

Colonial Echoes in Gothic Shadows: Examining James's *The Turn of the Screw*

Mahendra Bahadur Thapa¹

Abstract

Gothic literature aims not just to carry readers to the world of fear, suspense, and ghosts, but also secretly reveals the social and historical realities through the frightening, eerie and unsettling narrative. Focusing on Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, this paper aims to examine how the story carries the colonial dynamics and historical social hierarchy with in the environment of unsettling and eerie. This paper primarily seeks to answer how gothic literature works as a vehicle for the society to convey its cultural and historical facts and records through the extraterritorial characters and unsettling plot. To study this, the research applies the postcolonial framework of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K Bhabha to discuss the colonial issues of authority, subaltern speech, and mimicry. Further, the references of London, India and Bly are closely examined and metaphorically interpreted to reveal their connection to imperial and colonial dynamics, while also examining how the prevailing Victorian class hierarchy depicted in the story contribute to and highlight the colonial structures within the narrative. The findings reveal that *The Turn of the Screw* as a gothic literature not only creates an environment of unsettling and eerie narrative but also subtly critiques the social constructs and colonial dynamics of its time.

Keywords: Gothic literature, colonial dynamics, class hierarchy, postcolonial framework

Introduction

This paper explores how a gothic narrative explains colonial issues in the literature. Gothic literature is not merely the collection of horror stories that use supernatural being and ghostly figures, they are in fact the medium to reflect the darker aspects of social realities. The elements of gothic narrative such as the ghost figures as characters, setting as old houses and abandoned places, and the extraterritorial suspicious activities of the characters carry meaning beyond the textual purpose of evoking fear and sensation to the readers. These features do not just play with

1. Department of English, University of Texas at Arlington (UTA)
USA, 1225 W Michell Arlington, Texas 76019, 414 Carlisle Hall,
Email: mahendrabahadur.thapa@uta.edu

Article history: Received on: Nov. 18, 2024; Accepted on: Dec. 5, 2024; Published on: Jan. 31, 2025
Peer Reviewed under the authority of THE ACADEMIA, journal of NUTAN, central committee,
Kathmandu, Nepal, with ISSN 2350-8671 (Print).



Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International License.

psychology of readers to arouse feeling of fear and suspense, it often symbolizes deeper cultural, social, historical issues. This paper attempts to study how a gothic text can reveal historical and social dimensions of society beyond their immediate purpose of connecting readers to arouse suspense and horror. This paper studies *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James as a primary gothic text to reveal colonial and Victorian social realities.

James' *The Turn of the Screw* was published in 1898, during the late Victorian era and it is a gothic novella set against the backdrop of a society deeply influenced by colonial expansion and rigid class structures. This period was marked by the British Empire's global dominance, where moral authority and social hierarchies were key pillars of identity. James's work narrates these cultural anxieties, offering a chilling exploration of psychological and social tensions within this historical context. The story is set at Bly Manor, a remote estate in rural England, where a young governess is entrusted with the care of two orphaned children, Miles and Flora. The children's parents are died in India and the kids are left under the guardianship of paternal uncle, a charming and distant man living in London. Preferring not to be involved, he places the children under the care of the governess and the household staff. The governess soon discovers the unsettling presence of two apparitions: Peter Quint, a former servant, and Miss Jessel, the previous governess, both of whom are dead already. She becomes convinced that these ghostly figures are influencing the children, corrupting their innocence and threatening their well-being. As she tries to protect Miles and Flora, the governess grapples with the sinister mysteries surrounding Bly Manor, blurring the line between reality and the supernatural and creating sense of horror and suspense to the readers.

The narrative in the novel allows for interpretations that go beyond its surface-level ghost story, reveling the themes of power, morality, and imperial influence. Through its analysis of class dynamics, gender roles, and authority, *The Turn of the Screw* becomes a mirror reflecting post-colonial narratives within the broader framework of postcolonial thought and its critique of empire. Thus, this research paper attempts to argue that narrative in James' *The Turn of the Screw* is not only a horror story, but also revels the deeper meaning of colonial narrative, showcasing how a gothic genre of literature carries social and historical dynamics under the cover of horror and supernatural narrative. This paper examines the role of characters in the novel and even their position in the society and tries to navigate how their roles and context of the novel evoke the colonial issues. This research primarily aims to answer how a gothic narrative in literature brings some historical and social contexts with the help of ghost and supernatural being. To study this, the research applies the postcolonial framework of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K Bhabha to discuss the colonial issues of authority, subaltern speech, and mimicry. Further, the references of London, India and Bly are closely examined and metaphorically interpreted to

