Construing Horrific Uncertainty:

A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Stephen King's "*The Shining*"

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a text-based cognitive stylistic account of how lexical choices made by authors construe uncertainty; a prerequisite of the horror genre plot and the driving force behind its advancement (Carroll, 1990). Stephen King's The Shining (1977) recounts the story of how Jack Torrance, a wannabe-writer and a recovering alcoholic, slowly descends into madness as he develops an urge to kill his son and wife when the family moves to the Overlook, a remote haunted hotel, to be its caretakers during the off season. Through adopting Langacker (2008)'s Cognitive Grammar as the prime tool of analysis, this paper pays particular attention to how the construal operation of selection is exploited by the author to cause a semantic conflict and heighten the sense of uncertainty in the readers until they arrive to it at the end and reconcile the conflict they have been subject to along with the novel's denouement.

Keywords: Cognitive Grammar, horror fiction, uncertainty, construal, cognitive stylistics

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تأويل الحيرة في أدب الرعب:

دراسة أسلوبية—معرفية لرواية "البريق" لستيفن كينج

مستخلص الدراسة

المؤلف

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يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم تحليل أسلوبي—معرفي نصّي لتوضيح كيفية استخدام المؤلفين الاختيارات المعجمية لتأويل الحيرة، وهي أحد المتطلبات الأساسية للحبكة القصصية في روايات أدب الرعب والقوة الدافعة وراء تصاعد تشابكاتها وتعقيداتها (كارول، ١٩٩٠). وتدور أحداث رواية "البريق" (١٩٧٧) لستيفن كينغ حول الانحدار النفسي المُتباطئ لشخصية جاك تورانس، وهو كاتب مبتدئ ومدمن متعافٍ من شُرب الكحول، وصيرورتها للجنون؛ حيث تتملكه رغبة عارمة في قتل ابنه وزوجته عندما انتقل مع عائلته إلى فندق "الأوفرلوك،" وهو فندق بعيد تسكنه أرواح شريرة، ليكون القائم على حراسته خلال فترة الركود. ويتخذ هذا البحث النحو المعرفي (لاناكر، ٢٠٠٨) أداة رئيسية للتحليل، كما يولي اهتمامًا خاصًا لكيفية استغلال المؤلف لعملية الانتقاء المعرفية لإحداث صراع دلالي وزيادة الشعور بالحيرة لدى القارئ للوصول إلى الحل في النهاية وتسوية الصراع الدلالي الذي تعرض له جنبًا إلى جنب مع خاتمة الرواية.

الكلمات الرئيسة: النحو المعرفي، أدب الرعب، الحيرة، التأويل، الأسلوبية—المعرفية

Construing Horrific Uncertainty:

A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Stephen King's "*The Shining*"[i]

1. Introduction

Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) is a horror novel that charts the story of a family of three, Jack Torrance, his wife Wendy and their son Danny, who moves to a remote *haunted* hotel, the Overlook, for Jack to be its caretaker during the off-season. Jack is a wannabe-writer and a recovering alcoholic who slowly descends into madness as the story unfolds where he develops an urge to kill his son and wife via possession by the hotel's evil spirits. Jack's son, five-year-old Danny, possesses precognitive/supernatural powers, the eponymous *shining*, where he can see either things that had happened in the past or will happen in the future. Sometimes these visions come in the form of dreams or episodes where he goes into a trance-like state until he is knocked out of it.

One of the novel's narrative techniques is "metafictional determinism," which Anderson (2017) defines as "specialized prolepsis…[where] the author knows something will happen and is alerting the reader to this fact ahead of time" (p. 38). According to Genette (1980), prolepsis is "any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later" (p. 40). In the novel, Danny is one of the vehicles for this prolepsis through his precognitive *shining* powers. Additionally, The Overlook creeps into Jack's mind to possess him through the inception of the idea that he should kill his son in some dreams-turned-nightmares or hallucinations. All of this essentially creates a sense of suspense and uncanniness that permeates the novel (Anastasova, 2016; Berggren, 2019). In this paper, a cognitive stylistic account of how the horrific aspects of this climactic episode are developed and construed throughout the novel in a way that deliberately induces uncertainty until its final resolution.

1.1. Horrific Uncertainty

One of the earliest structural approaches to the classification of the horror genre can be traced back to Todorov (1975)'s account of the Fantastic as a literary genre, which has been often acknowledged as a valid basis for classifying horror into types (e.g. Stewart, 1982; Carroll, 1990; Hills, 2005; Prohászková, 2012). Todorov (1975) coins the fantastic with uncertainty and indecisiveness. The protagonists in these narratives are bewildered by an incomprehensible phenomenon, and there is an air of hesitation foreboding. How this hesitation is resolved (or not) is the basis for Todorov (1975)'s classification.

The Fantastic genre is defined in terms of the perception (and interpretation) of the abnormal phenomena that befall the protagonists in the literary work: "there is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect" (p. 26). Whenever the line between the natural and the supernatural is blurry, unclear and indefinite, the literary work belongs to the fantastic genre. Hence, the Fantastic genre "is that *hesitation* experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (p. 25; emphasis added).

Todorov (1975) also refers to two other sub-genres of the Fantastic that are determined by attitudes to the abnormal phenomena:

> [If] the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomenon described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary…new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous. (p. 41)

Hence, the Uncanny means the supernatural is explained while the Marvelous means the supernatural is accepted. However, since the hesitation between the ways of explaining the supernatural (which characterizes the Fantastic) is part of the journey that leads to

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differentiating the Uncanny from the Marvelous, Todorov (1975) further distinguishes between two subgenres: the Fantastic-uncanny and the Fantastic-marvelous ones (p. 44). Both genres combine the fantastic element; there is confusion at the beginning about the nature of the supernatural phenomenon, before arriving at an interpretation; whether the supernatural is explained or accepted.

The disruption that happens in the laws of reality have degrees and can be measured on an informativity scale as suggested by Stockwell (2002):

- **first-order informativity** – normal, unremarkable things are schema preserving or reinforcing.
- **second-order informativity** – unusual or less likely things encountered in literary worlds develop schematic knowledge by accretion.
- **third-order informativity** – impossible or highly unlikely things represent challenge to schema knowledge as schema disruption. This can result in schema refreshment or radical knowledge restructuring if the challenge necessitates a wholesale paradigm shift, a change in worldview. (p. 80)

Accordingly, how protagonists overcome or deal with the hesitation (resulting from the second- and third-order informativity that disrupt schemata) which pervades the narratives constitutes the subgenres of the Fantastic. This correlates to Stockwell (2002)'s notion of downgrading, defined as "a motivation search through schema knowledge for a resolution: an attempt at schema preservation" (p. 80). He refers to three types of downgrading: backwards, forwards or outwards. The backwards downgrading means that readers go back into the memory of the previous text to make sense of the schema disruption presented to them. Forwards downgrading, on the other hand, constitutes predicting what will happen which, narratively speaking, can only be done by reading on "for an explanation in an attempt to have the anomaly downgraded forwards" (p. 81). Finally, the outwards downgrading means the acceptance of a different reality of a literary schema, which corresponds to the acceptance of the supernatural in the Fantastic-marvelous genre of Todorov (1975)'s taxonomy.

1.2. *Crossing Thresholds:* Liminality and Horror Fiction

Closely related to the Fantastic genre and its characterizing uncertainty is the concept of liminality. According to Stewart (1982), "the predominant feature of the horror story's context [is] its liminality" (p. 40). Liminality is a term borrowed from anthropology and is used to refer to the transitional stage in a person's *rite de passage* where they move from one rank to another in society. In this stage, individuals go through "liminal rites or rites of the margin, which subject them to various deprivations and tests" (Aguirre, 2013, p. 126). This stage is typically characterized by uncertainty, which corresponds to the hesitation that characters experience in horror fiction and which is also the driving force behind the advancement of the horror plot. As a matter of fact, Aguirre (2013) argues that liminality is an integral constituent of gothic fiction, and since gothic is viewed as the "beginnings of a wider crystallisation of horror fiction" (Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 15), it is reasonable that liminality still characterizes contemporary horror.

