in it.

From this fluctuation and malleability in definition of reality comes the first argumentation for the purpose as well as for the uncanniness of reality television. Reality television is not so much about *being real* as much as it is about *representation an ideal real*. Reality television, as with factual programming, “takes on the burden of making sense of reality” (Biresi & Nunn, 2005, p. 4), making reality television a conduit of identification for its audience

in their quest of locating and identifying the real. This cultural space reality television, and television in general, provides is a “safe way of indulging and exercising our fears” (Robson, 2007, p. 242) as well as space in which contemporary anxieties can play out “within a dramatic structure and in an entertaining format” (Casey, 2002, p. 197). Thus reality television is uncanny because it acts as a mirror to the viewer forcing the viewer to move from the identification of the “specular I” into identification of the “social I” within the current social construction of reality. Reality television as mirror represents the movement from the self to the social where “the subject is no longer content to interrogate its face in the mirror” but rather “desires to stage itself in its social relations” (Vidler, 1992, p. 223). This image reflected is that in which we conceive ourselves, but at first before the moment of identification when reflection and self become one, we are confronted with a familiar, but unfamiliar, version of the self. It is the familiar self placed in an unfamiliar context. In the specific case of ghost hunting reality television programming, the social ideal the audience is confronted with is one of a paranormal reality; an environment where the paranormal exists and is successfully documented. For many viewers this reality of paranormal acceptance of which they find themselves temporarily immersed in (the program) is more coherent than the fragmented reality of paranormal exploration they reside in. Thus ghost hunting reality television programming, as the gothic genre, “in spite of its conjuring up of the uncanny, is rooted in realism not fantasy to provide its terror” (Allen, 2009, p. 92). This desire comes from the banishment of supernatural figures (such as ghosts) from an “increasingly empirical and rational world,” leading to the supernatural to find a place within the mind (Botting, 2005, p. 15). It is then the ability for these supernatural desires to control and resonate as “more real than ever before” that is a grounding point for the uncanny.

The overlapping of fantasy and reality, the confounding of inner and external worlds, the lack of distinction between mind and materiality, are (im)precisely the defining features of the uncanny. (Botting, 2005, p. 15).

Although deeper discussion upon the uncanniness of reality and definitions of reality within reality television could be pursued, it is not in the intentions of this research to delve deeper. Rather, at this point the focus will be redirected onto the latter half of reality television: the production of the message for the medium. I focus upon the medium of television over an approach to reality theory, as that which generates feelings and concepts of reality and the real is not in the content, but rather in how the content is addressed. The medium supposes how the message should be addressed. Thus “what is significant about reality television is the way in which it utilizes new technologies ... to convey a sense of authenticity and immediacy to viewers” (Casey, 2002, p. 143). But how then is the medium of television used to present and enhance the uncanniness of the message, and how is the medium itself uncanny? Although the medium of television as a whole is composed of many aspects, in this research I will specifically address: (a) the process of filming; (b) audio and visual post-production with an emphasis on audio; and (c) manipulation of space and time.

II. PRODUCTION

The first step into the construction of the medium is production. This concerns both production of reality and production of material that suits the medium of television. These constructions overlap as can be seen by reality television’s stereotypical portrayal of reality. In reality television “the poorer the quality of footage used, the more ‘real’ the images and sounds

presented appear to be” (Casey, 2002, p. 197). I will be focusing on that mentality within the discussion in this section. Specifically, I will be addressing three main aspects of the filming process: (a) the camera angles; (b) the use of lighting; and (c) the inclusion or exclusion of a technical crew within the program. As I am addressing the use of these filming techniques in creating uncanny environments, I will focus not on the entirety of the episodes, but only the investigation.

A. Camera

It is necessary to address the use of the camera due to the influence the camera has over the projection of meaning within a sequence of frames (Burnett, 1995). There are many ways in which the process of filming with the camera can influence the project of meaning. I will specifically address two aspects: (a) camera angles;¹¹ and (b) camera movement.¹² For instance, this can be seen in the genre of reality television and the projection of reality within a program. Reality television has developed into a genre of low production quality due to the best methodology for the projection of reality. Techniques such as “camera wobble, poor lighting, sound distortion, off-centre framing and disjointed editing can often operate as indexes of authenticity” (Casey, 2002, p. 143). These techniques have turned themselves into “cultural markers of spontaneity which serve to bolster the ‘reality effect’ of these texts” (Casey, 2002, p. 143). Although any or all of these aspects could be addressed within the context of the uncanny, for the general purpose of this argumentation I will focus on the ability for television to be a “vision of the other” (Yu, 2009, p. 119). In other words, I will address the uncanny vantage point of the camera as the other, the outsider, and how it creates an uncanny relationship between the viewer and the camera. In addition, I will address the uncanny ability the camera (and television) possesses to control the gaze of the viewer. This control forces the viewer to face that which they may otherwise have wished to avoid. In this way the camera acts as the mirror, forcing the viewer to witness their reflection within the context by controlling their gaze.

Within this context the camera acts as the other, the outsider, due to the nature of the camera’s vantage point of looking in to a situation. This distant, yet involved vantage point is a product of the fact that “the camera is in the very position it does not record” (Ruebsaat, 2010). Therefore, the image that the camera does record is by default where the camera is not present. Ruebsaat (2010) argues this gap between the camera and the image is uncanny as it is akin to the gap between the archetype and the archetypical image; referring to the uncanniness of the double.

Mechanically speaking, when I am outside, the natural direction of my gaze tends to be in (archetypal energy seeking form). When I am inside, my gaze naturally moves out. With the camera, I am always looking at where I am not. But simultaneously I am always looking from where I am. I imagine that this at/from then, is me. It is within my very being, or rather, is my being. Thus I am forever accompanied in this manner, by my inherent and constant double; I am looking at where I am not/what I am looking at is not where I am (Ruebsaat, 2010).

In this way the camera allows her to always be looking at where she is not, but simultaneously be looking from where she is. This creates a doubling of consciousness; the perception of the

¹¹ The camera angle is the “point of view from which the camera photographs its subject” concerning specifically the angle the camera is gazing at the subject (Katz, 1972).

¹² Camera movement refers to the “motion of the camera” (Katz, 1972).

space which Ruebsaat occupies and the perception of the space which the camera directs her gaze. This is although a pleasurable experience as “to be the same and be different simultaneously, to experience oneself as someone else or someone else as oneself, form aspects of readerly pleasure” (Botting, 2005, p. 20).

Building upon this observation, in the case of television the camera allows for the viewer also a doubling of consciousness; the view of the viewer to the television and the view of the camera to the situation unfolding before it. Doubling was viewed by Freud to be one of “the most prominent of those motifs that produce an uncanny effect” (Freud, 1919, p. 141). Doubling is visible in the moment where the subject identifies himself with the other, in a way that often allows him to become “co-owner of the other’s knowledge, emotions and experience” (Freud, 1919, p. 141).¹³ This is the way in which the gaze of the camera acts in relationship to the gaze of the viewer. The gaze of the camera allows the viewer to become such a “co-owner” of the knowledge, emotions, and experience of the camera (which is controlled by the director). It acts as an extension to the viewer’s consciousness, allowing the viewer a dual nature.

Although this dual nature in part refers to the co-ownership of perception, it also, in this instance, refers to the forced identification of the viewer with a secondary self. Freud also argued that the double’s uncanny quality is derived from “the fact that the double is a creation that belongs to a primitive phase in our mental development, a phase that we have surmounted, in which it admittedly had a more benign significance” (Freud, 1919, p. 143). This concerns the connections the double has to mirror-images (p. 142), which leads naturally to the Lacanian mirror stage (Lacan, 1977). The uncanniness through perception of a primitive phase references the “evolution of the sense of self, a regression to times when the ego had not yet clearly set itself off against the world outside and from others” (Freud, 1919, p. 143). Therefore, in this way the camera is also uncanny in the fact it acts as a mirror-reflection to the viewer (as it is the viewers double) forcing the viewer to see what the viewer may not wish to see.

