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The Turn of the Screw's debated phantasms: The role of the fantastic in the creation of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel

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The Turn of the Screw's Debated Phantasms: The Role of the Fantastic in the Creation of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel

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ABSTRACT

When Henry James sat down to write his "amusette" as he called *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), he created various ambiguities in the text as a means of confusing and surprising his readers or, in other words, catching them off guard. Over a century later, the mysterious ambiance surrounding the novella has not become any clearer. While critics from Edmund Wilson to Edna Kenton have analyzed the work from a somewhat psychoanalytical perspective, stating that the ghosts of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint are merely figments of the governess's imagination, Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson examine James's work through a fantastic approach, putting faith in the governess's narrative.

From Todorov's perspective, the fantastic requires:

> … the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work- in the case of naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations. (33)

In other words, Todorov's concept of hesitation involves a focus on an external point, the perspective of the reader. Yet, the reader's perspective cannot be separated from the character or thematic value of the work, thus linking the two elements through hesitation itself. Todorov explains that *The Turn of the Screw* fits the characteristics of the fantastic genre in regard to the reader's hesitation. Indeed, it is that very quality which has created so much critical contention in the past. Because of this hesitation, the reader must determine whether or not to believe the governess and thus, believe in the reality of the ghosts.

While I will begin by defining the fantastic from Todorov's and Jackson's perspective, it is my belief that both authors fail to connect all of the elements that appear in James's text without venturing outside of the work. In my thesis, I will strictly adhere to James's novella, focusing only on the content as I connect the governess's experience to an alternative reality rather than a deviation into psychological madness. In this way, *The Turn of the Screw* will be revealed as a fantastic text, producing its effects on the reader through the evolution of these tendencies within the work.

Chapter One

When Henry James sat down to write his “amusette” as he called *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), he created various ambiguities in the text as a means of confusing and surprising his readers or, in other words, catching them off guard. It has been a long and effective diversion among widely different perspective. Already in the 1920’s and ‘30s, critics such as Edna Kenton and Edmund Wilson were analyzing the work from a range of psychoanalytical perspectives all leading to one conclusion: that the ghosts of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint are merely figments of the governess’s imagination. At mid-century, some like A.J.A. Waldock were granting her credibility in varying degrees, but there was nothing like consensus. Still, over a century later, the mysterious ambiance surrounding the novella has not become any clearer. But there has been no more interesting and significant contribution than that of Tzvetan Todorov in the early 1970’s and Rosemary Jackson following him in the next decade. These theorists reexamined James’s work, putting faith in the governess’s narrative from a newly configured perspective on the fantastic.

Both Jackson and Todorov explain fantasy literature in terms of an unresolved "hesitation" between the fantastic and the real. For Jackson especially the process is a subversion of social reality. This hesitation affects the characters in the narrative and also touches on the reader’s orientation to the text. What Jackson and Todorov do not

consider, in my view, is that it can and does color the critics' viewpoint as well. I will begin by defining the fantastic from Todorov's and Jackson's perspective, but it is my belief that both authors fail to connect all of the elements that appear in James's text without venturing outside of the work. In my argument, I will strictly adhere to James's novella, focusing only on the content as I connect the governess's experience to an alternative reality rather than a deviation into psychological madness. In this way, *The Turn of the Screw* will be revealed as a fantastic text, producing its effects on the reader through the evolution of these tendencies within the work.

After I examine the genre of the fantastic, I will provide a focused perspective on the historical background of *The Turn of the Screw*. Since an element of criticism has been the governess's position *as well as* the characteristics of her personality, it will be necessary to view the governess in the context of her station in order to see the stereotypes that might be responsible for the disbelief in the truth of her narrative.

From this point on I will examine the crucial elements of the novella previous critics have analyzed that claim discrepancies in the governess's account. Afterwards, I will investigate the same elements applying a fantastic perspective in order to prove the validity of the governess's narrative. Examples discussed will be: the introduction of the novella where the governess's friend, Douglass, reveals her story, the nature of the governess's feelings for the children's uncle, the descriptions the governess provides of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, the odd behavior of the children, Miles and Flora, and the role of Mrs. Grose's servitude. For each one of these concepts, there exist analyses made by critics of how they oppose the truth the governess offers in her narrative, in particular: Edmund Wilson's and Edna Kenton's psychoanalytical approach, Oscar Cargill's

Freudian methodology, Harold Goddard's pre-Freudian reading and Joseph Firebaugh's emphasis on the incompetence of the governess and her need for attention. Having defined the fantastic, I will approach the above-mentioned instances within the novella from a fantastic perspective only. In this way, it will become clear that James's novella follows Todorov's and Jackson's characterization of the fantastic rather than another method of approach. It is my opinion that other theories bring too much outside speculation rather than focusing on the text itself and what is contained in it whereas the fantastic proposes an approach that works with what the text provides and nothing else.

Chapter Two -- Tzvetan Todorov's and Rosemary Jackson's Fantastic

For Tzvetan Todorov genre is the relay point linking literature with the world (8). As a consequence the fantastic exists for the theorist, as a genre rather than a literary technique or theme. In fact, Todorov's entire definition of the fantastic links the text itself not only with the surrounding environment, but with the reader involved with the work through the means of "hesitation." This process requires:

> … the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work- in the case of naïve reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations. (33)

In other words, Todorov's concept of hesitation involves the necessity for a "vision" to be presented, followed by the reaction of the protagonist, leaving the reader to ultimately choose between manners of interpreting the text. Yet, the reader's perspective cannot be

separated from the character or thematic value of the work, thus linking the two elements through hesitation itself.

Todorov explains that the fantastic's hesitation for the character of the text is created through a "necessary ambiguity." In this instance, the character doubts the reality of what he or she witnesses, questioning his/her own sensibility. At times, the vision or suspected illusory chain of events is confused with madness, albeit not to the point of certainty on the protagonist's part. Ambiguity, stylistically, is created through the "…imperfect tense and modalization" (38). In each instance, the certainty of the character's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs is never quite substantiated clearly enough to present to the reader what exactly has occurred within the text. As a result, the ambiguity transfers from the perception of the character of the text to the reader involved in the text's meaning.

Because of Todorov's specific representation of the fantastic, other literary and non-literary tendencies are excluded. Many literary critics have confused the fantastic approach with the marvelous; however, as Todorov explains, the difference lies in the reader's interpretation of the text: "At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic…If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous" (41). The fantastic, then, avoids permanent alteration of reality, while the marvelous adopts new laws that explain the ambiguous events of the text.

The fantastic is also limited to type of text. Todorov observes that the fantastic exists only in the world of fiction, rather than poetry since poetic imagery cannot be

translated into sensory items (60). Because of this, the reader cannot bring the image "to life," but rather, must allow the image to remain in its metaphorical state. To do otherwise would corrupt the interpretation of the text.