In his study of gothic fiction, Aguirre (2008; 2013) views gothic as a spatial genre, where characters are in-between worlds: "on the one hand, the human domain of rationality and intelligible events; on the other hand, the world of the sublime, terrifying, chaotic Numinous which transcends human reason" (Aguirre, 2008, p. 2). He calls the other world the Numinous because it creates cognitive dissonance by violating the thresholds of human intelligibility and going beyond individuals' scope of comprehension. Aguirre (2008) further formulates a geometric model for the gothic universe, as shown below in Fig. 1, in which he imagines the two worlds separated by a threshold where horror plots "invariably involve movement from one site to the other – a movement which, most often, is presented as a transgression, a violation of boundaries" (p. 2-3).

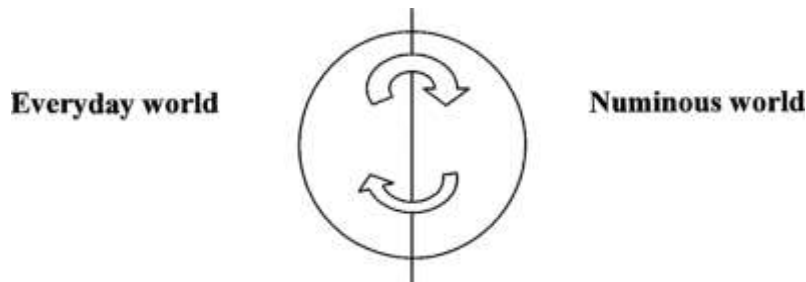

Fig. 1 Geometry of gothic fiction
(adapted from Aguirre, 2008, p. 3)

However, even though the movement realized above is a concentric one (i.e. out of the everyday world to numinous one and vice versa), Aguirre (2008) argues that characters' journey in the gothic world constitutes an irreversible, one-way crossing of thresholds from the everyday to the numinous. This crossing of thresholds (either literal or figurative) is "the prototypical deed in gothic fiction" (Aguirre, 2013, p. 127). This threshold crossing is in line with horror's complex discovery plot (Carroll, 1990) where the discovery and confrontation plot movements happen when characters leave the everyday world and realize the magnitude of the numinous.

In a similar vein, King (1981) also gives horror fiction a definition with a spatial gloss. He views horror as a *danse macabre* or the dance of death that works on two levels. In line with Carroll (1990)'s view that horror should generate disgust along with fear, the first level King (1981) proposes is the "gross-out" one which can be done "with varying degrees of artistic finesse" (p. 4). The degrees of grossing-out is determined by the degree of cognitive dissonance caused by schema disruption. The second level is the "dance—a moving, rhythmic search" that horror does to look for "the place where you…live at your most primitive level" (p. 4). He argues that horror looks for our deepest hidden fears and magnifies them: "the good horror tale will dance its way to the center of your life and find the secret door to the room you believed no one but you knew of" (p. 4).

Searching for readers' "phobic pressure points" and forcing them to leave the everyday, *natural*, world is primarily why horror fiction has an appeal to those readers. As put by Aldana Reyes (2016), "part of the attraction of horror derives from its *transgressive* nature – from the fact that it can deal in matters often left out of other genres or considered too extreme, maybe even harmful" (p. 12; emphasis added).

2. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, horrific uncertainty in written horror fiction is explored using analytical tools that fall within the theoretical framework of text-based cognitive stylistics, drawing particularly on Langacker (2008)'s Cognitive Grammar. Exploring the construal of horrific uncertainty is grounded in the nature of meaning in cognitive linguistics. In cognitive linguistic terms, meaning is both encyclopedic and dynamic. Meaning is encyclopedic in that the definition of linguistic forms encompasses also the way in which these forms are used "which may be personal and/or shared and also cultural specific. In this view, words act as *points of access* to a store of encyclopaedic knowledge of different types" (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, p. 17; emphasis added).

Langacker (2008) visualizes the difference between dictionary and encyclopedic meanings in Fig. 2 below, where the circle represents the sum of an individual's knowledge about a specific entity. In (a) the meaning only resembles *dictionary-like* entries where only specifications of the lexical item are displayed, disregarding any context. On the other hand, in the encyclopedic-semantic approach, "a lexical meaning resides in a particular way of **accessing** an open-ended body of knowledge pertaining to a certain type of entity" (Langacker, 2008, p. 39; bold in original). In (b), the concentric circles signify the set of accompanying knowledge that gets activated whenever a lexical item is used, which varies according to the person using the linguistic unit in a single event. Hence, meaning encompasses the lexical item

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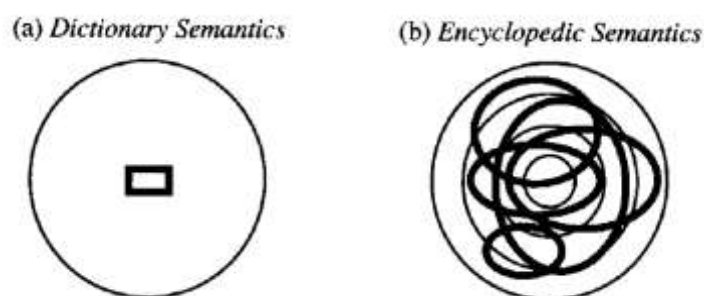and how the individual cognizer (and the sum of his/her knowledge and experience) conceptualizes it.

Fig. 2 Encyclopedic and Dictionary Semantics
(adapted from Langacker, 2008, p. 39)

Hence, linguistic meaning is basically a matter of conceptualization. (Langacker, 2008). According to Langacker (2007), conceptualization "is precisely the act of *engaging* the world, the experiential aspect of our interaction with it… [it] includes the interlocuters' apprehension of the discourse and the interactive context supporting it" (Langacker, 2007, p. 431). The analytical tools explore the lexical choices in *The Shining*, their nature and how they are used in relation to one another.

2.1. Construal and Lexical Choices

Langacker (2008) argues that meaning is not only composed of the conceptual content it invokes, but "equally important is how that content is construed" (p. 55). Construal refers to "our manifest ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways" (Langacker, 2008, p. 43), and it is also characteristic of all linguistic expressions and "intrinsic and essential to [their] meaning" (Langacker, 2007, p. 435). The idea of construal is also based on the fact that language offers multiple ways of representing the same event. Langacker (2008) argues that "in viewing a scene, what we actually see depends on how closely we examine it, what we choose to look at, which elements we pay most attention to, and where we view it from" (p.

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55). Accordingly, lexical choices are investigated according to two main dimensions of construal:

- Specificity: how closely we choose to view a scene or arts of it;

- Focus and prominence: what we choose to look at and pat attention to within the scene. (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, p. 34)

Both dimensions have to do with the construal operation of selection. Selection, according to (Croft &Cruse, 2004), is "our ability to attend to parts of our experience that are relevant to the purpose at hand and ignore aspects of our experience that are irrelevant" (p. 47). Specificity concerns the place of lexical items on the granularity-generality scale (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018). Hence, entities or participants can be described according to the degree of details the situation or the event requires. For example, in fig. 2 below, the situation is construed in varying degrees of precision and detail. Giovanelli & Harrison (2018) state that the relationship between lexical items on the granularity-generality scale is a matter of elaboration in which a schematic (general) term may be "elaborated or extended to form a chain where each subsequent part of the chain is relatively more specific than the one that precedes it" (p. 35). The degree of precision and detail determined by speakers/writers depends on "communicative needs and speaker objectives" (Langacker, 2007, p. 435), whereby each choice is consciously *selected* to present to the recipients an aspect of the situation that is deemed most important by the sender. Croft & Cruse (2004, p. 51-2) call this "scalar adjustment" which is the scale language users choose to represent a scene (coarse-grained vs fine-grained). Hence, in Fig. 3 below, the highly schematic/general "something happened" offers a coarse-grained view of the event (almost uninformative at all) while the highly specific "Jack's son was decapitated" offers a much finer-grained view of that same event.