B. Lighting

It is imperative to address the use of lighting within ghost hunting reality television programming due to the three main purposes lighting provides. Lighting controls the clarity of the image or situation presented; “effects lighting” controls the projects of realism; and lighting controls the presentation of atmosphere (Lighting, 2010). These three aspects of lighting each have the potential to influence audience perception of and attachment to the images presented before them.

Using lighting for the purpose of clarity, for instance, allows the audience to become more aware of the contents of the environment they are perceiving. In many instances, the use of intense lighting for clarity allows the audience to identify all images and elements, including the subjects, the objects, the environment, and the action occurring within the frame. Effects lighting, on the other hand, is not used for providing clarity in the environment, but rather is used to mask reality and suggest a new realism within an environment. An example of this would be using effects lighting to suggest a natural source of lighting (sunlight) within a soundstage depicting an external environment. Finally, the use of lighting for the creation of

¹³ In addition doubling can occur when a person becomes unsure of his true self to when she “may substitute the other’s self for his own” (Freud, 1919, p. 142).

atmosphere, as with the use of camera framing, indirectly suggests a specific mood within an environment to the audience. In many instances, this suggestion is accepted by the audience and causing the audience to adjust emotionally in correlation to the implied mood. All three aspects of lighting are important in the overarching programming and all three influence viewer perception. Unfortunately, there is neither time nor space to delve into deep discussion on all the use of lighting within the entirety of the ghost hunting reality television programming. Therefore, within this section I will just scratch the surface, addressing the *lack thereof of lighting* specifically within the investigation scenes in the programming. Within the majority of the program traditional lighting for the sake of clarity is used. This is not surprising as the goal of most scenes is for the audience to be able to clearly see what is occurring (such as a walk-through of a location or analyzing evidence by the investigators). However, during the investigation traditional lighting is abandoned and instead the decision is made for all ambient lighting to be removed, leading the investigation to occur in varying levels of total darkness. I will address the lack of use of lighting through the framework of clarity and the presentation of atmosphere, concluding with how the use of the lack of lighting creates an uncanny environment during the investigation. In other words I will address why the “veiling and unveiling” of lighting is uncanny (Sencindiver, 2009, p 72).

I will not address in great detail the project of realism through lighting, though it is an important aspect to note. Within reality television, as per definition, the environment presented within the frame is often the actual environment suggested. In pure reality television there is not much use of soundstages (beyond perhaps interview rooms) for this reason, and thus not much use of effects lighting to suggest natural lighting as natural lighting naturally exists. As most everything is on location, the location does not need to be manipulated to portray the location, as it already is the actual location. However, this is not completely true. Reality television *does* use effects lighting for the purpose of realism; it is just not used to suggest specific natural lighting. It is a noted phenomenon that reality programs trademark reality through poor quality lighting and camera angles (Casey, 2002; Raphael, 2009). Programming attempting to portray reality has “often avoided traditionally painstaking lighting and makeup to approximate the 'real' look of direct cinema footage” (Raphael, 2009, p. 130). However, within the argumentation of the lack of lighting (although that itself is a use of lighting still) it is not as interesting to delve further into discussion on the use of effects lighting. This being the case as it is the *absence* of effects lighting that is notable. It is important to consider the desire for realism gathered from observations on effects lighting and the sacrifice of quality to create a desirable medium for reality to be projected. This concept will be used later in the analysis of lighting.

The lack of lighting in the ghost hunting reality television programming is uncanny because it makes acquiring knowledge mastery more difficult. We are unable to assess the situation around us, and therefore are forced to rely on the camera to guide us through safely. We have to trust something we are unable to trust to guide us through. In addition it acts as the unfamiliar (lack of light) within the familiar (the location). In other words, darkness is a form of the uncanny as the uncanny acts “as ‘something one does not know one’s way about in’ (U, p. 341)” (Royle, 2003, p. 109). In this way it also calls for unintentional return to the darkness; no matter how one tries to escape it, often in the dark one always has to return to it no matter where one looks.

In addition, beyond the lack of general lighting, there is an important aspect of lack of lighting to consider: the shadow. Shadows are uncanny because they are indeterminable in their

state of being. They are familiar shapes within an unfamiliar presentation, or in some cases a familiar presentation but an unfamiliar shape. When look at a shadow, such as in one of Hitchcock's films (Schantz, 2010), it can be either the presence (or in some cases absence) of the shadow that is unfamiliar or it can be the shape of the shadow (or the impression) that is unfamiliar. The familiar outline of the shadow of a human figure on the wall, where there is no origin to shadow from (i.e. no person standing there) is uncanny because the familiar shape (the human) is recognizable, but the presence of the shadow is not. In a similar instance, the lack of the familiar outline of the shadow of a human figure on the wall, when there is a origin to shadow from (i.e. a person is standing there) is uncanny because there should be the familiar nature of the shadow, but there is not.

C. Equipment Crews

In many instances, the appearance, or lack thereof, of camera or equipment crews within reality television is not notably discussed. In most programming, there is a lack of visibility of the production crew where the crew is either absent or hidden in the background (Raphael, 2009, p. 130). This is not always the case in ghost hunting reality television programming. I argue in ghost hunting reality television programming the presence or absence of a production crew, and the visibility or non-visibility of the crew when present, has a direct correlation to the uncanniness and production of realism within the program.

From my observations, it appears the presence of a production crew within the programming makes the environment less intense, and less uneasy. The presence of a production crew "fosters an incredibly dangerous sense of false confidence to everyone involved" and creates a "misleading aura of protection" (Essany, 2008, p. 148). There is a larger sense of security when an investigator is seemingly alone in the room, while in actuality accompanied by a member of the production crew. In programming such as *Ghost Hunters* which use production crews, at points one member of the investigative team will go off by themselves with only a handheld camera in order to have a more intense fearful moment. In addition, within that confidence provided by the crew, the presence of a production crew also makes the audience consider the potential for manipulation to be stronger. In most programming that uses production crews, such as *Paranormal State*, *Ghost Hunters*, and *Scariest Places on Earth*, the camera crew is in almost all instances not featured. Thus it is difficult to know where all members of the crew are, which makes it more difficult to differentiate the origin of the evidence collected by investigators. A banging on a pipe may be an entity, but it may also be a member of the production crew attempting to improve ratings. In addition, a bigger crew also implies a bigger budget. The presence of a budget thus implies that the programming has moved from independent production to mainstream producers, who are, in the mind of the audience, more likely to fake results to achieve higher ratings.

This skepticism by the audience can be seen in Internet forums debating occurrences on the various programming that appears to be tampered evidence. A specific example of this is the *Ghost Hunters* live Halloween special, where Grant and Jason and their team investigated a location live – as opposed to their normally edited post-production episodes. During the episode there were several moments when the audience was skeptical as to the reality of the evidence. One of the incidents was the recording of an especially clear audio recording. Interestingly, in all of the discussion, the production crew is almost always the group that receives the blame for faking evidence. One user writes that "Steve Valentine, one of the guests of that episode, told

Grant and Jason (and he did it twice) that he could [hear] the alleged disembodied voice through his ear piece, an indication that this audio could've been 'planted' by the producers of the show."¹⁴ Another echoes similar concerns stating "I believe Fiona when she says Grant and Jason wouldn't be a part of any fake in their show, but who's to say someone in the GH crew wouldn't stoop to that for ratings?" Still another argues:

"Will they fake stuff for ratings? (sorry I have reading all the stuff on Scifake.com) You're darn right they will! For everyone who feels that the GH/GHI crews are honest. You have got be kidding! They have bills to pay for (now a B/B) and families to support. If the networks tell them to fake stuff, they will."

The comments continue, all focusing on the presence of the production crew implying a heightened potential for manipulation:

"Everything that I've seen of Jason and Grant over the years — and as recently as a couple of weeks ago when we were together at their hotel* — assures me that they are on the level. They weren't faking it. I can't speak for the sites being investigated on the shows, the production company or crew, or someone on the set who might want to 'enhance' the show."

Therefore, the presence of a production crew make the programming uncanny because the audience is never sure whether what they saw was the paranormal or the crew. I will delve into this argumentation further in the end of Chapter V, but it is important to note within this section as well.