reveal their connection to imperial and colonial dynamics, while also examining how the prevailing Victorian class hierarchy depicted in the story contribute to and highlight the colonial structures within the narrative.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship on *The Turn of the Screw* has predominantly revolved around psychological and supernatural study. Many critics have debated the reliability of the governess as a narrator, with interpretations often focusing on whether the ghosts she sees are real or mere hallucinations. Edmund Wilson opines that the apparitions in the novella are hallucinations stemming from the governess's repressed sexuality, suggesting that "the young woman who tells the story is a neurotic case of sex repression" (Wilson 121). This perspective has been influential, leading to extensive debates about the governess's reliability and the nature of the ghosts. Conversely, other scholars have maintained that the novella functions as a genuine ghost story, emphasizing its elements of supernatural horror. Robert B. Heilman argues that the work should be read as a straightforward tale of the supernatural, asserting that "the ghosts are real and the governess is a sane, perceptive woman" (Heilman 34).

In the context of Victorian literature, scholars such as Patrick Brantlinger has explored the intersections of imperialism and culture, particularly the anxieties surrounding British colonial dominance during the 19th century (Brantlinger 33). Works like *The Rule of Darkness* provide essential insights into how imperial ideology shaped Gothic narratives. However, critical engagement with *The Turn of the Screw* as a text that integrates Gothic elements with colonial and social themes remains limited. Notably, there has been insufficient analysis of Bly Manor as a symbolic space that reflects Victorian class hierarchies and colonial anxieties. The depiction of the governess, children, and ghosts offers a fertile ground for exploring these themes, yet few studies have addressed their interconnectedness in a comprehensive manner.

This paper identifies a research gap in the existing literature: the lack of integrated analysis that situates the novella at the crossroads of Gothic, postcolonial, and Victorian frameworks. While prior studies have examined the Gothic elements and social critiques in isolation, little has been done to explore how these aspects collectively illuminate *The Turn of the Screw* as a commentary on imperial and colonial structures. By examining the roles of Bly Manor, the governess, and the children within these contexts, this study aims to contribute a perspective, bridging the gap between Gothic horror and its underlying historical and cultural dimensions.

Governess's roles: Authority and Colonial Control

In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess is responsible for taking charge of two kids, Miles and Flora. The governess not just looks after their education and wellbeing, she even handles one of the serious issues and that is to keep the kids safe from the

ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. She does every possible step not to let the ghosts ruin the kids and makes a commitment, "I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world—the only two such creatures to whom I had in all my life committed myself with passion, and to whose trials I was ready to lay down my life if need be (James 29)." For governess, the ghost of Quint and Jessel is too dangerous and they are really dreadful in every possible way. The governor perceives the figure of Quint as "a figure of quite as unmistakable horror and evil" (16), while to the Jessel "pale and dreadful" (32). Thus, the terror she perceives from the ghost figure makes her fully committed to protect the innocent kids from the hands of the ghosts. This situation mirrors the Orientalist framework of Edward Said, which shows how the West constructs and dominates the "Others" to reinforce its own identity. For Said, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience (Said 1-2). This is clear that Said's emphasis stresses on a binary opposition that the West is portrayed as rational, progressive, and superior, where the East is depicted as irrational, inferior, and savage. This binary relationship enables the West to define itself positively by negating the East. This construction of West as rational means the Orient as "Other" in Said's definition of Orient. Going further, Said even finds the connection of Orientalism to imperialism and asserts that the construction of "other" is linked to colonial domination. Representation of the Orient as inferior or irrational is to mean the Western intervention as a rational and superior. The Western or "every European, in what he could say about the orient, was consequently racist, an imperialist..." (204). This statement of Said highlights the political motives behind this Oriental discourse.

Following the concept of Said's Orientalism, it is clear that the West systematically constructs and represent East – the Orient- as exotic, inferior and fundamentally different, in order to assert its own superiority. In Said's words, Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, and having authority over the Orient" (3). This framework shows the ideological and powerful nature if Western representations of the "Other". This notion can be seen while examining *The Turn of the Screw*. In the novel, the governess does attempt to impose authority to the children and also attempts to control the ghosts of Quint and Jessel at Bly. Taking the concept of Said, it can be said that James constructs a narrative that considers the ghost figures as "Others"-unknown and supernatural. In the story, the governess thinks that the children are secretly communicating with the ghosts and asserts, "They're not mine—they're not ours. They're his and they're hers!" (53). With that, she makes a commitment to "protect" and save them much like colonial figure who think that this is their duty to "civilize" or "protect" colonized subjects. The governess who is very much like a colonial figure in the story having authoritative power to operate and run the Bly, the rest people at the Bly are just the subjects who are forced to accept whatever the governess' narrative come through. In addition, the children are under the care and