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> Something happened > a person is injured > a young man died > John was killed >
>
> Jack's son was murdered > Jack's son was decapitated

Fig. 3 Elaborative relations

The second dimension of construal is that of focus and prominence. Focus and prominence have to do with the highlighted part of a word's conceptual content, where "different words in a semantic frame or domain focus our attention on the different elements in the frame" (Croft & Cruse, 2004, p. 47). Additionally, Langacker (2008) proposes that any word used has a maximal and immediate scope. As shown in the Fig. 4 below, the words hand and elbow evoke, or provide mental access to the maximal scope of body, and the immediate scope of arm.
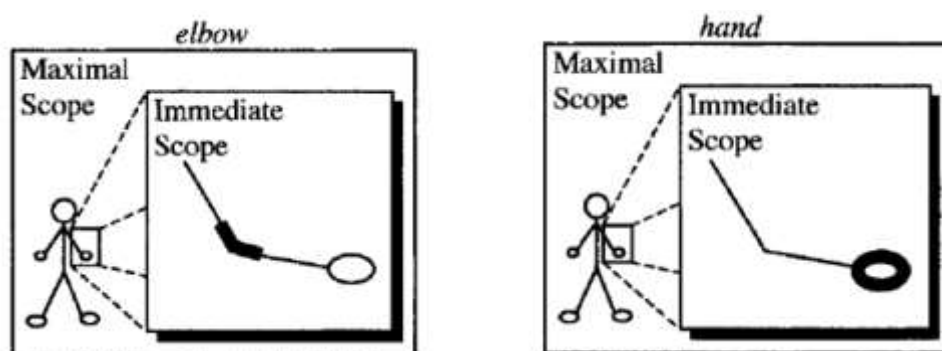

Fig. 4 Maximal and immediate scopes
(adapted from Langacker, 2008, p. 64)

Within the immediate scope, our attention is directed to a specific part using a word that designates it. Hence, both elbow and hand have the common maximal scope of body and immediate scope of arm, but each term profiles (directs our attention to) a specific part of the immediate scope; the "onstage region" (Langacker, 2008, p. 66-67). The immediate and maximal scopes act as the backdrop against which we understand the profiled aspect. Therefore, "the notion of profiling allows us to be more specific when examining the attention

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given to a particular aspect of a scene in relation to its conceptual base" (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, p. 41).

Langacker (2008) further argues that profiling provides an explanation of how the phenomenon of metonymy occurs. For example, in the sentence "*Shakespeare is on the shelf,*" the word *Shakespeare*, which would naturally profile the dead poet, instead highlights another aspect in the immediate scope of Shakespeare, i.e. his works. Hence, metonymy is defined "a shift in profile…we speak of metonymy when an expression that ordinarily profiles one entity is used instead to profile another entity associated with it in some domain" (p. 69).

3. Review of Literature

The cognitive turn in Stylistics have been prophesied in the field of stylistic research as linguists, as early as Halliday (1971) and Fowler (1977), have regularly referred to the cognitive factor in stylistic analysis. However, cognitive methods have not been formally imported nor integrated in the study of style. Halliday (1971)'s seminal work on analyzing the outlook and world view of a Neanderthal man demonstrated how *cognitive* limitations are translated by the author into distinctive transitivity patterns and restricted vocabulary. Following Halliday (1971), Fowler (1977) introduced the concept of mindstyle which is basically any "distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual *mental* self" (p. 103; emphasis added). Hence, an interest in the workings of the mind and their linguistic manifestations have long had an important place in the field of stylistics.

Leech & Short (2007), originally published in 1981, tackled all language levels and provides stylisticians with a thorough toolkit for the analysis of English fictional prose. The second edition included two extra chapters on the latest developments in stylistic analysis, including the cognitive turn. Simpson (2004) also presented a guide to the practice of stylistics and divides his book into 3 sections, key concepts, development and exploration respectively.

Simpson introduced the cognitive turn in stylistics and provides some important concepts in this new approach as well as an application of these concepts in the analysis of texts.

Semino & Culpeper (2002)'s edited book tackled cognitive stylistics as an emerging discipline. It featured multiple studies that employ cognitive stylistic approaches to the study of various types of literary works; novels, plays or poetry. For example, Culpeper (2002) provided a cognitive stylistic approach to characterization and draws on van Dijk and Kintsch (1983)'s model of text comprehension (p. 257). Semino (2002) also undertook a cognitive stylistic approach to mind style in fiction. Semino gave the notion of Fowler's mind style a new cognitive gloss and drew on multiple cognitive theories including schema theory, cognitive metaphor theory and blending theory.

Additionally, Stockwell (2002) paved the way for cognitive poetics (or stylistics) to take its shape as a valid framework for stylistic analysis. Stockwell (2002) dedicated each chapter to one of the tools developed in cognitive linguistics and adapts them to the study the style of literary language, including cognitive grammar, conceptual metaphor, schema theory and text world theory. He also accentuated the readerly aspect of the cognitive approach to stylistics, stressing how linguistic structures used in literatures operate in the minds of readers. In the same vein, Stockwell (2009) expanded on the notion of readerly experience and explored concepts like characterization, tone and empathy to account for the natural experience of literary reading.

Harrison, et al (2014) dedicated its chapters to the adaptation of Langacker (2008)'s Cognitive Grammar to the study of literary language. The book included two sections; narrative fiction and studies of poetry. In the narrative fiction part, Stockwell (2014) for example attempted to give an affirmative answer to the question of whether Cognitive Grammar be used effectively for literary stylistics. He analyzed different passages from H.G. Wells' 1898 novel,

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The War of the Worlds, using concepts from Langacker (2008)'s cognitive grammar such as clausal grounding, trajector and landmark, action chains and participant roles. On the other hand, Nuttall (2014) used Cognitive Grammar to explore the construction of a text world for Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Applying Cognitive Grammar offered a "plausible approach to the dynamic construction of text worlds and the specific effects of stylistic choices upon this readerly experience."

Harrison (2017) also used Cognitive Grammar to explore multiple contemporary literary texts. Each chapter in the book employed a cognitive grammatical concept to give a stylistic account of multiple literary texts. Nuttall (2018), on the other hand, used Cognitive Grammar to explore the concept of mind style, which was coined by Fowler (1977) and whose analysis was "continually enriched" via the developments of stylistics and linguistics. For example, Nuttall (2018) applied Cognitive Grammar to the Hallidayan notion of transitivity and investigated how the limited mind attribution for vampires in Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) was effected through the construal of actions and events from the perspective of its character–focalizer.

Giovanelli & Harrison (2018) is perhaps the most recent fully-fledged account of using Cognitive Grammar in stylistics. It offered a detailed practical guide to the use of multiple concepts in Cognitive Grammar in analyzing multiple texts (literary and non-literary), hence promoting it as an alternative to traditional grammatical models when analyzing texts.