Furthermore, the perspective of the protagonist involves the use of first rather than third person. Todorov claims that first person permits an easier identification between protagonist and reader. For this reason, generally third person is utilized in texts representative of the marvelous. At the same time, the identification between the inside and outside domains of the text is an inherent aspect of the work itself. In other words, the reader identifies with the protagonist through a "structural concomitant" rather than a psychological motive. Through the pursuit of psychological interpretations, psychoanalysis for one, the reader converts himself into a translator. If the text inherently produces the hesitation Todorov has repeatedly mentioned, then a linguistic or imagery related translation would violate the internal mechanisms of the work, thus avoiding the specific characteristics assigned to the fantastic genre. In this way, Todorov's analysis of what constitutes the fantastic rather than the marvelous or psychoanalytic approach explicitly defines the limitations of the literary fantastic.

Rosemary Jackson, in contrast, explains that the fantastic or *phantasticus* (Greek for that which is made visible, visionary or unreal), "… is produced within, and determined by, its social context" (3). The social context in question is a humanistic vision, one where the fantastic is able to transcend reality. As a result of building reality on a particular context, the former cannot be isolated from the latter. The consequence of such manipulation of reality is an "unreality" where what has been made invisible or unsaid within a culture appears as the predominate reality of the text (4). The fantastic

becomes then a search for truth instead of an embodiment of it as it subsequently violates the accepted "possibilities" or "truths" of reality. Jackson observes that, "Breaking single, reductive 'truths,' the fantastic traces a space within a society's cognitive frame. It introduces multiple, contradictory 'truths': it becomes polysemic" (23). In short, the fantastic works within a society's reality as it violates the limits the society traces.

Another aspect of the fantastic for Jackson as for Todorov, is a specific level of uncertainty as it occupies a space between two realms, that of the fantastic-uncanny and that of the fantastic-marvelous. For this reason, Jackson eliminates the fantastic as a genre (classified as such by Todorov), explaining that the purely fantastic functions as a literary mode between the marvelous and the mimetic. While the marvelous involves a passive participation on the reader's part, the mimetic merely imitates the "real," stating from the beginning through a third-person mouthpiece the imitative value of the work (34). In comparison, the fantastic produces a "narrative instability" as both the reader and the protagonist face uncertainty about the reality of what is seen and heard, although they experience a supposed validation of the reality of specific events. Instability presents the possibility of the fantastic as a mode.

As in Todorov's analysis, Jackson cites specific tendencies in the creation of the fantastic in a text. She observes that, "…it is remarkable how many fantasies introduce mirrors, glasses, reflections, portraits, eyes- which see things myopically, or distortedly, as out of focus- to effect a transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar" (43). Although Jackson illustrates the problem of vision and the eye, in a fantastic work, vision eventually becomes the only manner of "seeing" the unreal or making the invisible visible.

Thus Jackson notes specific themes associated with the fantastic such as invisibility, transformation, dualism, and good versus evil. Various motifs are generated through the thematic elements of the fantastic: ghosts, shadows, vampires, werewolves, doubles, partial selves, reflections, enclosures, monsters, beasts, and cannibals (49). Each motif works at subverting the general order of a reality, creating the possibility for gender inversions at times and the prospect of "unrealistic" visions becoming real. The development of multiplicity and transformation eradicates the surety of the eye and the visible while simultaneously erasing the stability of knowledge. The fantastic, thus, explores the relationship between the "I" of the narrative and the "other" created by the unreal.

Jackson further explores Todorov's lack of connection between the fantastic and the psychoanalytical. Psychoanalysis, in her opinion, directly correlates to the mode of the uncanny in the emergence of the unconscious. Through the mode of the uncanny, language poses a problem, prohibiting the expression of the character's desire. Jackson suggests that the psychoanalytic (ignored by Todorov because of his emphasis on structural effects) must be considered when analyzing the fantastic in a text because of the necessity both areas share in developing an utterance for desire lacking in linguistic methodology. The fantastic seeks, then, to make the "heart's darkness" visible as it subverts the cultural order and transcends the limits of society's constructions.

Chapter Three -- The Critics and the Governess

The central criticism of James's *The Turn of the Screw* lies in the governess's perspective. However, before examining the analyses of the critics taking a non-fantastic approach, it is necessary to concisely scrutinize the position James's governess would have had in the late nineteenth-century time period of the novella.

According to T.J. Lustig in *Henry James and the Ghostly*, the position of governess could be compared to the perilous occupation of tightrope walker. In his 1957 analysis, Lustig explains that, "An outsider within the family, often a foreigner within the familiar, she did not quite belong either above or below stairs, either with the adults or the children, either amongst men or with other women" (150). In short, the governess occupied a position both inside and outside of the family, placed neatly above the servants "below the stairs," yet hardly an equal to the family she worked for. As a result of this ambiguous position, fear developed as to the nature and necessary "education" of a governess. Families desired women from middle-class backgrounds, rather than the vulgar and low-born. However, despite the "required" middle-class position of a governess, her natural disposition was often associated with "…disorder, misrule, inversion, and ultimately with the manifestations of social or literary crisis outlined by Girard in his account of sacrifice and Todorov in his analysis of the fantastic" (Lustig

151). It is no wonder then that the governess's perspective in James's novella has been called into question by a great number of critics. Yet, despite the plethora of objections to the reality of the ghosts' presence, these critics often disengage themselves from the text, at times avoiding concrete evidence in the novella while at others recreating textual elements with little factual background.

While all the analyses eventually lead to the question of the governess's truthfulness and the ghosts' reality, the critics inevitably begin with the narrator responsible for shedding light on the governess's experience, her friend, Douglass. After an evening of listening to ghost stories, the narrator encounters a man who explains that he knows of a true "horror" story involving his sister's former governess (a woman that remains unnamed through out the novel). For the past twenty years, this man, Douglass, has kept the governess's testimony. He promises to send the manuscript to the narrator who then reads about the woman's experience through her own words in first person. At the beginning of the novella, however, Douglass describes the governess as "…awfully clever and nice…the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position…and worthy of any whatever" (James 130). In this way, James introduces the governess's voice with the reference of Douglass, a man half in love with her.

Yet, two decades before Lustig's account, Edmund Wilson in "The Ambiguity of Henry James," proposes that the governess's credibility is only a stylistic measure on James's part meant to throw the reader off (385). Wilson continues his analysis of the governess's credibility explaining that her ghostly visions are nothing more than the sexual repression of an Anglo-Saxon spinster. In other words, the governess merely transfers her sexual attraction toward the master of Bly, the children's uncle, to a physical

embodiment of sexually deviant "ghosts." Douglass's affirmation that the governess is a trustworthy witness of evil incarnate at Bly means absolutely nothing as Wilson attempts to compare manipulative twists in other novels and short stories with similar strategies in *The Turn of the Screw*. Yet supporting evidence from within the text does not present itself, implying that this particular aspect of Wilson's analysis, Douglass's "inadvertent" promotion of the governess's credibility, is only manipulated to accommodate his theory.