However, all this being said, I believe the presence of a crew has the potential to make the environment and instance within the environment uncanny. This is due to the potential for the presence of a crew to cause unexpected chaos during the programing. *Ghost Adventures* with their lack of camera crew is more intense and more dramatic, as part of the frightening aspect is their lack of the support illusion presented by a crew. However, in a program such as *Ghost Hunters*, the production crew adds an additional aspect to play off of when things go wrong. In *Ghost Adventures* if an investigator has an experience it is unsettling, however as the entire purpose of the show is to have experiences it is not that surprising. In *Ghost Hunters* if a member of the production crew has an experience it is both unsettling and surprising, as the crew member is not part of the investigative team, and thus should be perceivably not involved in the action. In addition, as the camera crew provides a sense of support and security, when the crew is involved that sense of security is destroyed. Instead unease arises as that which was safe is no longer safe. Great detail is taken to keep the camera crew out of the frame, so when an unexpected instance causes them to enter the frame, it implies that no one is safe from the action occurring. It implies a more real, more dangerous environment where even those behind the scenes are not safe from reality either.

III. POST-PRODUCTION AUDIO

Editing has always been a large part of film and television production. It is not surprising that reality television often spices up its raw footage with "some other type of extra value ... from mood music to a celebrity narration" (Simon, 2006, p. 179). This leads to a "collision and partial coalescing of old and new, which evokes the uncanny" (Allen, 2009, p. 89). The old refers to the

¹⁴ <http://hollowhill.com/ghost-hunters-tv-show-fake/>

original footage, and the new refers to the adding of extras to the original footage. Although there are many aspects to post-production, specifically I will address the use of diegetic and non-diegetic audio (including SFX). It would also be interesting to also address the use of image manipulation; the use of transitions; and the manipulation of the frame rate. However, within the scope of this project, addressing all aspects is not possible and thus I have made the decision to focus on audio – the biggest post-production aspect of the programming.

A. Diegetic Audio & Non-Diegetic Audio (including SFX)

The difference between diegetic and non-diegetic audio is in the source of the audio, and who is able to perceive the audio. Diegetic audio represents sound of which the source comes from within the scene. Diegetic sound is heard by both those in the scene and the audience. An example of this is a sound originating from a door in the environment shutting. The sound comes from the environment and can be perceived by those within the environment. Non-diegetic audio, on the other hand, represents sound of which the source comes from outside the scene. Non-diegetic sound is only heard by the audience. An example of this is a special effect (SFX) of a creaking door that does not originate within the environment. The sound is added in post-production, and thus was never able to be perceived by those within the environment. It can only be perceived by those experiencing the moment after post-production. This disembodiment gives the viewer the chance to take the sounds heard non-diegetically and let them “evoke personal and cultural memories, emotions and experiences that attach themselves to the ones presented on screen” (van Elferen, 2010). The fact the sounds are not placed by the characters allow the viewers to place the sounds, and for the sounds to trigger the repressed within the viewer. The media controls the subconscious, and in turn we project it.

Through the process of digital or analogue audio recording (also known as sound-reproduction technology) *any* sound has the potential to become separated from its source; including the human voice. In this way, the ability of sound-reproduction technology to separate sound from its source “allows us to hear the voices of the dead” (Sterne, 2003, p. 8). Although Sterne is not referring to the paranormal, but rather the ability to replay an audio recording of a person who was alive at the time of recording but is presently deceased, it is still evidence of our fascination with the dead (and in a way the afterlife). As Sterne discusses, these desires were “not innocent empirical descriptions of the technologies’ impact” but were rather “wishes that people grafted onto sound-reproduction technologies” (Sterne, 2003, p. 8). Thus, sound-reproduction technology in general is uncanny not only for its ability to detach sound from its origin, but for its ability to detach sound from the living and hold onto it well after the living is dead. In this way “sound reproduction itself became a distinctive way of relating to, understanding, and experiencing death, history, and culture” (Sterne, 2003, p. 26).

Therefore it is the ability of sound to be separated from its source that allows for non-diegetic sound to become uncanny (Sterne, 2003; van Elferen, 2010). It is uncanny as it places familiar sounds within unfamiliar contexts. For example, in many of the episodes of *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Adventures*, or *Scariest Places on Earth* the use of SFX like creaking doors, screeching animals, or footsteps is commonplace. These sounds are uncanny as in most instances the scenes in which they are placed are not scenes where the sound could have naturally originated from. Therefore, although the sound itself is recognizable and is thus familiar, the origin of the sound is not recognizable which leads to the presence of the sound being unfamiliar. However, it is also the *inability* of sound to be distinguished as diegetic or non-

diegetic sound that allows the sound to become uncanny. When diegetic and non-diegetic audio are muddled together it is uncanny because the audience is unable to “distinguish through our senses alone between what we take to be simply ‘alive’ and what as reproduction, separated from its origin is structurally posthumous” (Yu, 2009, p. 119). The audience cannot tell if the footsteps they are hearing in the scene are live (diegetic) or dead (non-diegetic); whether the sound has an original source within the moment or whether it has been transplanted. This is only possible with the possibility of sound reproduction as it “highlights the possibility of reality having an immediate self-presence in the first place” (Sterne, 2003, p. 220). The state of being of the sound is indeterminable and thus the sound becomes uncanny.

With modern sound-reproduction technologies there is also another uncanny aspect to consider: the methodology of the production or transmission of sound. Modern technology use devices referred to as transducers. A transducer is a “device that receives a signal in the form of one type of energy and converts it to a signal in another form” (“Transducer,” 2010). In the case of sound it is a device which “turn[s] sound into something else and that something else back into sound” (Sterne, 2003, p. 22). In this instance that “something else” is referring to electricity. In this instance sound “becomes electricity, is manipulated electricity, and is remade as sound” (Sterne, 2003, p. 225). Once again this brings us back to the uncanniness of electricity; in this instance electricity is uncanny because it has the power to transform a sound into another thing and then back into the original form. Electricity is able to take the familiar, turn it into the unfamiliar (while it still maintains aspects of the familiar), and then return it back into the familiar through an unfamiliar journey. This makes the sound also uncanny because it went on the journey. Although we hear the familiar sound, it was given to us in an unfamiliar way.

Although the previous discussion has referred specifically to the *presence* of sound, it is also important to address the *lack of presence* of sound; otherwise known as silence. Royle (2003) argues that the uncanny “comes above all, perhaps, in the uncertainties of silence, solitude, and darkness” (p. 2), but why is that? What is it about silence that is naturally uncanny? Royle (2003) and Freud (1919) link silence with death; it is a reminder of infantile anxieties. We are not used to silence, and thus – although it is familiar – it is also unfamiliar in its context. Benjamin Wright (2008) discusses in his online article “From here on in, absolute silence” the sense of unfamiliarity silence has:

“The shock of silence in modern movies is due, in many respects, to its foreignness on the sound track. There’s a certain discomfort that comes with a silent sound track. In life, we’re surrounded by noise emitting from our environment, televisions, personal stereos, and other media outlets including the movies. When that noise is silenced, there’s a good chance that something has gone wrong.” (Wright, 2008)

Because we are surrounded by noise, the absence of sound is “unrealistic” – as we should be “able to hear what the characters are saying and what their natural environment sounds like” (Wright, 2008) – it is unfamiliar; thus making it uncanny.

IV. POST-PRODUCTION TIME

As a final aspect of post-production, I will address the uncanniness of the manipulation of time. Reality television is notorious for not needing to follow “the traditional logic and criteria of reality that entails the unity of time and space and selfsame identity” (Yu, 2009, p. 118). Thus

the manipulation of time is a huge aspect. Specifically I will address this through the use of cuts. A cut is a point at which one shot¹⁵ transitions to another shot. This transition occurs to: change the scene; change or vary the point of view; construct an image, idea, or concept; or, the aspect I will be addressing, compress time (Chandler, 1994). The compression of time refers to the ability for post-production to manipulate the appearance of time within the shot and within the sequence of frames. Thus, time is manipulated in several ways: (a) through the alteration of content within a solitary instance (where a short scene appears longer, or a longer scene appears shorter); (b) through the speed of the frame (where a scene occurs faster or slower than it originally did); and finally through the organization of frames (where an frame that occurred later than another frame is placed before that frame to give the illusion it occurred first).