As for studies that apply linguistic analysis to horror fiction, some works undertook gothic fiction as their object of analysis. For example, Aguirre (2014) studied formulaic patterns in gothic fiction, taking *The Necromancer* (1794) as a model. Aguirre identified the lexical fields that accompany the node-field '*with horror*' which, together, make up the formulaic patterns in the novel and then studies them syntactically and phonologically.

Jones (2010) also conducted a corpus-stylistic analysis on gothic fiction. The study used ten works of gothic fiction that are representative of the century from 1800 to 1900. The corpus underwent a keyword and frequency analysis along with an analysis of collocations and clusters. After the quantitative analysis, Jones provided a qualitative analysis of the results, giving some observations on the recurring words and their stylistic function in the gothic texts. Ferguson (2004) explored Bram Stoker's employment of language variation in his seminal novel *Dracula* (1897). Though not strictly adopting linguistic techniques in her treatment of the text, Ferguson (2004) highlighted the role of sociolinguistics in antagonizing Dracula. As a foreigner to the English community (both as a non-Englishman and a vampire), Dracula is very keen to speak a perfect and impeccable version of English in order to merge into society. However, faced by *nonstandard* language of the common people of England, it becomes clear that "the linguistic deviations – whether of syntax, diction, or accent[…]are constitutive of a fundamentally human network of communication from which the vampire is excluded" (p. 241).

Moving from gothic fiction, some studies focused on modern and contemporary horror. For example, Peer & Graf (2002) conducted a cognitive stylistic analysis of spatial language development of Stephen King's novel *IT* (1986). They investigated whether King pays attention to cognitive abilities of his characters through analyzing their use of spatial language first as children and then when they meet again as adults and how meeting the entity *IT* had a say in their cognitive perception of space. Landais (2016), on the other hand, investigated the problems of translating fear in modern horror fiction into French. Landais analyzed the translation of excerpts from short stories and novels by modern horror writers such as Stephen King and James Cooper.

Anderson (2017) is perhaps the most recent example of applying linguistic analysis to

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modern horror fiction. Anderson dedicated his book to the study of Stephen King's works. Each chapter tackled one of King's works (novels, short stories or novellas) from a linguistic angle. Anderson (2017) relied on a mix of postmodern theories, including "Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytical criticism" and the linguistic theories of J. L. Austin, John Searle, and Ferdinand de Saussure (p. 7). For example, in his treatment of King's *The Shining* (pp. 35-43), Anderson (2017) applied a deconstructive view of language in the novel, where "the shine" is considered a "pre-linguistic ability that allows him to understand with his intuition and his precognitive senses, which don't rely on the accuracy of words" (p. 42). Sazonova (2018) conducted a comparative analysis of English and Ukrainian texts of horror discourse. Sazonova explored "the textual actualization of fear" (p. 21) through a pragmatic/semantic analysis of the names given to monsters in horror texts of H.P. Lovecraft and some Ukrainian authors. Sazonova argues that different nomination strategies of monstrosities are used in horror texts to evoke diverse senses of fear, either fear-awe or fear-disgust.

Stewart-Shaw (2017), on the other hand, is the most comprehensive *cognitive poetic* study on horror fiction. Stewart-Shaw employed Text World Theory, Stockwell (2009)'s concept of readerly attention and resonance to explore the emotional experience of reading three contemporary horror novels; : Ira Levin's (1967) *Rosemary's Baby*, Stephen King's (1986) *IT*, and William Peter Blatty's (1971) *The Exorcist*. Though her approach is poetic, she conducted brief text-based stylistic analysis of some excerpts of the three novels. Additionally, the study offers an analysis of online reader responses to the three novels.

4. Objectives of the Study

Against the previous review of literature, the present paper contributes to the current literature because it takes as its object of analysis an example of a literary genre that has been little studied. Additionally, while most studies apply linguistic analysis to horror literature, none

of them focused on the text-linguistic vehicles of instilling fear in readers, with the exception of Stewart-Shaw (2017), whose approach is rather more discourse-oriented rather than text-oriented.

Hence, the paper aims to offer a text-based cognitive stylistic account of horrific uncertainty through exploring Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977). The paper's goal stems from the idea of horror as a mood (Sauchelli, 2014). According to Sauchelli (2014), moods are mental sates that linger in the readers' minds: "Moods are also sometimes described as those "background" states of our minds that color our other experiences positively or negatively…moods are preparatory states that orient us toward a particular emotion" (p. 42).

The paper also relies on Langacker (2008)'s Cognitive Grammar, an approach that "is in its infancy" in the hands of stylisticians (Stockwell, 2014). It aims to explore how lexical choices, as well as the set of accompanying knowledge activated by them, are deliberately employed in a way that creates horror in texts and induce fear in readers by perplexing them as to the nature of the phenomena they are reading.

The research questions that this paper attempts to answer are:

1) How is horror mood textually and cognitively created?

2) How is horrific uncertainty construed?

3) How does the author use the construal operation of selection to serve his purposes of creating horror?

5. Analysis: Semantic Conflict and Horrific Uncertainty

According to Carroll (1990), horror narratives "must modulate the flow of information…[where] the choice of language, then, will be especially strategic…in which the author wishes the reader to hesitate, perhaps in the early onset movement of a plot" (p. 150-1). Markers of uncertainty and hesitation have been discussed by literary scholars who have

theorized the genre of horror and its origins (e.g. Todorov, 1975; Carroll, 1990) and those who have explored modern and post-modern horror (e.g. Grixti, 1989; Findlay, 2018). Their treatment of uncertainty is mostly thematic with very brief reference to the role of language in making the unreal/supernatural "step into our cognitive world of everyday reality" (Grixti, 1989, p. 62). However, a cognitive stylistic analysis of Stephen King's *The Shining* has revealed that semantic conflict is the prime vehicle for creating uncertainty that horrifies the readers. This semantic conflict is realized by multiple specifications whose semantic fields are incongruent but turn out to have the same referent. This serves as a way to hinder readers' attempts to come to grips with the (horrific) information they are receiving in the course of reading horror novels. The focus here is to highlight how multiple specifications coupled with varying specificity of the lexical items burden the readers with a cognitive load of contextually vague, blurry and indefinite referring expressions that eventually turn out to signify a single referent. Below is how uncertainty is created using lexical choices and how they operate in the readers' minds.

5.1. Multiple Specifications and Varying Levels of Lexical Specificity

"Multiple specifications" is the term used by Talmy (2000b) to refer to "the situation where a sentence, or other portion of discourse, provides two or more specifications of the characteristics of the same referent" (p. 323). The multiple specifications are a way to tamper with readers' attempts to come to grips with the (*horrific*) information they are receiving in the course of reading horror novels. In Talmy (2000b)'s terms, when faced with multiple specifications, discourse recipients try to "resolve the conflicts among the competing representations of a concept" (p. 324).

Multiple specifications are a way to burden the reader with a cognitive load of contextually vague lexis and leaves to the reader the task of identifying the referents. Bray

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(2007), citing Emmott (1997), speaks of the possibility of linguistic cues forcing readers to "reappraise their mental representations of a text which they have just read, noting that 'the ability not only to make assumptions about a context but to realize that these assumptions may need adjusting is an important feature of human cognition'" (p. 46).

Stephen King exploits this feature of human cognition in order to perplex the readers and intensify their reading experience. Consequently, the cognitive burden imposed upon the readers requires them to keep up with, in the words of Emmott (2003), the "dynamic development" of the fictional narrative world and update their mental representations of its participants (p. viii). Additionally, though the dynamic development of fictional narratives normally stretches across large discourses, in horror novels, it can happen on sentential level via manipulating the degree of specificity/granularity (vs. schematicity) of the lexical items used.