directives of her, making the children like colonized subjects. Further, the fear of the governess and her fascination with the ghost figures forces a sort of obligation on her to dominate the narrative and establish her authority. This situation can be connected to the theme of colonial impulse where the Western power establish its authority over foreign territories. Furthermore, the governess's perception of the children and the ghost figures ultimately reduce them to just symbols- "serene and yet haunted", "little spirits"- with in her constructed narrative, which echoes Said's notion of the "Orient" as "a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles" (Said 2). The role of governess in the story reflects a colonial bureaucrat, governed by the distant authority of Master living in London. This can be metaphorically interpreted as a representation of the British Empire during its colonial era, where London, as the imperial capital, directed and controlled colonized regions through its local representatives- much like the governess manages Bly on behalf of the absent Master ("The British Raj"). Moreover, James through the character of the governess seems to evoke the sense of domination over the "Others" at Bly, where even the existing characters like Mrs. Governess, the children and non-existing characters like Quint and Jessel are othered like colonized subjects on the hand of colonizers.

Subaltern Voices in Silence: Quint, Jessel and Children

James in *The Turn of the Screw* present the governess as the authoritative figure at Bly as her master in London does not want her to disturb with any issues concerning to the estate. As "supreme authority", the governess is the most hierarchically senior post at the Bly, required to to supervise of all the activities with the help of other staffs or servants. The governess with her authoritative position does not just do "othering" to the remaining servants at Bly, she ultimately even silences the voices of Flora and Miles. Being the governess in the Bly, her authoritative role can be found when she says her suspicions about the apparition that Mrs. Grose's "dense ignorance" (26), which indicates her positions as more powerful and insightful than the rest servants. Similarly, the governess is found to interpret the children's behaviors her own lens. She thinks, "They know—it's too monstrous: they know, they know!" (43). She thinks that both the kids are aware of the ghosts, but they do not want to share with her. This shows that governess seems to impose her narrative onto them forcefully disregarding their attempts at self-expression. The governess confronts Flora about seeing Jassel and takes the denial of this by Flora as a deceit only. The governess insists, "she's there, you little unhappy thing—there, there, there, and you know it as well as you know me!" (84). With this instance, it's clear that the governess attempts to impose her version of reality that silences Flora's attempt to voice her truth. This can be critiqued with the concept of Gayatri Spivak that examines how colonial hierarchies' silences marginalized voices, particularly those of the subaltern who exist outside hegemonic structures of power. Analyzing Spivak's theory of subaltern, it's found

that marginalized voices are often spoken about rather than allowed to speak for *themselves* as they are continuously defined and redefined by those in power. Spivak asserts: "The subaltern cannot speak" (104). While analyzing the two characters, Flora and Miles, it becomes clear that both are denied their autonomy and agency as the governess interprets their action through her own perspective. Similarly in one occasion, Flore tries to protest her innocence: "I don't know what you mean. I see nobody. I see nothing. I never have. I think you're cruel. I don't like you!" (James 86). But the governess's insistence that Flora has been corrupted by the ghosts silences her, relegating her to the position of an "Other" under the governess's scrutiny.

Moreover, the ghost figures of Quint and Jessel can also be critiqued under Spivak's framework, where the presence of these two figures is filtered exclusively through the governess's viewpoint. Although the two figures are not physically alive, the Quint and Jessel serve as symbolic figure of the subaltern who remain voiceless and existing in the story as characters in the governess's narrative. Likewise, Quint, a valet to the master and Jessel, a previous governess occupies spaces subordinate to the gentry, embodying figures who lack agency and whose voices are repressed by both their social positions and the Victorian ethos. In analyzing Quint's character, he is unable to utter any words and appear physically mirrors Spivak's assertion that the subaltern is incapable of having their subjectivity within hegemonic framework (Spivak 67). In addition, the character of Jessel shows another dimension of Spivak's concept that carries the issue of gender and subalternity. Jessel as a fallen woman, her relationship with Quint is scandalized. In the story, Jessel represents what Spivak calls as the "subaltern woman" whose voice is "effaced" by both gendered and classed oppression (Spivak 82). The invisible and voiceless portrayal of Jessel shows the image of Victorian ideologies where the women are stigmatized. James' narrative employs the ghostly presence as a commentary on the erasure of voices marginalized by dominant cultural and social narratives, which aligns with Spivak's argument that subaltern figures- mainly the female ones- are silenced by patriarchal and colonial forces.