This is uncanny because it is familiar moments places in an unfamiliar context. For example, were a scene to be filmed in slow or fast motion, although the shot would be recognizable, the method in which the shot was portrayed would not be. Because the shot is behaving outside the normal boundaries of reality, it is uncanny because it should not be able to perform like that. In addition this goes for scenes that are rearranged where one event that, in reality, occurred earlier but then is placed later in the program. This is uncanny because it is taking something reliable, time, and making it unreliable and performing in unsettling ways.

¹⁵ In the case of television, a shot is a continuous series of frames running for an uninterrupted period of time. Shots can be of brief or extended duration. This is similar to a clip, the continuous footage between two edits.

CHAPTER V: GHOST HUNTING REALITY TELEVISION AND THE UNCANNY: THE MESSAGE

Dr. Egon Spengler: Ray, look at this.

Dr Ray Stantz: Ectoplasmic residue.

Dr. Egon Spengler: Venkman, get a sample of this.

Dr Ray Stantz: It's the real thing.

Dr. Peter Venkman: Someone blows their nose and you want to keep it?

Dr. Egon Spengler: I'd like to analyze it.

Dr. Peter Venkman: [gets the slime on his hand] Whoa, ah.

(Ghostbusters, 1984)

I. GHOST HUNTING REALITY TELEVISION: THE MESSAGE

The medium is the message, and the medium has shown us how electronic media allow for a world of extension and manipulation into uncanny spaces and practices otherwise not available. Now it is time to view the message as the message, and how the message uses electronic media uncannily. Therefore, to return to the time-old question: In the case of ghost hunting reality television programming, what is the message? Whereas the medium was shown to have provided an uncanny framework for the message to be socially construed through, the message refers to the organization, process, and results of paranormal investigations. Within the scope of this chapter I will address only the use of electronic media during the process of investigation (the acquisition of evidence) and during the presentation and reception of evidence. I chose to focus on the acquisition and presentation of evidence as the message of the program itself is arguably centered on finding and displaying proof of paranormal activity. Therefore, although it would be interesting to address the use of interviews or the walkthrough prior to the investigation, due to the constraints of this chapter only the major theme will be addressed.

II. GHOST HUNTING: AN INTRODUCTION

I will begin this section by introducing the structure of the investigation sections of the ghost hunting reality television programming. There are two types of programs I will address in this research: (a) investigations done by trained 'professionals'; and (b) investigations done by untrained 'amateurs'.

Ghost Hunters and *Ghost Adventures* both fall under the category of trained 'professionals.' It is the same group of investigators each episode and all investigators on the show had to go through a training of some sort in order to be a part of the team. Although each investigative program has a unique aspect to it (which is in part why both can be successful), the structure is relatively similar. First the case is introduced. In *Ghost Hunters* this means Grant and Jason, the lead investigators, are prepped by a case manager for TAPS. In *Ghost Adventures* it means one of the three team members, either Zak, Nick, or Aaron, has personally brought a case to the group. Next the members of the investigative teams (this is relevant for both *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures*) interview those who have been affected by the alleged paranormal activity, and go through a walk-through/tour of the location. They do this in order to

find the spots within the location that the team believes will provide the best activity. Then comes the actual investigation of the location where the investigators attempt to discover paranormal evidence. Following this, the team then returns to their base and reviews the raw footage, to prepare any evidence caught for the final moment of the programming. In the case of *Ghost Hunters* this final moment refers to the presentation of the evidence to the client. In the case of *Ghost Adventures* this does not always mean the team will present evidence to a client, as in some episodes the evidence is only presented to the audience through the programming. Although all of these aspects are interesting to discuss within the context of the uncanny, as previously explained I will only be focusing on the actual investigation and the presentation of evidence.

As has been already briefly addressed, there are many differences between *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures*, especially concerning the method of investigation. Within their investigations *Ghost Hunters* takes a team of four to eight investigators (sometimes more, depending on the size of the location) and a camera/equipment crew of four or five people. *Ghost Adventures* only ever takes a team of three investigators and never takes any additional camera/equipment crews onto location (with one exception being the live show in which they took additional investigators in). In addition, there is a major difference in both teams' approach of the investigation. *Ghost Hunters* approaches a location trying to disprove a haunting (find 'scientific reasoning' why the location is behaving how it is behaving – such as faulty pipes, or unlocked windows). *Ghost Adventures*, on the other hand, approaches a location automatically trying to find evidence of a haunting, always assuming a place is haunted. The approach of skepticism vs. belief between the two shows can also be seen in both their method and tools of investigation. It can also be seen in their reaction to events that happen during the investigation. *Ghost Hunters* uses a selection of typical ghost hunting tools, such as EMF readers, digital thermometers, digital and analogue cameras, infrared/thermal cameras, and audio recorders. They then use these tools during the investigation in a calm, methodological manner. Thus, if one of the investigators were to panic or run during an investigation, both Jason and Grant would reprimand that investigator for his or her lack of professional behavior. *Ghost Hunters* treats the investigation as a job, and the investigators act like professionals hired to perform a task (investigating and determining if a location is haunted). Although they use a selection of typical ghost hunting tools as well, *Ghost Adventures* is more prone to trying new tools, such as the ghost box, a radio device that allegedly allows for two way direct communication between the investigators and entities. *Ghost Adventures* use these tools during the investigations in a more panicked, aggressive nature; often when an unplaced sound has been heard erupting into a chorus of shaky camera footage and a chorus of "dude, did you see that?". *Ghost Adventures* treats the investigation like an adventure (as can be seen in the name), and thus do not focus on acting professionally. Rather they act like explorers, interacting with whatever they feel and whatever they see however they actually wish to react to it. On *Ghost Adventures*, the group frequently becomes allegedly possessed by spirits or aggressively pushed around by entities, offering these non-electric events as proof of the paranormal. *Ghost Hunters* only offers electronically recorded, non-human, events as proof. In addition, while the *Ghost Hunters* show their evidence to the client, *Ghost Adventures* show their evidence to other investigators who help them analyze it further. Thus there is a difference, in the end result, of who the evidence is intended for. *Ghost Hunters* intends the evidence for those who ask them to investigate (and then by proxy is made for the audience), while *Ghost Adventures* is purely for the good of the team, and those who are viewing (as much of the show is narrated by Zak, addressing the audience).

Scariest Places on Earth, on the other hand, falls under the category of untrained ‘amateurs.’ It is never the same group of investigators (although the show may have the same host or production team), and most of the participants on the show have never undergone any professional training. Therefore, each episode has a different group of people, who are untrained and unprepared, investigating a new purportedly haunted location. For this reason, the investigations are naturally very different than on *Ghost Adventures* or *Ghost Hunters*. In this case, first the location is introduced (but mostly to the audience). The team is then equipped with camera apparatuses that attach to an individual’s chest and have a camera that points up at their face to film them for the duration of the investigation. The amateur investigators, once the equipment has been prepared, are then allowed into the location, and walk around (often nervously and on-edge) exploring the location. Unlike *Ghost Hunters* or *Ghost Adventures* the goal of this program is not to find evidence, but rather to show the experience of an unprepared individual walking around a purportedly haunted house. The program’s focus is ‘in the moment’ rather than ‘after the fact.’ *Scariest Places on Earth* doesn’t ever find any evidence¹⁶ (of apparitions or object manipulation), but instead portrays the intensity the investigators feel when walking around the house. This ghost hunting reality television program thus is more like *Ghost Adventures* in the fact that the investigators are encouraged and allowed to be more highly strung and on edge than the investigators of *Ghost Hunters*. As *Scariest Places on Earth* does not focus on evidence and the use of electronic media as much as *Ghost Hunters* and *Ghost Adventures*, I will not focus on this program in this section.¹⁷

Although I have now addressed the various methods the programs use to investigate, and the people behind the investigation, there is still one aspect to address before continuing on to the investigation. Before it can be addressed *how* the use of electronic media is uncanny, it is perhaps imperative to address *why* the investigators use electronic media in the first place. I argue they use it for two reasons. First, as discussed in Chapter III, electricity and electronic media are not understood, therefore they are not perceived as being easily manipulate. The evidence gathered by them is, therefore, arguably more valid than when collected with more easy to manipulate methods. Second, electronic media help keep distance between the investigators/viewers and the object of their desire, the paranormal, by acting as an intermediary, not allowing the investigators/viewers to get too close as for the object to lose its desirability.