Through the use of multiple specifications coupled with fluctuating specificity of lexical items, the readers are burdened with a cognitive load of blurry and indefinite referring expressions that eventually turn out to signify a single referent. The unwinding events of *The Shining* (1977) lead to the final confrontation between possessed Jack and his family where he viciously tries to kill them. This is termed "climactic suspense episodes…[whose] resolution is significant for the…overall finale of the work" (Anastasova, 2016, p. 54). However, owing to Danny's proleptic precognitive powers, these episodes have been vaguely alluded to in different parts of the novel.

The most significant features of this climactic episode are Jack, holding a roque mallet and chasing his son Danny across the corridors of the haunted hotel, the Overlook.

Possessed Jack	Multiple Specifications stretching over the course of the novel (Danny's premonitions)
Figure/ Movements	**(1)** "and now **a Shape** turned the corner […], **lurching, smelling of blood and doom**. It had a mallet in one **hand** and it was swinging it […] **The Shape advancing on him**, **reeking of that sweetsour odor**, gigantic... Tiny red **eyes** glowed in the dark. **The monster** was upon him, it had discovered him." (p. 47-8) **(2)** "*(Come out here and take your medicine, you fucking crybaby!)* Oh and he could hear **the owner of that voice** coming, **coming for him**, **charging up** the hall like **a tiger** in an alien blue-black jungle. **A man-eater** […] his heart leaping into his mouth like a hot lump of ice, fearing that each turn would bring him face to face with **the human tiger** in these halls." (p. 189) **(3)** "There was **a tiger** in the hall, and now **the tiger** was just around the corner […] **this tiger walked on two legs**" (p. 190) **(4)** "I can't remember everything. He showed me the Overlook at night... **Something** […] I don't remember what […] **A monster**." (p. 363)

As shown above, examples (1-4) refer to the climactic episode of possessed Jack attacking his son way before that actually happens in the novel. The range of terms used to describe Jack starts from the highly schematic "shape" and the lexical items continue to be specified more. Fig. 5 below displays a clear referential conflict as to what (or who) is actually chasing Danny. Given the nature of Danny's elusive and indefinite premonitions, specificity of the lexical items is equally elusive and fluttering irregularly across the schematic-specific scale, which also reflect Danny's inability to construe what is befalling him due to his young age and innocent nature.

Additionally, owing to the multiple specifications, and to use Coulson (2001)'s term, the *elaborative relations*, which normally occur within the same semantic field, make "leaps" across semantic fields with the intention of heightening the uncertainty surrounding the nature

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of the referent as well as increasing the cognitive burden on the reader, trying to decipher these

code-like lexical items.

A shape → The shape → The monster →

The owner of voice →

A tiger → A man-eater→ The human tiger → A Tiger → The tiger → This tiger walked on two legs→
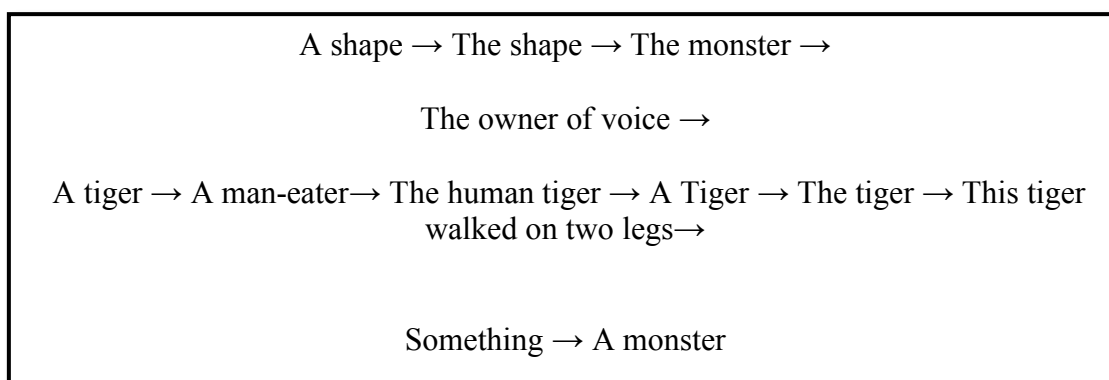
Something → A monster

Fig. 5 Elaborative relations of describing possessed Jack in *The Shining*

Hence, initially, the highly schematic and indefinite '*shape*' is used to refer to Jack

followed by the slightly more specific *the shape*, using the definite article. More specified

construals are used in (1) where the *shape* is described as "*lurching, smelling of blood and

doom.*" The use of these specifications gives the feature of animacy to *the shape* and associate

it with danger as *blood* and *doom* are negatively connoted lexis, which carry danger in their

semantic profile. The *shape* is then described as a *monster* which moves up the scale of

specificity but remains at a close degree of schematicity as to what type of monster is it. As the

dream sequence goes along, other attributes are brought to the readers' attention such as *hand*

and *tiny red yes* which evoke the maximal scope of (human) body. Then in example (2), another

layer of specificity is added when the *monster* is construed as an *owner of voice* hinting at his

human form. However, a leap occurs across semantic fields when the semantic frame of

predatory animals is activated as the *shape* becomes a *tiger/man-eater*. Though activated and

included in the semantic frame, the use of *man-eater* chooses to highlight this specific feature

of tigers to amplify the danger. Then, a leap *back* into the domain of humans is taken when the

tiger is described as a *human tiger walking on two legs*. The leaps back and forth between the

semantic fields of predatory animals and humans [*man-eater* to *human(tiger)*] further activates

the domain of cannibalism, which confuses the readers and simultaneously horrifies them.

Another point worthy of attention is how King (1977) grounds this entity via the use of

articles. According to Langacker (2008), 'ground' in cognitive grammar is used "to indicate

the speech event, its participants (speaker and hearer), their interaction, and the immediate

circumstances (notably, the time and place of speaking)" (p. 259). Hence, (nominal) elements,

(*e.g. the, this, that, some, a, each, every, no, any*), are used as a way for speakers to direct "the

hearer's attention to the intended discourse referent" (p. 259). In examples (2) and (3) above

about the entity conceptualized by Danny, the grounding seesaws between definiteness and

indefiniteness when it comes to using articles. First, it is *a tiger*, *a man-eater*, then it moves to

the definite article *the human tiger*. The articles then move back to indefiniteness, with using

a tiger once again and then definiteness is also used in *the tiger*. Following that, a proximal

demonstrative *this*, in *this tiger walked on two legs*, is used to divert attention to this unique

and particular instance of tigers and causes a re-construal of an already dangerously connoted

animal, since it was like no other instances of its type because this tiger *walked on two legs*.

Thus, these seesawing grounding elements work as a lens, zooming in and out and in again on

the entity, perplexing the readers and immersing them in Danny's trance-like/nightmarish

episodes.

Hence, while elaborative relations of lexical items are supposed to make things *clearer*,

all what the lexis in Fig. 4 do is create a semantic conflict and conceptual tension in the minds

of the readers. In his treatment of semantic conflict, Talmy (2000b) proposes some strategies

for conceptual "reconciliation" which the recipients can employ in order to overcome this

concept. These strategies are *shifts, blends, juxtaposition, juggling and blockage* in which

readers try to cope with the semantic conflict presented to them (p. 323-4). However, the author

does not leave the choice for the readers and, via using the compound noun *human tiger*, they are forced to *juxtapose* the two specifications because the discourse at that point is not clear about the nature of this monster. According to Talmy (2000b), juxtaposition foregrounds the semantic conflict created in which drawing attention to these "incompatible specifications generates the experience of what can be called **incongruity effects**. Included among such effects are surprise, oddity, irony, and humor" (p. 332; bold in original). Accordingly, given the contextual factors of the compound noun (*human tiger*), the surprise and oddity of using it eventually yields horror.