Along the same lines in the 1960s, Oscar Cargill in "Henry James as Freudian Pioneer" compares *The Turn of the Screw* (in particular, the governess's madness) with a case studied by Freud and Breuer, "The Case of Miss Lucy R." In his comparison of the two texts, Cargill relates that both cases are presented as reports or case histories. In *The Turn of the Screw*, Douglass provides the governess's experiences, while in Lucy R.'s history, her case is documented through Freud's and Breuer's work in psychoanalysis. Douglass relates through his introduction of his friend, that the latter fell in love with Bly's master, as Lucy R., another governess, did with her own employer. In Lucy R.'s case, however, the young governess experienced strange smells and depression while in control of her charges. After several interviews Freud determined that her sensory experiences were somehow linked to her feelings for the master of the house. Her first "imaginary" smell, a burned pastry, was later substituted after a few sessions with Freud with the smell of a burning cigar. As Freud delved deeper into the governess's neurosis, he determined that the smells were a replacement for a specific memory the governess had witnessed one evening during a social gathering when a gentleman visitor kissed the governess's charges. Later on in the same evening, a lady visitor also kissed the children. In both instances, these gestures of affection were witnessed by the children's father. Up

to this point, through the governess's romantic fantasies, she had convinced herself that the children's father loved her and that her presence in the household was due to her prolonged waiting for his amorous confession. However, after the father witnessed the two visitors' actions, he exploded with rage, blaming the governess for permitting such an occurrence. The governess suddenly realized that the children's father lacked an amorous affection for her, and, at the same time, her "imagined" olfactory perceptions consequently disappeared. As she consciously acknowledged her fantasies, her physical symptoms appeared corrected.

Although Lucy R.'s case occurred in 1895, three years before the publication of *The Turn of the Screw*, Cargill offers little evidence aside from chronology that Henry James was influenced by such a psychoanalytic case history enough to base the novella on it. In fact, in Henry James's letters where he explicitly developed his ideas through his correspondence with other writers as well as friends, he never mentions Freud's theories or cases once. In fact, he explains in a letter to Edmund Gosse that the source of his novella is a story heard from Archbishop of Canterbury:

> To think of the good old Addington Archbishop (by a vague fragment of a tale he ineffectually tried to tell me) having given me the germ of anything so odious and hideous! …The difficulty, the problem was of course to add, organically, the element of beauty to a thing so foully ugly- and the success is in *trust* if I *have* done it. But I despise bogies, any way. (81)

In short, although Cargill links the narrative technique (Douglass's presentation of the governess's case) of *The Turn of the Screw*, with Lucy R.'s psychoanalytic sessions, as well as the two histories' chronologies, James distinctly explains that the idea for the

novella did not come from psychology, but rather was a ghost story told by a friend. In short, Cargill posits a theory with little factual research behind it.

The other structural thread connected to the governess's credibility is her romantic feelings for the children's uncle, the master of Bly. Edmund Wilson postulates that the governess has merely transferred her feelings for the master into a physical apparition. He calls attention to the scene where she walks, dreaming of the master's face before her, only to stumble upon the figure of Peter Quint. Wilson explains, "She is never to meet her employer again, but what she does meet are the apparitions. One day when his face [the master's] has been vividly in her mind, she comes out in sight of the house and, looking up, sees the figure of a man on a tower, a figure which is not the master" (386). However, the figure in question is not dressed as a gentleman and what has specifically attracted the young woman to the master in the first place is the gentlemanly qualities the uncle possesses to which she is not accustomed in her previous experiences. Although Wilson attempts to connect the ghost's "smart clothes" with Quint's previous habit of stealing the master's belongings, the governess explicitly states that the man she saw was not a gentleman, stolen clothes or not. In short, again Wilson futilely attempts to force James's descriptions into a psychoanalytic approach despite the discrepancies in James's work and the critic's developed theory.

In "Another Turn on James's 'The Turn of the Screw'" appearing in 1949, Glenn A. Reed observes that the governess's feelings for the master are inserted on James's part in order to provide explanation for later actions:

> In the second place, it is difficult to see how a girl of twenty with little knowledge of the world since she comes to her first job of governess fresh

> from a country parsonage, could be a version of the frustrated Anglo-Saxon spinster, particularly when her relationship with the Master is developed no further than a schoolgirlish crush and is inserted into the story, it seems to me, partly to motivate her acceptance of a position peculiarly encumbered and partly to explain her reluctance to consult the master when she is hard pressed. (418)

In other words, although the governess discloses her feelings for the uncle, her "romantic intentions" consist of nothing more than the exposure of an inexperienced girl to the sophistication of wealth and culture. At the same time, according to Reed, once she accepts her position as governess, she longs to please the master by controlling Bly in an efficient manner, without the necessity of calling upon him as per his instructions. After the appearance of the ghosts and the witnessing of the children's inappropriate behavior, her respectful feelings for the uncle prohibit her from corresponding with him and asking his advice.

While Reed disagrees with psychoanalytic or other theories that question the governess's credibility, he considers the ghosts' appearance one element of James's "fairy tale." He thus links all the questionable "ambiguity" of other analyses to the structural techniques of the Brothers' Grimm stating that, "There is the same objective horror with no attempt to explain it away" (417). Yet, the entire novella functions as an explanation from Douglass's introduction to Miles's sudden death. In short, James's "amusette" meant to "catch those not easily caught" implies that the explanation has been provided, but those not paying close enough attention will lose the clues structurally

threaded throughout the novella's development. To discard the possibility of explanation eradicates the opportunity to thoroughly understand James's creation.

Another element of the text analyzed by critics has been the description of the ghosts by the governess. For many, her entire credibility lies in these descriptions of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. Edna Kenton in her article "James to the Ruminant Reader: *The Turn of the Screw*" (one of the first articles approaching the governess's situation, appearing in 1924) quotes long passages of the text in her efforts to exemplify the governess's madness and the illusion of the ghosts' presence. However, she never addresses how exactly the governess came to know so distinctly what Peter Quint and Miss Jessel looked like. She observes:

> Not the children, but the little governess was hounded by the ghosts…After her startling materializations of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, Bly became a nest of lurking shapes, and she walked softly, in terror, expectantly…So she made the shades of her recurring fevers dummy figures for the delirious terrifying of others, pathetically trying to harmonize her own disharmonies by creating discords outside herself. (254)

According to Kenton, the governess's recognition of the ghosts is simply the projection of her own madness, yet the explanation of madness determines only so much in James's text. Mrs. Grose shockingly concurs that the governess's descriptions of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel correspond concretely to the former employees of Bly, so much so that the former is immediately convinced that the ghosts of these two deviants are now haunting the property. If the governess were mad, how could she possibly describe down to the

color of their hair, two people that she has never met in her life? Edna Kenton's argument lacks conviction without exploration of James's development of the governess's experience.