To first address the use of electronic media over non-electronic media: Why is a piece of electronic media, such as an EMF reader, more uncanny than a Dowsing Rod?¹⁸ In most instances, it is because we are able to understand the manipulation potential of the Dowsing Rod over the manipulation potential of the EMF reader. It is easier for a person to manually manipulate a stick and claim the stick manipulated itself (i.e. moving the stick subtly on command), than it is for a person to manually manipulate an EMF reader. Due to this, in the case of the EMF reader, the perceiver believes they have the same amount of control as the

¹⁶ In fact, in the fine print of the credits there is a remark that the show may have enhanced or created some of the effects (such as loud banging or the sound of objects moving) to intensify the show.

¹⁷ This is not to say that *Scariest Places on Earth* is not uncanny in its message. Rather, for the purpose of the focus of this chapter (on the investigation and collection of evidence), this program is not as fitting a match as the other two.

¹⁸ A dowsing Rod is a forked stick, or a pair of metal L shaped rods that, when used correctly, are claimed to be able to detect electricity as an EMF reader does.

person with the EMF reader over the results the EMF reader displays, as it is perceived that the EMF reader has less potential to be easily manipulated. In the case of the Dowsing Rod, however, the perceiver believes they have less control as the person with the Dowsing Rod, as it is perceived that the Dowsing Rod has more potential to be easily manipulated. Therefore, the perceived credibility of the results is greater in the case of the electronic than it is in the case of the non-electronic. In Season 3 Episode 12 of *Ghost Hunters*, when one of the investigators is using an EMF reader to communicate with spirits (a process that will be explored further in Section II), he makes a comment as to the credibility/reliability of the EMF reader discussing with spirits, by comparing it to a Ouija board. The investigator states "See it's like using an Ouija board, but no one can push it." This comment, although it appears as a side comment, with the reaction to the EMF reader I believe it summarizes why electronic media are used. It is harder to disprove evidence when a source of manipulation is not as easily perceived. An Ouija board has more potential for human error or manipulation, as it is not electronic, and thus, can only be manipulated with a human manipulating it. An EMF reader, however, works without any assistance from the human operator. This ability to operate independently from a human operation is one of the reasons electronic media are uncanny, as discussed in Chapter III, but it is also one of the reasons that makes electronic media a appealing tool for investigators.

However, the need for validity is not only in the hands of the investigators, but also in the hands of the viewers as well. As can be seen in a discussion over the use of Dowsing Rods versus EMF readers in a forum on ghost hunting, many people express concern over the ease of manipulation of the Dowsing Rod. One user explained his concerns over the use of Dowsing Rods as evidence: "The other part of it is, too much human interaction! I can't really trust things that people can easily manipulate, like ouija boards and the like. Pictures and Videos I can trust them to a certain degree, but you can't be 100% until you see your own."¹⁹ Another user echoed that concern, "I agree with the others, it's difficult to "believe" in such things that humans can have a big influence over."

In addition, the validity of using electronic media to justify results can be seen in cases where non-electronics are used in congruence with electronics, such as can be seen once again in *Ghost Hunters* Season 1. In Episode 4, *Race Rock Lighthouse*, one female investigator uses a Dowsing Rod while another male investigator uses an EMF reader at the same time in the attempt to detect electromagnetic fields, and thus potential spirits, while walking up a set of stairs. As the Dowsing Rod begins to cross, and thus detect electromagnetic fields, the female investigator tells the male investigator, who then checks the EMF reader and sees whether it correlates. In this episode, at every point where the woman detects something with the rods, the EMF corresponds to a similar level. The more the rods cross, the more electricity there is, and thus when the rods cross more the EMF detects more, and when the rods cross less, the EMF detects less. Thus, in this instance, although the female investigator has the potential to manipulate the rods, because the electronic media is backing up her claims, they become more valid, and thus, the rods even out-shadow the electronic media in its uncanniness. This is the case because the rod has to perform in a more abnormal way than the electronic media to become uncanny, and in this instance, the fact the rod is able to allegedly detect spirit energy, and is supported by the EMF reader, is scarier, because we believe we understand what a rod is capable of, and what it is not capable of more than the electronic media. However, in the end,

¹⁹ <http://www.ghost-mysteries.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=3374>

although the rod is not a typical electronic medium, it becomes an electronic as it is animated by the electricity. It is still more uncanny, as it is not typically controlled by electricity.

With all of these electronic media used by the investigators, as I stated before, there is another aspect to consider, concerning the underlying presence of desire. As discussed in Chapter II, the spectral image, the paranormal, the ghost through the paranormal's role as mirror, becomes the object of our desire though the paranormal's role as mirror. This creates a tense balance between a desire to *see* the mirror and a desire to *seek* the mirror, which contrast Lacan argues is necessary for an object to be desired in the first place. Subconsciously desire is most interested not in fully attaining the object of desire but in keeping a distance to provide continued pursuit of the object. Thus, electronic media are used as a buffer between the desired and the desire to maintain the balance between the desire to see and the desire to seek. By using electronic media and electricity as tools for exploring the paranormal and the otherworld, a safe environment is created in which no definite resolution can be achieved. As electronic media and electricity are not fully understood, and thus can easily behave in familiar yet unfamiliar ways, triggering repressed emotions of curiosity and dread, at all moments it is the electronic and the electricity that is accessing the object of desire, and not the person desiring it. Thus, electronic media create space between the seeker and that which is being sought, allowing for the seeker to never get too close, but to instead allow the equipment to get close. Just as electronic media themselves are physically used to separate the desire from the object of the desire, so are they used for the format of evidence they produce. Even when electronic media present evidence, as electronic media and electricity are still have a fragmented understanding, no evidence will be coherent enough to fulfill the desire and become the object of desire. The investigators, and by proxy the clients, are encouraged by the evidence as to the existence of the object of their desire, the paranormal, but there will never be enough evidence acquired using electronic media to fully access and achieve control over the object of their desire.

III. THE INVESTIGATION

In Chapter III, I posed the question: What makes electronic media and the electricity that animates it uncanny? The answer resided in a fragmented humanistic comprehension of the abilities and limitations of electricity, or, in other words, in the inability to understand whether electricity itself is conscious or unconscious, animated or inanimate, or alive or dead. It concerns the insecurity as to whether or not electricity can reach to a space beyond human perception and, through the electronic media it animates, allow indefinable incidents from the otherworld to cross over into the living dimension in a form perceivable by the human senses. It is now time to take this question and answer a step further and ask: How is the use of electronic media and electricity within the investigation segment of ghost hunting reality television programming uncanny?

As explored in Chapter III, electronic media are perceived as being able to explore the space beyond reality, and tap into an electronic otherworld in a way humans, as physical beings, cannot. Because of this perception, and including the fragmented comprehension as to the workings of electricity, paranormal investigators use a variety of electronic media in investigations as tools to explore this electronic otherworld. Specifically there are six electronic media/electronics used in all of the investigative shows: (a) the EMF reader (an electromagnetic field detector); (b) the audio recorder; (c) the video camera; (d) the digital thermometer; (e) the

infrared/thermal camera; and (f) the still camera. In all of these instances it is the performance of the equipment in familiar, yet unfamiliar ways that causes them to become uncanny in their actions.