In example (4) later in the novel, Danny is asked by his parents to try to remember what he has encountered after being brought back from one of his trance-like episodes. The lexical items used, *something* and *monster*, are textually elaborate (coming later than the other more specific terms), but semantically unelaborate since the term *something* is even more highly schematic than the first used *shape* in (1). The schematicity of these terms also mirror Danny's inability to remember the horror he witnessed and might be an attempt on his part to background a traumatizing dream like this, which expected as a coping mechanism for a child.

Elaborative relations also conceptualize how possessed Jack moves in the nightmare sequences. As seen below in Fig. 6, the *shape/tiger/human tiger* first lurches, which connotes unsteady and uncontrolled movement with no specific direction. Then, the lexical items move up the scale of specificity by assigning a direction to and a target of its movement as it starts to *advance on* Danny and *come for* him. The same goes for the description of the scent of the *shape*, which starts as a neutral *smell* then the more specific and negatively connoted *reek* and *odor* are used. This spatial progression coupled with the elaborative relations described above bring the *entity* more into readers' attention as it approaches Danny and work as a way of attentional zooming in on the whole event.

Lurching → Advancing on him → Coming for him → Charging up the hall

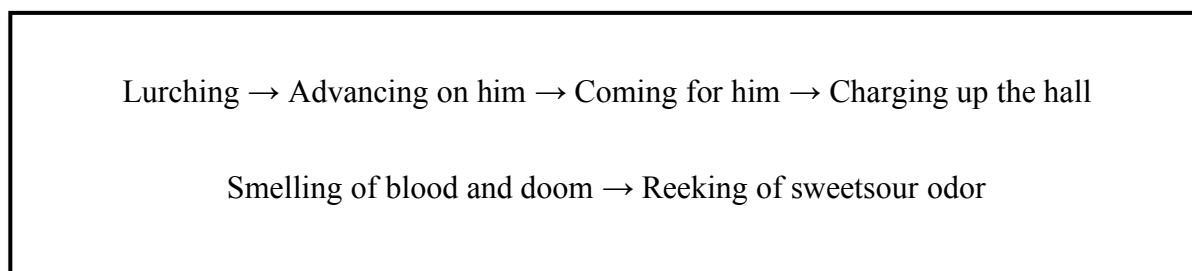Smelling of blood and doom → Reeking of sweetsour odor

Fig. 6 Elaborative relations of movements and attributes of possessed Jack in *The Shining*

Hence, The gradual transition from *shape* to *human tiger*, which *lurches*, then *advances* reflects the emerging horror of Danny's experience in his trance-like episodes while the effect of zooming out by going back to *something* and *monster* is done to remain true to Danny's childlike nature and also heightens the uncertainty permeating the novel.

The final confrontation between possessed Jack and Danny is also vaguely referred to in Jack's unconscious and hallucinatory worlds. First, in Jack's unconscious world, (5-6) below, Jack has a dream about a character from his past, George Hatfield, one of his previous students whom Jack cuts from the debate team because of his stuttering. In response, George tries to slash Jack's tires and Jack ends up assaulting him after a fit of rage which makes him lose his job (and eventually goes to Colorado be The Overlook's caretaker). In this dream, Jack gets attacked by George who was about to strangle him when Jack manages to hit back and escape George's grip. The moment Jack starts hitting George with his father's cane, the scene gradually changes to Jack hitting his son. A similar pattern of multiple specifications and fluctuating degrees of lexical specificity is also displayed.

Textual Setting of the Climactic Episode's Reference	*Multiple Specifications and Construal Patterns*
Jack's dream	**(5)** "**George's** bloody protecting fingers fell away from **his head** and Jack brought **the cane** down again and again […] Except that **the cane** was no longer precisely **a cane**; it seemed to be **a mallet** with some kind of brightly striped handle. **A mallet** with a hard side and soft side. The business end was clotted

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Egyptian Journal of Linguistics and Translation 'EJLT' - Volume 11, (Issue 1) - July 2023
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with blood and hair. And the flat, whacking sound of **the mallet** against flesh had been replaced with a hollow booming sound

[…]

The figure on its kness slowly raised **its head**, as if in supplication. There **was not a face**, precisely, but only a **mask of blood through which eyes peered**. He brought **the mallet** back for a final whistling downstroke and it was fully launched before he saw that the **supplicating face** below him was not George's but **Danny**'s. It was the face of **his son**. (p. 402)

(6) "And then the mallet crashed home, striking Danny right between the eyes, closing them forever. And **something somewhere** seemed to be laughing—
(!No!)
He came out of it standing naked over Danny's bed, his hands empty, his body sheened with sweat." (p. 402-3)

The snippets shown above from the dream sequence highlight the transition from Jack hitting George to him hitting Danny. Similar to the previous examples, the lexis used to profile the shift from George to Danny mirror Jack's confusion and uncertainty. Fig. 7 (a) outlines the multiple specifications of George-turned-Danny where the gradually specified elaborations track Jack's emerging horrific conceptualization of killing his own son.

(a) George (his head) → The figure (its head) → Not a face → A mask of blood through which eyes peered→ The supplicating face → Danny → His son

(b) The cane → A cane → A mallet → The mallet

Fig. 7 Elaborative relations in Jack's dream in *The Shining*

In (5), the proper noun *George* is used and the apt possessive pronoun *his* in *his head.* Then the scene changes and the schematic *figure* is used along with a change in the possessive pronoun *its* instead of his to match the indistinctive/unspecified nature of the figure. Following that, King (1977) uses the negation *not a face* as a description. According to Langacker (2008),

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negation "evokes as background the positive conception of what is being denied" (p. 59). The negation evokes the semantic field of *face* along with its maximal scope *body/animate figure* but then denies its existence. With the use of *its head* in the previous clause, readers expect that the head would have a face, but negation actually defeats readers' expectations to add to their horror.

The description used next, *mask of blood through which eyes peered*, uses the negatively connoted *blood* and activates the immediate scope of face (after negating it) through the use of indefinite *eyes*, whose indefiniteness heightens uncertainty as to the nature of this figure's identity. The specification then increases when the immediate scope is profiled and brought to attention in an affirmative clause through the use of *face* in the definite noun phrase *the supplicating face* which presupposes its existence in spite of negating it before. Moving up the specificity scale, a proper noun is used to reveal the identity of the face; Danny. Then a finer granularity is added when the epithet *his son* is used to *elaborate* more on the identity of Danny and brings into readers' attention the horrific realization that a father is actually doing that to his son.

Additionally, in example (5), there is a back and forth transition between definiteness and indefiniteness when it comes to construing the weapon Jack uses, as shown above in Fig. 7(b). The grounding of the weapon matches its hazy and illusive mutation in Jack's dream from his father's cane to the infamous mallet which he actually uses at the end of the novel to attack Danny. First, it is *the cane* referring to his father's cane which he identified earlier in the dream. Then it is less specifically grounded by using an indefinite article, *a cane*, to signal its change and render it unrecognizable by Jack, which is furthers strengthened by the negation *no longer a cane*. The cane becomes *a mallet* where the indefinite article is used to indicate newness and unfamiliarity. After adding extra information about it [*A mallet with a hard side and soft side.*

The business end was clotted with blood and hair], the definite article is used as it now profiles a unique reference. This roller coaster of words up and down the specificity scale immerses the readers in Jack's dream and place them right in the middle of his horrific realization.

Unlike in Danny's trance-like episodes, the semantic conflict created by the multiples specifications here is reconciled by using shifts, which is also imposed upon the readers. Reconciliation using shifts happens when "the specification of one of the forms [changes] so as to come into accord with the other form" (Talmy, 2000b, p. 324). Hence, readers are forced to reconstrue George as Danny and live through the appalling experience that Jack is actually hitting his son to death.