In A.J.A. Waldock's examination of the novella in 1947, "Mr. Edmund Wilson and The Turn of the Screw," he posits the question in response to Edmund Wilson's argument of the governess's madness and self-projection of the ghosts: "How did the governess succeed in projecting on vacancy, out of her own subconscious mind, a perfectly precise, point-by-point image of a man, then dead, whom she had never seen in her life and never heard of? What psychology, normal or abnormal, will explain that? And what is the right word for such a vision but 'ghost'? (334). However, Waldock's examination of *The Turn of the Screw* simply expresses the concept that the ghosts are real once compared to the analysis of Wilson who ignores specific details while fabricating others in order to prove his psychoanalytic approach. At the end of the article, Waldock fails to provide explanation for why the ghosts present themselves to the governess or what the reader should gather from the novella outside of the belief that the governess has indeed experienced a moment of "horror."

The odd behavior of the children, Miles and Flora, directly corresponds to the governess's reliability as witness to the strange events occurring at Bly. As the governess minutely watches the changes in the children's behavior from their disappearing acts in the middle of the night to the obscure conversations filled with double meanings, she becomes convinced that Peter Quint has corrupted Miles while Miss Jessel has tainted Flora's purity. The governess bases her belief in the children's corruption on these eccentric, somewhat unexplainable acts. According to Edmund Wilson, though, the

children "…are able to give plausible explanation of the behavior that has seemed suspicious" (388). And what precisely are these explanations? When the governess leaves the room she shares with Flora in the middle of the night, she returns to find Flora's bed empty. Flora is hiding behind the bed and she jumps out to frighten the governess. When the governess asks the little girl if she was looking for her out of the window assuming that the former has been walking on the grounds, Flora assents that she has been looking out the window, adding ambiguously, "Well, you know, I thought someone was…" (James 178). Given that the scene occurs in the middle of the night, what exactly seems plausible about Flora's explanation? Who else would she be expecting to see at night walking the grounds of Bly?

In another scene with Miles, the governess visits him once he is tucked into bed. By this point, her conversations have become a method to divine the truth about the ghosts and the children's involvement with them. Miles explains that he has merely been thinking while lying in bed. The governess asks him what he is thinking of.

> "What in the world, my dear, but you?"
>
> 'Ah, the pride I take in your appreciation doesn't insist on that! I had so far rather you slept.'
>
> 'Well, I think also, you know, of this queer business of ours.'
>
> 'Of what queer business, Miles?'
>
> "Why, the way you bring me up. And all the rest!'" (203).

However, Miles never reveals what "the rest" is after he alludes to her style of teaching and raising children. In fact, the majority of the conversations that the governess has with Miles involve "double-talk," a manner of speech quite unusual for a young boy to use in

his everyday dialogues. Still, Wilson insists that Miles and Flora are nothing more than children with the sad misfortune of living with a sexually repressed Anglo-Saxon spinster in love with their uncle.

In Muriel G. Shine's analysis *The Fictional Children of Henry James* (1969), she determines that James offers little concluding evidence that the children are or are not corrupted. She observes that,

> At no point in the story does James have Flora or Miles *do* anything that might not be construed as perfectly normal behavior for children of their class and obvious intelligence. The reader can never, with any degree of certainty, say what the children really are, only what they could possibly be. Miles could be the soul of corruption, and, by the same token, he could be a typical little Victorian gentleman who minds his manners… (138).

She further claims that the decision concerning the children's corruption is based solely on the reader's state of mind, ignoring James's basis of the text, the ghost story of horror combined with the concept that childhood is not sacred (James 84). If childhood loses its purity, the horror becomes more than the appearance of ghosts, a hackneyed plot in fiction, but rather a story of extreme deviance as the two children lose themselves because of the lecherous psychologies of their former "friends" and servants, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. In ignoring the possibility of a concrete conclusion about the children's state of mind, Shine, as with Cargill, oversimplifies James's work, thus seriously misreading the text.

Terry Heller's *Bewildered Vision* (1989) offers the interpretation that the children have become corrupted because of their fear that their present governess has been

converted into Miss Jessel. Miss Jessel has been described as somewhat melancholy by Mrs. Grose and so Heller assumes that Jessel's behavior and moods influenced the children's behavior during her employment at Bly. Now, as they witness their current governess's preoccupation and misery, the two children become "convinced" that they have seen the ghosts the governess so enthusiastically points out to them. As a consequence to the psychological disturbance consistently present in the house (from Miss Jessel's time period to the narrating governess), Flora wishes to be removed from the young lady's presence, while Miles dies for fear of the consequences of his behavior in this stressful situation (235). Unfortunately, Heller's analysis develops implications with little foundation. Although Miss Jessel exhibited questionable tendencies in regard to her relationship with Peter Quint, Mrs. Grose does not hold the former governess responsible for improprieties, but rather, the valet, the young man who stole his master's clothing. Again, while Heller's theory illuminates a possible interpretation, once scrutinized the theory proves lackluster in textual evidence and support.

Robin P. Hoople provides a contemporary perspective in 1997, claiming that the children exhibit corruption because of the ghosts' presence. He explains that, "Closely related to the study of character in the novella is the association of horror with character creation. The writer for Literature is appalled at the particular horror of the possession of the children by the ghosts, at the obscene cooperation between the ghosts and the children" (42) According to Hoople, the magnificence of James's novella is this unique twist in the thematic development of horror. While he investigates the possibility of approaching *The Turn of the Screw* from a fantastic perspective, the central premise of his text is a comparison of various criticisms since the first publication of the novella in

1898. At the same time, Hoople connects various theories with the concrete construction of James's work, allowing for possibilities such as horror and the fantastic while excluding psychoanalysis as an approach to the text. In short, Hoople does not distinctively choose one perspective to follow, but instead, offers an array of analyses for James's "ambiguous" novella.

The final element linked to the governess's experience is her counterpart, Mrs. Grose, a woman that submissively seems to follow the governess's lead. Robert Heilman in the same decade as Waldock describes Mrs. Grose as "…the commonplace mortal, well-intentioned, but perceiving only the obvious" (278). But Mrs. Grose does not always acquiesce when it comes to the actions evident in Bly. Glenn Reed explains that Mrs. Grose is entirely aware of the past corruption of the former governess and valet and when the new governess appears, she attempts to eradicate all trace of evil and diabolical deeds from Bly's surface (421). In each of these arguments, the manipulation of Mrs. Grose's placement within the text occurs in order to prove that *The Turn of the Screw* presents itself with Christian overtones (according to Heilman) or as conclusively ambiguous and unnecessary to define (Reed). This problematization of Mrs. Grose continues in other analyses of her character.