For example, one of the most common pieces of evidence allegedly gathered by investigators through electronic media is an audio recording called an electronic voice phenomenon (EVP). An EVP is allegedly the voice(s) of the deceased recorded through either an analogue or digital audio recorder. In the instance of searching for EVPs, the use of an audio recorder itself is not abnormal. The fact that an audio recorder records sound is also not abnormal. However, the fact that the audio recorder has the potential to record sounds perceived as *not being from this time and space, but from an otherworld* is abnormal. Thus, the audio recorder becomes uncanny through its ability to be both familiar (recording sound within the perceivable space) and unfamiliar (recording sound by accessing another non-perceivable space). Its perceived ability to access a non-perceivable space, in addition, triggers emotions of both desire and fear. Fear as to the inability to prevent the audio recorder from accessing the electronic otherworld and a mixture of fear and desire as to what, in actuality, what the audio recorder has accessed is (is it a ghost, and if so, what does it mean?). We are afraid of our inability to control the contact these electronic media have with the otherworld; however, at the same time we are curious of and have a desire to let these media to contact the other world. We have this desire due to our desire to find the paranormal. It is perceived that the audio recorder is able to go to an unfamiliar space where we cannot go, and then show us the world it went to in return through a familiar medium.

To take another generic example, I will look at the EMF Meter. EMF Meters are scientific devices that measure electromagnetic fields in the area surrounding the device. What is generating the electromagnetic field cannot necessarily be determined by the device specifically (there is no input on the machine that says “electrical box” or “ghost”), however, the device does, in all instances, accurately detect the presence of an electromagnetic field. As with the audio recorder, it can be argued that the EMF Meter itself is normal, its ability to detect electromagnetic fields is normal, yet its ability to detect electromagnetic fields where none should, logically, be present is abnormal. Thus, the familiar equipment, as with the audio recorder, is performing in an unfamiliar way by accessing an unfamiliar space within a familiar space.

An example of this within the show *Ghost Hunters* is a moment in Season 3, Episode 12 *Manson Murders* of Grant and Jason’s use a modified EMF Meter called the K2 EMF Meter. The difference between a K2 EMF Meter and a generic EMF Meter is how specifically the electromagnetic field is measured, and how that measurement is shown. A generic EMF Meter measures the electromagnetic field on multiple-axis (thus having a slower response time) by producing a specific number (either by a digital or analogue method). The K2 EMF Meter, on the other hand, measures the field on a single-axis (thus having a quicker response time) through five LED lights, ranging from less than 1.5 mG (dark green) to over 20 mG (dark red). As the K2 EMF Meter is easier to manipulate as it measures on only one axis, and thus the response time of detection of an electromagnetic field is quicker, it has become to be commonly used by paranormal investigators to allegedly communicate with spirits. Allegedly the spirits are able to be taught to strengthen and weaken their electromagnetic fields to light up more or less of the five LED lights on the K2 EMF Meter, and use the LED lights to communicate. The investigator asks a question (with a yes or no answer) and the spirit or entity answers by manipulating the

LEDs to light up in rapid succession to the fourth or fifth LED then rapidly back down to the first LED. Often the investigator uses a code, as they did in *Ghost Hunters*, where one flash succession meant “no” and two flash successions meant “yes.”

In the *Ghost Hunters* episode, Grant and Jason, along with another investigator named Chris, were in the master bedroom of the house using a K2 EMF Meter, allegedly asking questions to an entity in the room. Chris asks the supposed entity to announce its presence by making the lights on the K2 EMF Meter “go haywire.” As soon as he asks the spirit, the LED lights begin to successively light up and down several times in a row. Although both Grant and Jason know this is what they were attempting to achieve with the device, Grant’s first response was to dismiss it stating “There’s gotta be something normal about that.” This is followed by Jason asking “Do you think there’s a problem with the battery in it?” This implies that the potential ability for the K2 EMF Meter to be manipulated by a spirit or entity was unsettling and uncanny enough, that the team found it hard to rationalize how the familiar equipment was behaving in such an unfamiliar way, causing them unease of which they sought relief through assuming the equipment was naturally malfunctioning. After changing the batteries, the team once again entered the bed room, and proceeded to ask a series of questions, of which, even after changing the batteries, the K2 EMF Meter’s LED lights performed in abnormal ways, appearing as though an entity was manipulating it in response to the questions Chris was asking. It then switches to an interview with Jason who begins discussing what happened, stating “We start getting spikes on the K2 meter, as Chris was asking some pretty personal questions. And it was kind of startling to start seeing this meter answer yes or no through the amount of blinks.” This is an interesting observation on two levels. Firstly, it shows Jason’s unease around the fact the machine appears to be able to be manipulated by an entity. Secondly, it shows Jason’s association of the source of the answering of the question is within the electronic equipment and not the spirit. Jason does not state that it was startling to see “a spirit answering through manipulating the meter” but rather “the meter answering.” The electronic medium is seen as the uncanny entity, while the spirit is placed in the background with this observation. The electronic medium becomes the one communicating with the investigative team, and thus the electronic medium is the one that creates an uncanny environment, forcing the investigators (and the viewers) to come face to face with emotions of curiosity and fear over the paranormal. This, an intelligent haunting, is more uncanny than witnessing a residual haunt (as discussed in Chapter II), as it has the potential to interact with the equipment and the investigators.

To address a final example, in *Ghost Adventurers*, Zak, Nick, and Aaron use another piece of equipment, similar, yet different to the K2 EMF Meter called the Ovilus. What the Ovilus can purportedly do is measure changes in the environmental energy fields around the device. It then takes the energy and translates it into “audible speech” using a synthesizer chip, an English dictionary, and a function that phonetically sounds out words. The device is claimed to not be based on arbitrary techniques, such as random generation, but rather that the spirits can use different energy frequencies to communicate with the investigators through the box. An example of the use of this equipment can be seen in Season 2, Episode 7, *Moon River Brewing Company*. The team is investigating the attic in a haunted building where, allegedly, a ghost has been preventing renovation. According to reports, the ghost has aggressively attempted to prevent renovations by injuring people and destroying tools. After a moment of technical malfunction during their investigation of the attic, Zak begins to challenge the ghost, asking if it was causing their equipment to malfunction, and threatening to begin reconstruction on the attic. A few moments later, once the Ovilus comes online, as Zak is setting up a ladder against a

banister in the ceiling, the Ovilus “speaks” saying the word “remove.” Zak asks “remove what?” and the Ovilus shows the word “step.” The team then makes the connection that the ghost must be using the Ovilus to tell them to remove the ladder. They continue and allegedly ask the ghost what would happen if the step ladder wasn’t removed, the Ovilus replies a final time saying “yell.” This implies that the spirit would yell if they did not remove the ladder. Once again, as with the EMF Meter, there is an instance of familiar yet unfamiliar. The equipment is familiar, although unlike the other equipment its sole purpose is for communication with the otherworld, however it is still behaving in unfamiliar ways. The equipment is being seemingly manipulated by another source, and thus moves away from being familiar into the realm of the unfamiliar. It is then uncanny on a second level, because of the method of delivery of the information. There is the familiar use of the English language (through the dictionary in the machine), but the delivery of the language is not in a traditional format. A piece of electronic equipment which normally does not speak, is able to speak and communicate with the investigators. The response of the equipment and the ability for the words to be placed logically within the environment, forces the investigators to consider the possibility that something is using their equipment to communicate with them. There is also a trace of indeterminate state: is it unconscious random electromagnetic fields generating the words, or is it a conscious entity? Because the intentions and consciousness of the manipulator of the device is unknown it, as with the performance of the familiar within the unfamiliar, forces the investigators to consider whether what they are encountering is conscious (an intelligent, demonic, or poltergeist haunt) or not (a residual haunt)

Although all of the shows use variations on this basic equipment, there is another form of equipment that needs to be addressed. This is equipment which relies on the malfunctioning of electronic equipment, often specifically telecommunicative electronic media, to interact with ghost, spirits, and entities. This kind of equipment is uncanny for three reasons: (a) as discussed in Chapter III the insecurity as to whether or not the electronic media is animate or inanimate or conscious or unconscious in its actions; (b) when electronic media malfunction it acts as a mirror forcing the viewer to acknowledge their fear of not understanding how the electronic media can and will perform; and (c) like other electronic media, it is familiar equipment performing in unfamiliar ways, both because it is, by definition, electronic medium that is malfunctioning (often using white noise), but also because it is electronic media that are communication with a space they are perceived that they should not be able to communicate with. In other words, the electronic media reaches into a space for them they would not otherwise be able to reach into. I will address two examples of the use of malfunctioning electronic media, specifically using white noise, by looking at two examples from *Ghost Adventures*. I will look at one example where the investigators use the white noise background of a radio (or spirit box) to allegedly capture and communicate with spectral voices, and another where the investigators use the white noise background on the television to allegedly capture spectral images.