Additionally, in (6), the scene zooms out by using two highly vague words *something* and *somewhere* to construe their referents in a schematic fashion. While *something* usually falls on the schematic end of inanimate objects' scale, a referential conflict arises as it is endowed with the human ability to laugh in *something seemed to be laughing*. The use of *laughing* connotes happiness which semantically clashes with the violence described before. The semantic clash perplexes the readers and defeats their expectations, namely that violence is met with disdain and disapproval. Since the scene is all in Jack's subconscious, the semantic clash hints at unrecognizable evil lurking in Jack's mind and sustains a sense of the uncanny which is basically a matter of disturbing the familiar (Berggren, 2019). Additionally, the use of epistemic modality via the verb *seem* weakens the claim which makes the scene all the more uncertain and the reader is left without any kind of resolution.

Next, in Jack's hallucinations near the end of the novel, he is in the ballroom of the hotel, hallucinating about getting drunk and talking with the hotel's previous caretaker, Delbert Grady, who actually killed his family and then committed suicide. Grady assures Jack he must "correct" his family. In that part of the novel, Jack has already begun to give in to the hotel and

allow its spirits to take over and convince him to kill his wife and son. In the ballroom, there is a clock beneath a glass dome which was gifted to the hotel by a Swiss diplomat in 1949. In the same fashion as a cuckoo clock, the clock has two mechanical ballet dancers, a boy and a girl, who dance to Johann Strauss's famous music piece "Blue Danube Waltz." In the illusory sequence below, Jack hallucinates that the two mechanical figures behind the clock's glass dome turn out to be a father hitting his son, much like what happens in his dream earlier in the novel. The lexicalization of the scene construes referents in interesting ways.

Textual Setting of the Climactic Episode's Reference	*Multiple Specifications and Construal Patterns*
Jack's Hallucination at the Ballroom	**(7)** "The clock began to chime delicately. Along the steel runner below the clockface, from the left and right, **two figures advanced** […] One of the figures was **a man standing on tiptoe**, with what looked like a **tiny club clasped in his hands**. The other was **a small boy wearing a dunce cap** […] The steel mallet in **the clockwork daddy**'s hands came down on the **boy**'s head. **The clockwork son** crumbled forward. The mallet rose and fell, rose and fell. **The boy**'s upstretched, protesting hands began to falter. **The boy** sagged from his crouch to a prone position. And still the hammer rose […] and it seemed that he could see **the man**'s face, working and knotting and constricting, could see **the clockwork daddy**'s mouth opening and closing as he berated **the unconscious, bludgeoned figure of the son.**" (p. 523-4)
	(8) **A spot of red flew up** against the inside of the glass dome. […] Two more **splattered** beside it. Now **the red liquid** was **spraying** up like an obscene rain shower, striking the glass sides of the dome and running, obscuring what was going on inside, and flecked through **the scarlet** were tiny gray ribbons of tissue, fragments of bone and brain […]. The entire dome was **splashed with blood** (p. 524)

(a) Two figures ➡ A man standing on tiptoe → the clockwork daddy → The man
⬊ A small boy wearing a dunce cap → The boy → The clockwork son →
unconscious, bludgeoned figure of the son

(b) A spot of red flew up → two more splattered → the red liquid was spraying up → the
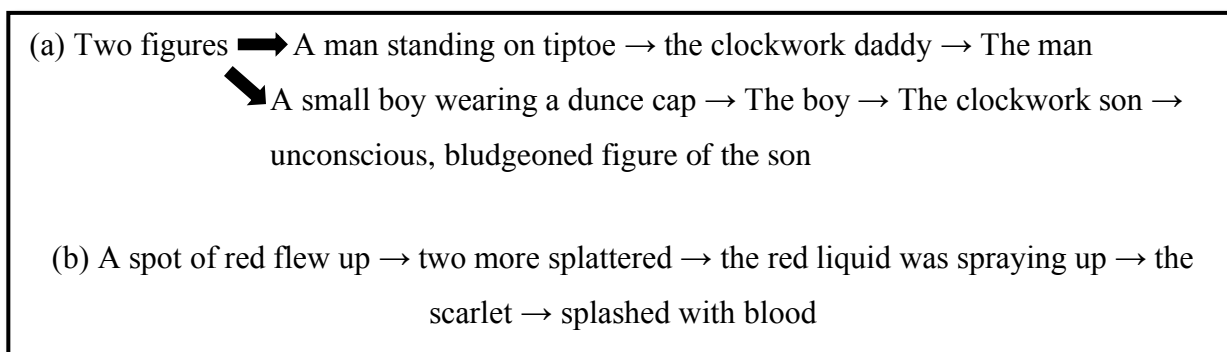scarlet → splashed with blood

Fig. 8 Elaborative relations in Jack's ballroom hallucination in *The Shining*

Yet again, as shown in (7) above, the elaborative relations here mirror the disturbed nature of Jack's hallucinations and his own inner demons which the hotel exploits against him. As Fig 8 (a) shows, the schematic terms *two figures* are used to describe what were construed earlier in the novel as ballet dancers inside the clock's glass dome. Then, one of the figures is more granularly construed as *a man standing on tiptoe*, which hints at the ballet dancing position. On the other hand, the second figure is *a small boy wearing a dunce cap*. A dunce cap is a conical cap that was used in the past to punish slow learners. This activates the semantic frame of struggling students and implies that the boy is actually George Hatfield, the stuttering boy whose confrontation with Jack ended in Jack assaulting him and eventually him losing his job. Though they can still be mechanical and be described as such, the terms *man* and *boy* give the two figures an animate gloss and evoke the semantic frame of *humans*.

The two figures are then elaborated through the kinship terms *father* and *son* to highlight their relationship even though there are no immediate co-textual elements that suggest this relationship. These terms further strengthen the semantic frame previously activated in spite of the emphasis on their lifeless nature through the epithet *clockwork*. However, the pattern changes when the hallucination sequence progresses. Keeping the *Jack figure* at the same level of specificity [*clockwork daddy*] while removing the epithet *clockwork* from *son* in *unconscious, bludgeoned figure of the son*, transfers the boy figure to the semantic frame of

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humans, and consequently reflects progression in the scene along with the transformation of the *clockwork son* to an *actual son* with a *conscious* which he loses. This also foreshadows the fact that, similar to the *clockwork daddy* in the glass dome, Jack will be entirely possessed by the hotel when he attacks his son. Hence, much like the previous examples, conceptual tension is created here as to the nature of the figures; are they mechanical or are they humanized? Even though it is acknowledged in the sequence that it is a hallucination, tension is created while reading because a hallucination does not have a definite schema, i.e., anything can happen.

In Fig. 8 (b), an interesting pattern on the specificity scale is shown to track Jack's realization of the (supernatural) transformation of the boy from a clockwork figure to a real (alive) one through the description of the boy figure bleeding. Since the scene in (8) happens inside the glass dome of the clock, the view is presented from the outside according to Jack's conceptualization. Hence, first, a *spot of red flies up against the inside of the glass dome*. Though blood is contained in *red*'s semantic profile, it is not clearly stated. Then, the use of the verb *splatter* in *two more splattered* is more specific than *fly up* and connotes more force in the spread of the *spots of red*. A more fine-grained view is construed as the flying and splattering spots of red are now a *red liquid spraying up*, evoking more violence in the way blood is running inside the glass done. It is described then how *tiny ribbons of bone and brain* appeared through the *scarlet,* which is a brighter hue of red, connoting fresh blood coming out of the boy as a result of the *clockwork daddy* bludgeoning his *son.* Finally, Jack comes to the full realization that what is going on inside the dome is an actual murder when the highly specific *blood* is actually used. Hence, the scene takes the readers on a conceptual (and horrific) trip of comprehension where transition from *spot of red* to *blood* allows horror to gradually creep into the readers' minds.