In 1953 Charles Hoffman describes Mrs. Grose as a minor character, but an important one (102). He explains that at the beginning of the novella Mrs. Grose is a functioning, completely sane woman, possessed with realistic rather than superstitious tendencies. From Hoffman's perspective, Mrs. Grose provides important collaborative testimony, supporting the governess's belief in the ghost's reality (102). Belief in the governess's perspective proves central to Hoffman's argument because he believes Henry

James has developed a novel based around the battle between good and evil. The ghosts' presence provides the necessary evil that will eventually corrupt the purity of the children. While Hoffman supports the notion of the ghosts' reality, his conclusion that James developed a battle between "sinfulness" and "light" or "God as the creator" seems far-fetched when placed within the context of the novel. After all, Mrs. Grose presents herself as realistic and rational, only believing in the ghosts once she witnesses enough strange behavior in the house, behavior that mimics the deviancy present when Miss Jessel and Peter Quint were alive. Never, in the evolution of the action of the text, does a notion of Christian allegory emerge. In fact, the novella appears strangely void of religious connotations taken in its totality. It would seem then, that although Hoffman remains true to the nature of Mrs. Grose's character and her reliability, he embellishes in terms of thematic content.

John Silver in his article from 1957 "Freudian Reading of 'The Turn of the Screw'" explains that Mrs. Grose's belief in the governess's testimony is not adequate enough for the reader to be taken in by the developments at Bly (208). In fact, Silver proclaims that Mrs. Grose will not "tell her superior" that the latter is crazy. Furthermore, the governess only manages to "bully" Mrs. Grose into believing that the ghosts have appeared at all: "In Chapter VIII we are told that the governess and Mrs. Grose have had a talk in which Mrs. Grose, not yet fully cowed into belief in the ghosts, asks the governess how she can be sure that what she has seen were not, in effect, hallucinations. The governess's reply is typical of the half-truths she uses to bend Mrs. Grose to her will" (209). Mrs. Grose, then, is simply a puppet to the governess's manipulation. Silver observes that not once does Mrs. Grose ever actually see the ghosts that the governess

describes, illustrating concretely the lack of any supernatural occurrence. However, Silver's analysis of *The Turn of the Screw* is only meant to support Edmund Wilson's and Edna Kenton's analyses, calling into question the various objections pertaining to these two critics' articles. John Silver offers explanations where Wilson does not, concluding that the governess was able to describe Peter Quint and Miss Jessel because she had previously heard of them elsewhere. Again, though, as with Wilson's and Kenton's argument, Silver does not concretely illustrate through textual analysis proof that the governess overheard or learned of the two employees' physical descriptions before arriving at Bly. Likewise, his explanation that Mrs. Grose suffers from an attitude of "servitude" violates the descriptions previous critics have utilized in order to illustrate that Mrs. Grose provides the voice of reason through her realistic perspective. At the same time, she has sensed, long before the arrival of the present governess, something amiss in the former employees, something diabolical and strange, enough so as to try and cover up all appearance of it before the new governess has the chance to sense anything amiss. As a consequence, although she does not visually observe the ghosts' presence on the grounds or in the house, the governess's minute description of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel functions as viable evidence to convince Mrs. Grose, servant or not, that the ghosts are materializing. At the same time, Mrs. Grose cannot help but consider the governess's recent arrival at Bly and her inexperience in the area as well as her blatant incapacity to conjure up so realistic and "truthful" a description of two people she could hardly have known or heard of in her distant parsonage. It would seem then that Silver's attempt to eliminate the criticism of Wilson's and Kenton's analyses only furthers the possibility of

another, quite different approach to James's text, one in which fundamental evidence is provided.

In each of the above-mentioned analyses of James's *The Turn of the Screw* the various theories, from Wilson's Freudian perspective to Hoffman's Christian battle of good and evil, appear misshapen and unfounded, because of serious misreading, textual information forced into an already divined theory and the consistent use of extraneous, "invented" information not contained in James's work. In contrast, in the following section, I will examine each element connected to the governess's perspective and credibility, applying a fantastic approach without deviating from the text James created.

Chapter Four -- *The Turn of the Screw* and the Fantastic

Janice M. Bogstad posits that the fantastic has become rather difficult to define; however, much like Todorov and Jackson, she connects the fantastic with the social realm of individual identity (81). Todorov and Jackson, though, provide greater synthesis in their attachment of literature and to the society surrounding it. Applying this syncretism to *The Turn of the Screw* supplies the reader with the answers to James's apparent "ambiguities" that have stumped critics and previous readers since the novella's release. In this chapter, I will connect the same problematic concepts discussed in the previous chapter. However, instead of addressing them as discrepancies introduced by critics, I will treat them in the context of the narrative. In this way, it will become apparent how necessary a fantastic perspective is when evaluating the "amusette" James has so cleverly created.

Douglass is the second narrator of the text followed by an unnamed man who happens to overhear ghost stories at a social event he attends. The narrator explains that, "I remember no comment uttered till somebody happened to say that it was the only case he had met in which such a visitation had fallen on a child" (128). Douglass, who likewise attends the party, speaks up, explaining that he knows of a case involving *two* children. All of the people in the house, including the narrator, exclaim that they would like to hear the story. Unfortunately, they cannot because the tale is contained in a

manuscript Douglass has kept in another location ever since his sister's former governess gave it to him. From the beginning, then, Douglass's participation in the text seems more than a manner of introducing an "untruth" or the "madness" of a young woman already deceased. Instead, when applying Todorov's first point of the three conditions for the fantastic, Douglass's involvement brings to life a vibrant world full of "real, living" characters. Likewise, from this introduction a balance between the world of the supernatural and the natural appears as the narrator delves into a manuscript, confronted by the appearance of two ghosts who corrupt the young people they associated with when they were living.

Todorov also links his first point with a "verbal aspect," one in which "visions" occur. The manuscript given to the narrator by Douglass is the governess's testimony, written in her own hand in first person. Each element of her experience functions as a series of visions that she attempts to sort through, while the narrator, presumably, does the same. Yet, her precise "manifestation" of her personal experiences falls under scrutiny because the text itself has become inexorably linked with the societal structure in and around it. In other words, as premised by Rosemary Jackson, "…the literary fantastic is never 'free'" (3). Literature cannot be separated from the society outside of it; for this reason, the fantastic fails to disconnect from the structural elements of the time period and the society inhabiting the historical moment of its creation. Given the criticism concerning the governess's state of mind when describing her life at Bly, critics also, whether consciously or subconsciously, insert societal "judgments" into the text, thus transforming the text's meaning into "untruths" in an effort to explain the complicated ambiguity of James's work. Jackson explains that the fantastic works to transcend the

reality of society by voicing what has been silenced in this "accepted" reality. In terms of the governess, a woman whose occupation denies her equality as well as passive subservience, her written testimony voices her "absenteeism" from Victorian society. As a consequence, from critics' analyses of her truthfulness, the second narrator, Douglass, faces the same scrutiny as his friend because of his faithfulness in a "governess's" state of mind and voice. From the synthesis of Todorov's and Jackson's hypotheses of the fantastic, Douglass and the governess both elicit credibility as they transcend the strict norms and mores of an inflexible, slightly intolerant societal system of belief.