In Season 1 Episode 8, *The Idaho State Penitentiary of Ghost Adventures*, the team uses, as a later point in the investigation instrumental transcommunication (ITC). ITC is a scheme that uses a digital video camera and a television connected on a closed-loop system. The output of the video camera is fed to a TV and the camera is aimed, three feet away, at the TV screen and records the image, basically recording its own white noise output. Supposedly spirits can manipulate the signals flowing around in the loop, as they can allegedly manipulated the K2 Meter, and manifest themselves. The team sets up one of these closed loops ITC systems by one of the cells in death row in the hopes of “capturing ghost pictures on electronic devices.” The

team films several times for 30 seconds intervals and then analyzes the video directly afterward. During this experiment, they allegedly caught the image of a man wearing a hood in the left hand side of one of the frames. After the investigation they look at the footage in more detail with another researched named Mark, who finds the evidence impressive. As before, the use of the television and video camera in this instance is uncanny because it is familiar pieces of equipment used in unfamiliar ways achieving unfamiliar results. In addition the results appear to show the image *within* the television, as opposed to outside of the environment (as other evidence shows). Unlike the tape recorder with EVPs, which is pre-existent noise that is not generated but rather recorded, the image almost appears to be generated by the television, and thus is uncanny because it appears the image comes from the otherworld within the television, as discussed in Chapter III.

In Season 2 of *Ghost Adventures*, the Zak, Nick, and Aaron did a special episode live from the *Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum*. During this episode, they brought in a specialist investigator, Chris Fleming, in to work with a gadget he had created, called the spirit box. The spirit box, the one used in this episode specifically called the Paranormal Spirit Box 7 (P-SB7), is a radio that sweeps through the frequencies on the radio (forward and backwards) while having white noise distributed between the frequency steps. Allegedly, using the white noise and the sweeping of radio frequencies, spirits can use the device to communicate with the investigators (in real time). After turning the device on, Chris begins to explain how the device works, telling the alleged spirits that they can use the device to communicate with them. After a few moments the device says "Hello" much to the surprise of Zak and Chris, who immediately respond with surprise and "Did you hear this?" and "Holy cow." They continue to talk to the device, and Chris soon explains that the sounds they are hearing (somewhat high frequency pitches) are not sounds he normally hears on the device, and thus, he asks "Are those sounds from when this asylum was active?" A few moments later the device allegedly says "Yes they were." This, once again, unsettles all of the investigators, who explode in a chorus of "oh my god" and, as with the first noise that came from the machine, all back away from the P-SB7. They continue to ask questions and get allegedly intelligent responses, each time strongly reacting when the box sounds.

This is uncanny to them because, on the first level, it is a familiar piece of equipment, a radio, already behaving in an unfamiliar way, creating white noise. It is then, on a second level, a familiar piece of equipment, a radio, behaving in a second unfamiliar way, allegedly allowing the dead to communicate through it. On a final level, it is a familiar language, English, presented in an unfamiliar way, through electronic media. Beyond these familiar yet unfamiliar situations, this alleged form of communication then acts as a mirror to the investigators, who are forced to address the potential that what they are communicating with is real, and that the radio may actually be reaching out to another universe, and consider their placement and identity within it. Not only are they forced to consider their placement within the fact it is being used to communicate with them, but they are also forced to consider their lack of understanding as to how it is happening, and how much control they may or may not have over the device. This is why, even if they do not do it on purpose, when the device speaks, all investigators, in some form, step away from the device the moment it communicates, or directly after. This is uncanny, as the uncanny "has to do with making things uncertain: it has to do with the sense that things are not as they have come to appear through habit and familiarity, that they may challenge all rationality and logic" (Bennett and Royle, 1999, p. 37 cited in Punter, 2007, p. 131). In other words, the uncanny is that which is uncertain, that which defies the familiar performance, and

thus defines and challenges logic. Thus, beyond behaving in this unfamiliar way, as the radio is unfamiliar in its actions, the investigators are unable to determine whether the radio is then conscious or unconscious. They are also unable to determine whether the radio is limited to its actions or can go beyond the current actions, and, making the situation and electronic media become uncanny. Thus the uncanny becomes the “sense that wherever life is going on, it is always going on ‘elsewhere,’” (Punter, 2007, p. 134), in other words, that there is life existing beyond the scope of our vision and senses. There is life going out outside of our realm in a place we cannot see. Finally, taking into consideration that the alleged entity they are communicating with is real, the investigators also have to face the insecurity as to whether or not what they are communicating with is conscious or unconscious (is it residual or intelligent) and whether its intentions are good or bad? There are two sides to the uncanniness of consciousnesses; the first concerning the uncanniness of gaze, and the second concerning the uncanniness of inanimacy in what is perceived as that which should be animate. The intelligent/poltergeist/or demonic haunting is uncanny because of gaze, and its ability to interact. It is uncanny because as it is allegedly composed of electricity it is unpredictable in its limitations and actions. However, the residual haunting is uncanny for another instance; its inability to gaze. It is perceived as something that should be conscious (like a human body) that is not. It is uncanny because it is not able to interact and is instead in its own set of programming.

After the investigation, the team comments on some of the moments of the live investigation, with Nick speaking about his experience with the spirit box: “Every single question that we asked had an intelligent response. How can you disprove that? How can you disprove that? It’s changed my life seeing this stuff, hearing this stuff.” These comments stem from the identification process Nick and the others went through during the actual investigation, when they were forced to be either afraid of, and reject, the mirror that appeared through the disembodied voices, or embrace and identify with it as part of his Ideal I. As he chose to identify with it, he sees the voices now as evidence of truth and proof of his identity as an investigator, and his own personal beliefs in the paranormal. As explored in Section II, as the communication was not done face-to-face, but rather through a third party medium (the radio). Although the team feels they are closing in on what they desire, they are prevented from being able to fully achieve and reach the desired, as the radio acts as a buffer between the desired and those who desire it. As with many of the investigators, most have suffered, arguably, a trauma in which they were confronted face to face with an instance of the paranormal. Thus seeking the paranormal not only becomes an object of desire, but it also becomes a way in which the investigator seeks to appease the past trauma. As Freud argues “such trauma is repressed but made visible in the desire to repeat certain types of activity, because such a repetition compulsion represents an urge to reclaim past traumas in order to lay them to rest” (Smith, 2007, p. 148). This can also be seen on a more direct level with the ITC example, when Zak, after the fact, attempts to correlate a weird experience with a black mist caught on camera he had while provoking spirits in front of the cell of a mass murderer, in correlation with the image he saw within the ITC. This is a way he attempts to reclaim the trauma that occurred in the cell by repeating the experience at another point, thus validating what he felt, and validating the identity he claimed from it. A trauma does not always refer to a negative instance, it refers to an emotional instance which leaves a mark on a person. In these instances they are looking to justify the identification they felt through their experience, which was traumatic, through the recognition of repetitive proof.

IV. THE EVIDENCE

In Section II, I addressed how the investigators in the programming I chose to analyze structured their investigations, and then addressed why electronic media were a chosen tool in these investigations. I argued that they used it for two reasons: (a) the inability of electronic media to be as easily manipulated as non-electronic media; and (b) the distance using electronic media provides between the investigators (and by proxy the viewers) and the object of their desire. In Section III, I addressed how the use of electronic media in ghost hunting reality television programming was uncanny. The unfamiliar electronic behavior of familiar electronic media objects led to the triggering of repressed emotions in the investigators (and by proxy the viewers), and how the varying methods of unfamiliar behavior altered the uncanniness of the situation or instance. Now, in Section IV, I will explore the final aspect, how the evidence gathered by the electronic media, and in many cases shown through electronic media, are uncanny to the viewer and the client.