Finally, the confrontation between possessed Jack and Danny actually happens near the

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end of the novel. The conceptual tension reaches its peak in this particular scene as the narration reflects Danny's struggle with the fact that he is being attacked by his own father whom he loves, where "dream and reality had joined together without a seam" (King, 1977, p. 629), referring to the multiple premonitions/nightmares he previously had over the course of the novel.

Multiple Specifications

The actual confrontation between Danny and possessed Jack	**(9)** "**The thing** that was after him **screamed and howled and cursed** […] **It** came around the corner. […] **It** breathed. **It** wiped **its lips** with a shaking hand. […] **The eyes** glared out at him from beneath **the furred brows**. There was an expression of lunatic cunning in them." (p. 629-30)
	(10) In a way, what Danny felt was relief. **It was not his father**. The mask of face and body had been ripped and shredded and made into a bad joke. **It was not his daddy**. (p. 629)
	(11) "You're ***it***, **not my daddy**. You're **the hotel**" (p. 631)
	(12) The **face** in front of him changed. It was hard to say how; there was no melting or merging of the features. **The body** trembled slightly. […] But suddenly **his daddy** was there, looking at him in mortal agony, and a sorrow so great that Danny's heart flamed within his chest […] "Doc," **Jack Torrance** said. "Run away. Quick. And remember how much I love you." (p. 631-2)
	(13) ""Go away," **he** said to **the bloody stranger** in front of him. "Go on. Get out of here." **It** bent over, exposing the knife handle in **its back**. **Its hands** closed around the mallet again, but instead of aiming at Danny, ***it*** reversed the handle, aiming the hard side of the roque mallet at **its own face**." (p. 633)
	(14) Then the mallet began to rise and descend, **destroying the last of Jack Torrance's image**. **The thing** in the hall danced an eerie, shuffling polka, the beat counterpointed by the hideous sound of the mallet head striking again and again […] But when **it turned its attention** back to Danny, his father was gone forever." (p. 634)

In examples (9-14) above, conceptual tension is created via alterations between the humanization and dehumanization of Jack Torrance. Danny, the loving son, still believes his father is not the one trying to actively kill him. As Fig. 9 below shows, Jack is extremely underspecified as *the thing* along with the anaphoric referring pronoun *it*, though human attributions follow immediately as *the thing* is *screaming, howling*, *breathing* and *wiping its lips*. Hence a juxtaposition reconciliation strategy – similar to the one imposed in Danny's premonitions – is employed to be able to make sense of how a figure that does all these human activities is construed as a *thing*. Additionally, using the definitely grounded metonymic *the eyes* and *the furry brows* further backgrounds and dehumanizes their owner because it cannot be construed in its entirety.

The emphasis on the dehumanization of *the thing* is furthered through defining it by what it is not via repetitive negation in (10) and (11), where it is assured that the *thing* is *not Danny's father* and *not his daddy*. As previously mentioned, negation activates the positive concept of what is denied and thus remains in the background. The use of negation here summons Jack through the terms *father* and *daddy* (which are elaborative on the scale of kinship terms) and then denies his existence in the form of this unidentifiable *thing*. However, Danny comes to realization that the *thing* is actually *the hotel* that has been trying to possess his father all along (11).

> The thing (screamed and howled) → It (breathed and wiped its lips) → It (not his father) → It (not his Daddy) → The hotel →
> The face → The body → His daddy → Jack Torrance → He → It → Its hands → Its own face → Jack Torrance's image → The thing
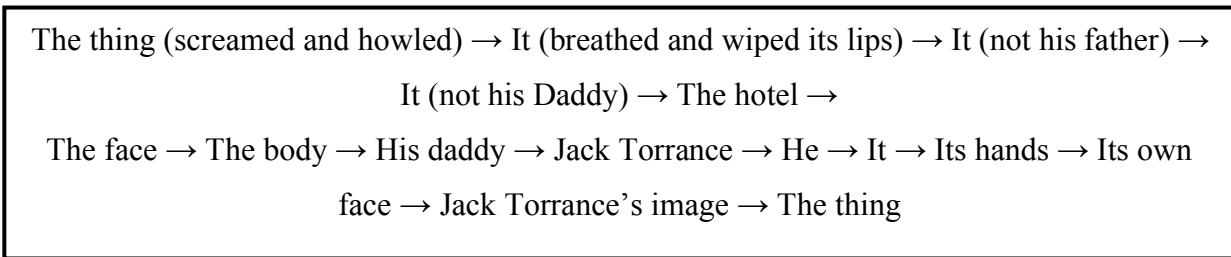
Fig. 9 Elaborative relations in the confrontation between Danny and possessed Jack in *The Shining*

However, the elaborative relations take a U-turn back to Jack the human when, after being

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addressed by his son, Jack comes briefly to his normal self. Jack's gradual change back to his nature is told from Danny's perspective who first describes *the face* then zooms out by using *the body* trembling as a whole to capture a more schematic construal of Jack's change. Then, *daddy* followed by the proper noun *Jack Torrance* and the anaphoric *he* are used to announce the completion of Jack's transformation. After realizing that he cannot escape the hotel and its possessive spirits, Jack urges his son to run, using the schematic *bloody stranger* to mirror the fact that he is beyond rescue or help as he does not know his son now. The elaborative relations circle back to a more schematic construal of Jack as his possession by the hotel is complete. Pronouns used to specify inanimate objects are used, *it*, then the proper noun is used one last time in an additive construct *Jack's Torrance's image* to reconcile the conceptual tension and emphasize Jack's soulless and lifeless existence now as he is again, *the thing*.

6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to investigate the semantics of horror fiction and how lexis used by horror authors operate in the mind. Working within a cognitive stylistic framework, the paper has demonstrated how semantic conflict is an intrinsic part of conveying horror to its readers since it describes entities and events that are beyond the scope of human comprehension. Accordingly, the construal of those entities reflects humans' attempts at making sense of their (super)nature. The conflict is achieved through using multiple specifications and varying levels of lexical specificity, and how they cause readers to construe the novel's climactic episode over the course of the novel in a way that is textually perplexing until they arrive to it at the end and reconcile the conflict they have been subject to. Multiple specifications place the readers in a constant state of reconstrual of supernatural events and entities. Additionally, the varying levels of lexical specificity reflect the characters' bafflement in the face of the supernatural, driving the characters to construe entities and events in a bumpy

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Egyptian Journal of Linguistics and Translation 'EJLT' - Volume 11, (Issue 1) - July 2023
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way using words see-sawing on the specific-general scale. The semantic conflict remains until characters arrive at a satisfactory resolution and reconcile this conflict, which mainly comprises an acceptance of the supernatural.

Against the previous background, review of literature and analysis, the present study contributes to the literature by adopting an "infant" tool of analysis and proving its validity in eliciting the working of linguistic structure in the minds of readers. Additionally, in spite of its popularity, contemporary horror fiction is still an understudied genre in from a linguistic point of view. Further investigations of contemporary (and modern) horror could yield more comprehensive results and establish horror as a linguistic genre from a cognitive point of view. Additionally, a reader-response analysis can enrich the results of investigating the linguistic features of horror fiction by involving the actual reader in the process of analysis rather than the implied or ideal one.

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[i] This paper is extracted from my PhD thesis titled "*Linguistic Peculiarities of American Horror Fiction: A Cognitive Stylistic Approach,*" Faculty of Al-Alsun (Languages), Minia University.

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