Before the arrival of the manuscript, Douglass introduces further the governess's character and state of mind regarding the uncle. He describes her as "…young, untried, nervous: it was a vision of serious duties and little company, of really great loneliness" (134). Despite the somewhat melancholic characteristics associated with an existence at Bly, the governess cannot separate her future position from the "bachelor in the prime of his life" a figure the young woman has not had the capacity to imagine in Hampshire. Combined with the sophisticated countenance of the children's uncle, the governess receives an offer from him of a substantial salary, a secondary unfamiliar element in her range of mastered expertise. From the novella's onset then, the governess stands vicariously between everything she has intimately witnessed and that of the elusive.

Todorov explains in his second point of the elements of the fantastic that a level of hesitation is experienced in a character of the work. As a result, the reader parallels the internal mechanisms of the text, suffering hesitation through his/her connection to the thematic appearance of "hesitant" situations. Before the narrator begins to read the governess's manuscript in *The Turn of the Screw*, Douglass and other listeners absorb the

nature of the governess's feelings for the children's uncle. Through Douglass's adjectival phrases, even in conversation, the other characters of the text as well as the reader experience the governess's trepidation and apprehensive constitution. Yet, the theme of hesitation, on the young woman's as well as the reader's part, sustains itself in her testimony once she begins to observe the strange happenings at Bly and the mysterious figures that present themselves to her as she watches over Miles and Flora. Jackson develops the concept of "narrative instability" where the reader and the character both inhabit a region of uncertainty as they progress through a series of destabilized actions and occurrences. The governess's feelings for the uncle metamorphose beyond a delicate "minor" detail of her character, thus simultaneously producing the intricate, destabilized tone of an uncertain environment as the reader proceeds through the manuscript.

Once the governess arrives at Bly she initially experiences wonderment at the beauty of the children as well as the extravagance of Bly itself. Even Mrs. Grose, a "…stout, simple, plain, clean, wholesome woman" (136) captures her attention as she attempts to incorporate herself into a seemingly "utopic" environment. However, at the beginning of the second chapter, the hesitation first experienced by the governess as she considered the position at Bly, returns once again within a distinguishable context. She explains that she is "full of distress." Her reasons for anxiety eventually expand beyond the intimidating nature of her position towards a simple lack of counsel. Faced with the formidable task of managing an expansive estate as well as two very young precocious children, the governess begins to recognize how truly lonely she will be in her occupation. She even hesitates in speaking with Mrs. Grose once Miles is expelled from school. It is then that she completely indoctrinates herself into the strangeness of Bly,

where a young boy's misbehavior becomes the subscribed method of protocol (according to Mrs. Grose.) Through her general sense of hesitation and the overwhelming nature of her vocation, the governess unites herself with Mrs. Grose, the only inhabitant of Bly that illustrates "normal, realistic" tendencies. The chapter closes with the mention of the former governess, Miss Jessel, and her tragic desperate end. In Mrs. Grose's words once more, she explains that Miss Jessel "went off to die somewhere." It is no wonder, at this point that the governess begins to witness the diabolical, ghostly figures roaming through Bly's seemingly "pleasant" grounds.

In chapter three, the governess, impressed by Miles's beauty as much as Flora's, decides to take a walk where she daydreams about the present rather congenial conditions of her life in contrast with her previous "shielded" experience. She thinks, "I learnt something- at first certainly- that had not been one of the teachings of my small, smothered life; learnt to be amused, and even amusing, and not to think for the morrow" (144). At Bly, she begins to disregard the general characteristics of her nature, her methodical manner of approach and her concern for the future. It is in this state, as she imagines again the handsome uncle, that she first sees Peter Quint:

> It produced in me, this figure, in the clear twilight, I remember, two distinct gasps of emotion, which were, sharply, the shock of my first and that of my second, surprise. My second was a violent perception of the mistake of my first: the man who met my eyes was not the person I had precipitately supposed. There came to me thus a bewilderment of vision of which, after these years, there is no living view that I can hope to give…I had not seen it in Harley Street- I had not seen it anywhere. (146-7)

The governess at first mistakes Peter Quint for the image she has conjured in her mind of the uncle, but then she immediately, from the unnatural feelings she experiences as well as from his physical description, recognizes that the figure before her is completely unknown. To see such a man on the property calls her to question the reality of his existence when she thinks to herself: “It lasted while I just bridled a little with the sense that my office demanded that there should be no such ignorance and no such person” (147). In short, such a creature wandering the manicured grounds seems an impossibility. Consequently, she does not tell Mrs. Grose at first about what she witnesses. Instead, she steadily depends on her interior monologue as she endeavors to find a logical explanation for the grim stranger’s presence.

In the following chapter, she again witnesses Peter Quint. Only in this instance, the valet surfaces outside of Miles’s bedroom window. As the governess watches him, feeling distinctly the same sort of uneasy wariness she experienced before on the grounds of Bly, she notices more in his demeanor. She explains that, “On the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had come there. He had come for someone else” (152). Amidst the peculiar spell that Miles casts on her with his beauty and distinctive charm, the governess inherently understands a connection, or a “spell” existing between this anonymous man and the young boy. The governess, moved to examine the place that Peter Quint has formerly occupied, hurries outside only to find herself staring into the boy’s bedroom window, faced with Mrs. Grose’s fearful countenance as a reflection. It is then, empowered by her concern for the children’s welfare, that the governess describes the figure with “red hair, very red, close-curling, and a pale face, long in shape, with straight, good features and little, rather queer

whiskers that are as red as his hair. His eyebrows are, somehow darker; they look particularly arched and as if they might move a good deal. His eyes are sharp, strange-awfully; but I only know clearly that they're rather small and very fixed" (156). In other words, after the governess's elaborate description of the ghostly red-headed figure, Mrs. Grose recognizes him as Peter Quint, voicing the unknown man's formal name. At the same time, she reveals that Peter Quint, like the former governess, is already dead.

Before applying Todorov's third point to the governess's preliminary experience with the ghosts, it is necessary to expand on an aspect of his second point in terms of illustrating the thematic hesitation of the work. Todorov explains that the second point requires a *syntactical* aspect, or what he terms, the character's "reactions" and the *semantic* aspect, or the presentation of a problematic element of perception in the text. The governess's experience elicits an immediate reaction on her part as she attempts to determine the identity of the man she sees on Bly's grounds and outside of Miles's window. However, the thematic value of hesitation extends itself as she hesitates to believe in his existence *and* as she hesitates to reveal what she has witnessed to anyone else, even Mrs. Grose. It is only when the "normal" reality of her situation, her position as protector of the children, re-enters that she experiences motivation in her efforts to prohibit Quint from harming Miles. At the same time, in terms of Todorov's semantic aspect, the governess hesitates to believe in Quint's existence because of the unlikelihood that a stranger would carelessly wander Bly's grounds. The thematic hesitation of the text attaches itself to Todorov's concept of syntax and semantics, and as a consequence, thoroughly illustrates the theorist's second characterization of the fantastic.