As with the investigation, in the evidence as well the use of electronic media, and the presentation of evidence gathered by electronic media, is uncanny because of the familiar yet unfamiliar nature of the process and result. To express this, I will continue the example in the previous section of the audio recorder recording a possible EVP. As the audio recorder itself became uncanny through it being a familiar object behaving in unfamiliar ways, and thus triggering repressed emotions, the EVP gathered by the audio recorder is also uncanny for the same reason. The recording is familiar, as in many instances there are normal and recognizable sounds on the recording (of the investigators or the environment behaving naturally). However, the unidentifiable sound on the recording, mixed between the identifiable sounds, is unfamiliar, and thus once again generates the return of repressed fears and desires through an unfamiliar familiar. The moment the audio recording is replayed and a sound is heard in the recording that was not perceived by those in the room at the time of recording, they are forced to acknowledge the triggered repressed emotions. First, they must accept a lack of understanding as to how the audio recorder is able to record the abnormal sound, and then accept the fact that the audio recorder is able to access this space and return with the sound perceivably *on its own accord*.

However there is another aspect of the uncanny, specifically perceivable by the viewer: The uncertainty of whether or not what they are witnessing, the fantastic, is really animate or inanimate. Is it truly the paranormal, or is it a trick of the production crew? Is it really an entity, or is it the shadow of an investigator gone unnoticed? I argue this is uncanny on two levels: (a) it allows the viewer to distance themselves from the object of their desire, while still pursuing it as the object of their desire; and (b) it creates an uncanny environment within the television programming itself as to the nature of the instances witnessed by the viewer. First, as with the previous observation, the goal of desire is not to achieve the object of desire, but rather desire the desired. Thus, as explored before, this creates a situation in which what desire most desires is to continue desiring itself. Exploring the paranormal, the object of desire, through the television programming allows the viewers, as the investigators with the electronic media, to distance themselves from the object of desire through the uncertainty as to the reality of what they are viewing. Although it appears evidence of the paranormal is captured, the viewer is forced to consider whether or not the evidence was truly untouched and captured, or whether the production team enhanced or manipulated the evidence after the fact. Thus, even though theoretically each episode brings the audience closer to the object of desire, the natural distance this insecurity provides helps keep the desire strong, and the object distant. Second, it

creates an unease from the insecurity, because the viewer is unable to tell whether or not the object they see as animate on the television is really animate, or if it is inanimate. As it could be the imaginary, and not the real, the viewer is put on edge, hesitation, because of their inability to define it. Part of this hesitation is a fear of what would occur if it were really what it claimed to be, and thus, the viewer is forced to determine at a point whether they believe it is real or it is fake, and thus identify with it as such. However, each time repressed emotions are brought to the surface and reflected for the viewer to address: for some this repressed emotion is a fear that what they are seeing is in fact not the truth, that it is an illusion, and for others this repressed emotion that what they are seeing is in fact the truth and not an illusion.

CONCLUSION

What started in Chapter I as an exploration of purely the uncanny has now ended in a full adventure of the paranormal, electronic media, electricity, and television. In **Chapter II** I explored the uncanniness of the paranormal afterlife. I introduced the basic terminology concerning the ghost and the haunting (intelligent, residual, poltergeist, and demonic) and the pre-existing link to electricity. I showed how the paranormal is uncanny, addressing its correlation to (a) the return of the repressed; (b) indeterminate state; (c) desire and the mirror stage; and (d) the gaze of the specter. In **Chapter III** I delved into the uncanniness of electronic media and electricity. I analyzed how the indeterminate state of being of electricity creates instances in which that which uses electricity (namely electronic media) have an indeterminable risk factor due to the indeterminability of consciousness. I also addresses the uncanny elsewhere the medium of television has created. In **Chapter IV** I showed how the use of electronic media and electricity within the medium of television, and how the medium itself, is uncanny. I first addressed the production of the program, specifically focusing on (a) the doppelganger nature the view of the camera provides; (b) the use of the dark and shadows; and (c) the inclusion or exclusion of equipment crews in the action of the program. I then addresses three aspects of post production (a) the separation of non-diegetic audio from its source; (b) the unnatural nature of silence; and (c) the uncanny ability for instances to transverse time and space. Finally in **Chapter V** I showed how the use of electronic media and electricity within the message of the program (the paranormal investigation) can be uncanny. I argued that the use of electronic equipment during the investigation plays off of the general uncanniness of electricity to access an electronic otherworld full of spirits and specters. I also looked at how this ability for electronic media to access that space is manipulated to achieve the goals of the investigators during the investigation, and provide an instance of which they can find more coherent identification with.

And after all of this, I must then return to the question: What is the uncanny? The uncanny is the unfamiliar familiar (Freud, 1919). It is the return of the repressed (Freud, 1919), and it is the inability to achieve knowledge mastery of an instance (Jentsch, 1906). It is the relationship of the self to the other (Lacan, 1949; 1951) and the merging of the double (Freud, 1919; Lacan, 1949). It is a confrontation of that which we both desire and fear. It is a form of the frightening which can be unsettling and make us uneasy, but at the same time it is that which intrigues us and our desire to better place ourselves within the context of the universe. It is that which is not scientifically explainable, but seeks acceptance and reliable explanation nonetheless. In this way, the entirety of the process of accepting the evidence through scientific terminology addresses yet another aspect of the uncanny not explore in this research; the fantastic. The fantastic is a duration of uncertainty. It is the hesitation “experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (Todorov, 1975, p. 25). Todorov (1975) describes it as a point at which

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know....there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination-- and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality--but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us (Todorov, 1975, p. 25).

Thus, in summary the fantastic is the inability to determine whether an event is of this world or of another concerning either an “experience of [internal] limits” within the uncanny (Todorov, 1975, p. 46) or the “acceptance of the supernatural” in the marvelous (Todorov, 1975, p. 52). Thus this paves the way for further discussion as to the uncanny nature of ghost hunting reality television; specifically considering the processing of the indeterminate state discussed in Chapter one. Within the fantastic the uncanny is “the resolution into a rational explanation of the uncertainty that adheres to the Fantastic, however “incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected that [explanation] may be” (46)” (Gooding, 2008, p. 393). Thus it can be asked: How does this processing affect the uncanniness of ghost hunting reality television programming? How does this change the way in which the investigators and the audience identify with the evidence? In the attempt to rationalize the fantastic, what happens to the core nature of the marvelous? Does the process of rationalization itself within a reality-based context (as opposed to a fictional narrative) change the nature of that which is marvelous to that which is uncanny and rationalized? These are just a few of the questions which could be continued to be explored in this discussion which I hope to address in future research.

To conclude this current addressing of the uncanny, it is now apparent why those original “things that go bump in the dark” are uncanny. It is indeed the unfamiliar familiar addressed in the beginning; the familiar sound of the bump, but the unfamiliar context due to the situation we are in. For this reason we are not able to have intellectual mastery over it, and therefore the state of being of the instance is indeterminate and thus unsettling. This can trigger repressed emotions, and thus keeps us in a state of heightened awareness. We are curious about the bump, but at the same time fear what the bump may be. A part of us desires that the bump be paranormal, while the other part is frightened that it may be. The darkness also acts as an unintentional return; we are unable to escape the darkness, both literally and figuratively, that consumes us, and thus we unintentionally return to it in each and every step. We are forced to become explorers of another realm, where every step is a frightening and exciting step toward a goal of self-completion and self-discovery. These are the same reasons these ghost hunting television shows are popular. We are curious about the paranormal, but at the same time frightened by it. We desire a closeness, but at the same time unconsciously seek a distance of which both we find through electronic media. Indirectly, although it was not our goal, we have sought more than just the paranormal, electricity, or entertaining programming; we have found the uncanny. With the same electronic media that we perceive reach through to the electronic otherworld of the paranormal we reach through to our own electronic otherworld within our brains of our consciousness to contact that which we perceived incontactable.

With this I now return control of your paper to you until next time. We’ll be waiting.

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