Jackson similarly asserts the necessity for a syntactical and semantic aspect within a fantastic work; however, she develops these concepts through "instability.' For Jackson, both the reader and the protagonist respond or "react" to specific events with uncertainty, disbelieving in what they witness until they receive later validation. In the case of the governess, once she describes minutely Peter Quint's appearance, breaking her silence to Mrs. Grose, the latter identifies the ghostly man walking the premises. In this instance, the validation the governess has been searching for appears and the instability disappears momentarily. In fact, with the certainty that Peter Quint exists, the governess, upon seeing Miss Jessel during an afternoon by a pond with Flora, immediately believes in the former governess's appearance when she observes:

> The way this knowledge gathered in me was the strangest thing in the world-- the strangest, that is, except the very much stranger in which it quickly merged itself. I had sat down with a piece of work-- for I was something or other that could sit-- on the old stone bench which overlooked the pond; and in this position I began to take in with certitude, and yet without direct vision, the presence, at a distance, of a third person….There was no ambiguity in anything; none whatever, at least, in the conviction I from one moment to another found myself forming as to what I should see straight before me and across the lake as a consequence of raising my eyes. (162)

In other words, through the validation of the ghost's existence, the true center of the novella develops as the governess fights to remove this diabolical presence from the

children's lives. In short, the young woman now "truly" attempts to illustrate her full capabilities as governess at Bly.

From this point on, the reader is left to discover the children's fate, thus illuminating Todorov's third point concerning the fantastic. Todorov observes that, "…the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations." In *The Turn of the Screw*, the reader cannot help but ignore possibilities of allegorical or poetic manifestations because of the culmination of the ghosts' significance and reality thus far within the text. In this way, the reader must accept that the governess truly has witnessed the ghosts and that the children are slowly becoming corrupt due to their exposure to such dubious presences.

In chapter seven, after the governess witnesses Miss Jessel by the pond watching Flora, she returns to the house and explains to Mrs. Grose that the children remain quite aware of the two ghosts. As the governess describes Miss Jessel's "fixed look" on Flora, the components Mrs. Grose attempted to hide at the beginning of the novel slowly emerge. The humble servant admits that Peter Quint and Miss Jessel were in a relationship and that the nature of Miss Jessel could only be described as "infamous." In fact, the relationship the children experienced with the two former employees admittedly involved vulgar and equally diabolical moments, thus further validating the governess's sensations. In these moments, because of the true commitment the governess and Mrs. Grose elicit regarding the children, the reader should avoid other interpretations in favor of belief in the supernatural occurrences and the implications of these events presented to him/her. In short, James carefully weaves, in the governess's testimony, all the elements

necessary in eradicating any doubt about her credibility, in particular in relation to the nature of the ghosts' appearance.

While Todorov focuses on the reaction of the reader in his third point, Jackson explains that the fantastic often utilizes specific figurative and symbolic devices. Many fantastic works introduce mirrors, reflections, portraits, eyes or some variation of "visual" distortion. From the moment that the governess first sees Quint, she cannot forget the nature of his eyes, how they transfer a feeling of uneasiness from him to her. Likewise, when she sees Miss Jessel for the first time by a pond, again she concentrates her attention on the eyes, noting the "fixed" expression of them. The governess's third experience with Peter Quint functions in the same manner as the others:

> Without it, the next instance, I saw that there was someone on the stair. I speak of sequences, but I required no lapse of seconds to stiffen myself for a third encounter with Quint. The apparition had reached the landing half-way up and was therefore on the spot nearest the window, where, at sight of me, it stopped short and fixed me exactly as it had fixed me from the tower and from the garden. He knew me as well as I knew him. (176)

In this moment, characteristic of the others, the governess calls attention to the "fixedness" of Quint's stare and his "visual" recognition of her through his eyes. At the same time, the great detail and thematic repetition of "recognition" illuminates a certain degree of truthfulness in the governess's tale, forcing the reader's belief in her testimony.

Jackson's above-mentioned "visual" tendencies coincide with several other thematic concerns characteristic of the fantastic genre such as dualism and good versus evil. In *The Turn of the Screw*, once the ghosts have been acknowledged by the governess

and Mrs. Grose, the objective of the latter's actions becomes "saving" the children from such dangerous creatures, or a version of Jackson's theme of "good versus evil." Through James's clues and evidence of the ghosts' "horrific" existence, the author inadvertently eliminates a certain level of the hideousness of the story by integrating the ghosts so thoroughly into the "normality" or "reality" of Bly. As a result, James must extend the "terror" of the story by transferring uncertainty about ghosts that are now certain to children that once appeared "innocent" but who are now "corrupt." In other words, at the beginning of the tale, the governess, entranced by the children's beauty, assumed their "innocence," and now, her recognition of impurities calls into question their alleged and "uncertain" innocence. At the same time, the transference of action from the ghosts to the children prolongs the horror and terror of the story as the governess and the reader proceed towards the termination of this battle between good and evil.

From chapter ten until the conclusion of the novella, the governess and Mrs. Grose attempt to ascertain the degree of guilt suffered by the children in connection with Quint and Miss Jessel. Flora has been looking out the window, searching for someone. When questioned by the governess, the girl responds with an innocence mingled with precocity, explaining that "someone" might be wandering the grounds in the middle of the night. The governess thinks: "At that moment, in the state of my nerves, I absolutely believed she lied; and if I once more closed my eyes it was before the dazzle of the three or four possible ways in which I might take this up" (178). Yet, little time passes before Flora stands before the window again, face to face with the "apparition" as she "communicates" with Miss Jessel.

Miles likewise offers suspicious behavior combined with his innocent beauty. In an obscure conversation with the governess he worries that she will "think me-- for a change-- bad!" (184). However, the story he cryptically tells condemns his "honest" reputation once applied to his actions. By convincing his sister to stand before the window in order to distract the governess so that he may wander the grounds in the middle of the night, Miles illustrates his capacity to deceive. Although Flora's previous behavior seems consequently explained, it is only replaced with further doubt as to why Miles would go outside at midnight in the first place. One suggestion, then, is planted in place of another.

In chapter twelve, the governess after thorough investigation and observance of several strange interludes, explains to Mrs. Grose what the ghosts' intentions are with the children, furthering the fantastic theme of good versus evil: "For the love of all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And to play them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons, is what brings the others back" (186). In short, the ghosts have returned in order to expand on the evil they implanted within the children when Quint and Miss Jessel were alive. Mrs. Grose, uncertain as to the capabilities of the ghosts, asks the governess: "But what can they now do?" (187). The governess responds, "Do?...Don't they do enough?...They can destroy them!" (187). In this instance, it is no longer a matter of preventing the complete corruption of the children's souls, but rather, their deaths. Mrs. Grose wants to notify the uncle about these happenings at Bly, but the governess, completely aware of the "reality" that still exists in Victorian society, already imagines "…his derision, his amusement, his contempt for the breakdown of my resignation at being left alone and for the fine machinery I had set in motion to attract his

attention to my slighted charms" (188). In other words, the governess cannot present the case of ghosts and madness to the reality that exists outside of Bly. In that "other" reality, she will only suffer rejection and negativity at her inability to a) perform her duties and b) remain rational and "realistic" in an extremely lonely and stressful situation. The reality of society is thoroughly rejected in her decision to remain silent as far as the uncle goes, while consequently positioning her as the center of good against evil. However, the governess does not need his intervention once the intensity of the children's behavior grows.

In chapter fourteen, Miles pleads to return to school. He expresses disdain at remaining in a lady's presence, yet up until this moment, he has not complained about his protectress. He wants to be with his "own sort," an amusing concept from the governess's perspective. The importance of the chapter remains in Miles's desire that his uncle visits in order that he should know "the way I'm going on" (187). For the governess, his agitation only illustrates his already developed "plan" regarding his future actions. The young woman determines to call the children's uncle, regardless of how she will be perceived in doing so. Her actions lead to another obscure conversation with Miles regarding, once more, the elusive future. Miles again begs her to reveal everything about what has been going on as well as how she has been raising him and his sister. He explains: "Well, don't you understand that that's exactly what I'm working for? You'll have to tell him- about the way you've let it all drop: you'll have to tell him a tremendous lot" (196). Yet the subject of each of the conversations seems undetermined. Clearly, Miles conceives of a plan, yet his "reasoning" raises questions as to the truth of his intent. In the preceding days, Miles depicts only fondness for the governess, positioning his

request as a means of "saving himself" from the terrors he encounters at Bly outside of the governess's presence. By the end of the story, Miles remains the purer of the two siblings as he continually trusts in the governess's character in contrast with his sister's loathing of the young woman. The root of Flora's resentment arises from the disturbing events of chapters eighteen and nineteen.

In these chapters, Miles and Flora attempt to confuse Mrs. Grose and the governess in order that Flora can escape to see Miss Jessel. The governess and the servant follow the young girl out to the lake again, where they find the child ominously waiting for them: "While this dumb convulsion lasted I could only watch it-- which I did the more intently when I saw Flora's face peep at me over our companion's shoulder. It was serious now-- the flicker had left it: but it strengthened the pang with which I at that moment envied Mrs. Grose the simplicity of *her* relation" (212). Not long after the reunion, the governess spies Miss Jessel near the lake and once more the ghost presents herself to the child. When the governess expects a response from the little girl, both Flora and Mrs. Grose deny Miss Jessel's presence. However, the child's reaction suddenly turns sinister as she begins to vehemently request to be removed from the governess's sight. It would seem after a series of tricks and preconceived plans on the part of Flora and Miles that her reaction concretely fits into the pattern of their strange behavior. Flora, in short, has little choice but to turn against the governess in order to preserve her previous "deceitful" actions. At the same time, in the following chapter, after Mrs. Grose spends some time with Flora, the servant reports to the young woman that the little girl has been speaking "horrors." Yet, the horrors in question only justify the governess's case. Despite Mrs. Grose's failure to see the ghosts, the thoroughness of the child's

corruption presents undeniable evidence of her participation in all the strange and devilish aspects of the ghosts' appearance.

In the final chapters, the governess experiences further revelations as she pieces together each moment of her time at Bly since the ghosts' first appearance. Mrs. Grose leaves with Flora while the young woman remains behind with Miles. In their final conversation, Miles explains that, "I will tell you everything!" (229). He consequently admits to stealing the governess's letter to the uncle and he concedes that his expulsion at school was for saying horrible things to "those he liked" (233). The governess asks him what the "things" were he told the other students. Miles does not have a chance to respond as the ghost of Quint appears at the window again. Without mentioning his name, the governess gets Miles, in complete honesty, to name the figure's identity. Miles exclaims: "Peter Quint-- you devil!" (234). With the revelation of the ghost's name, the governess embraces the young boy, quite certain that by revealing his name and Miles's "devotion" to him, the young boy will finally "dispossess" himself of the evil. However, the price of reclaiming his purity is death. Thus ends James's novella as the battle between good and evil comes to a close, the governess triumphing against the dangerous, corrupt presence of spirits through the sacrifice of a young boy's life.

Chapter Five

Although a variety of explanations surface when analyzing James's novella *The Turn of the Screw*, when applying Todorov's and Jackson's concepts of the fantastic to the text, the work gathers greater purpose while diminishing in "ambiguity." Through a fantastic approach, the novella divides into two counterparts, thus expanding on the "terror" produced in the text. In other words, while at the beginning of the work, the governess ascertains the "reality" behind the ghosts' appearance, once her suspicions are confirmed, the latter half of the novella portrays an explicitly clear battle between good and evil, the same challenge enumerated by Jackson in her analysis. Without this perspective, the text would appear hackneyed and clichéd in its efforts to "surprise" a reader not easily caught. The truth, then, behind James's novella is not the credibility of the governess, repeatedly discussed in previous analyses, but rather the terrible possibility of a child's corruption through unexplainable and unpreventable means outside of accepted "reality." If one is to accept Jackson's contrast between the "I" as mere witness and the "other," this other that questions the nature of society and societal constructs of reality, what then, is being questioned in James's text?

It would seem that the boundaries between reality itself, so thoroughly regulated in Victorian society, are the questionable aspects of the novella. If the governess, a woman placed precariously between the "accepted" and "ignored" of reality due to her

occupation, remains the true witness, expressing her testimony with complete validation, then already the boundaries of belief systems experience a threatening possibility of extinction. Her validation is the ghost's appearance at Bly and so, the destabilized reality is the "accepted" reality, one in which children remain unquestionably pure while the servants are held responsible for indiscretions and inconsistencies. James, however, proposes a reality where the "questionable" elicit credibility and trust, while the "unquestionable," young, beautiful children, fall into disgrace because of their attraction to the diabolical and disgraceful elements of society, two previous servants of little virtue. Through a reversal or destabilization of societal norms, the limits of social boundaries crumble even if momentarily in the small space of a single community. James arranges this momentary configuration of reality exchange through a simple "ghost story" of limitless magnitude. In this way, through a fantastic presentation of his novella, he does indeed capture those "not easily caught."

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