Mimicry and Ambivalence: Struggles with Identity and Power

James' text also carries a narrative where mimicry and ambivalence echo the complexities of colonial and post-colonial identity as described in Homi Bhabha's theories. Bhabha defines mimicry as "a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other" in which colonial subjects imitate their colonizers. Similarly, it creates an unsettling sense of "*almost the same, but not quite*" (86-87). So, while analyzing the character of governess, she seems to have a desire to embody an idealized, authoritative role that mirrors colonial ambitions to control and reform 'others' in the colonies. The role of governess and her relationship with Flora and Miles reveals her struggle between affection and authority, as she attempts

to embody the traditional role of an English woman, representing the colonial “self”. But her role appears very strange in reality. She happens to be the authority figure at one point, and at the other point her provincial background keeps positioning her as an unsettling “other”, complicating her identity and sense of belonging. This tension echoes her conflicting desires for acceptance and control within the household. This attempt from governess to mimic the English gentility shows her psychological ambivalence and her complex relationship with social class. This mimicry, however, fails to grant her the control that she desires and instead leaves her feeling perpetually “incomplete” in her role. Reflecting on her position, she admits: “I dare say I fancied myself in short a remarkable young woman and took comfort in the faith that this would more publicly appear...in a position to give orders” (James 19). Her wish to be authority thus reveals her underlying insecurities. By imitating upper-class confidence, she only intensifies her feelings of inadequacy. The far-reaching hope of her role make her struggle with her own sense of incompleteness.

James through the ghost figures- Quint and Jessel embodies the concepts of Homi Bhabha’s ambivalence. Bhabha’s notion of ambivalence can be interpreted as extending into colonial narratives, where the spectral, or the uncanny serves as a symbol space for the emergence of the repressed tensions. These elements show the unresolved conflicts and contradictions within colonial systems, exposing the instability and duality inherent in the colonial experience. To take the words of Bhabha, the mimicry appears as a “blurred copy” of authority, causing an issue to its stability (Bhabha 132). The two phantoms represent the “blurred copy” of authority. Both Quint and Jessel, ghost figures sound as echoes of the past that regularly reappears and challenges governess’ sense of reality. The challenges of the phantoms knock not just to the authority of governess, even to the Bly’s colonial order. They are there as silenced “others”, but their presence can be noticed. Similarly, the desire of governess to find the connection between children and phantoms indicates that she wishes to have control over the kids, which is related with the colonial understanding. The serious motive of governess to know the reasons why phantoms keep visiting kids highlights she is much worried to protect the children from ruining on the hand of ghosts in one hand, while on the other she is driven with strong desire to master the Bly. However, the governess is surrounded by doubts. The doubts can be observed when she observes, “I have been living with the miserable truth, and now it has only too much closed around me. Of course, I have lost you...” (James 122) This situation reflects the sense of ambiguity, blurring the line between real and imagined. Looking this through Bhabha’s framework, the governess experiences with the apparition shows how colonial narratives of control are subverted by their own internal contradictions, where the spectral signifies an unresolved resistance that refuses to be fully explained or dismissed.

Metaphors of India, London and Bly

The Turn of the Screw can be studied metaphorically to decode the colonial narrative. London, where the owner or employer of Bly house lives in can be taken metaphorically as the headquarter of British Empire. As the Bly, the estate situated in the rural England is controlled and governed by the master living in London. This can be seen as a perfect analogy to show the British empire where the colonies used to be controlled by London in the colonial era. Similarly, the novel reveals that parents of the children were in India (James 8). This reference of India too can be critically examined to find the colonial narrative in the novel. Graham McMaster sees the relation between Bly and Britain noting “the geographical joke completes the synecdochic linking between Bly/Britain-of-the-status-quo/India” (33). This further clarifies that Bly, a house where the servants under governess live to look after the property and two children-Miles and Flora, can be taken as status-quo India under British Empire, highlighting profound colonial narrative in the novel. Furthermore, analyzing critically to the servants working at Bly can be interpreted British colonial rule to India. The Bly has servants including “a cook, a housemaid, a dairywoman, an old pony, and old groom and old gardener, all likewise thoroughly respectable” (James 28). These servants are metaphorically understood as colonial subjects as Bly serves as India in the novel under the master who lives in London, the capital of British Empire.

Victorian Class Hierarchy as a Colonial Parallel

The Turn of the Screw explores deeply the Victorian social class or class hierarchy and gender roles. While examining the roles of character in the novel, James attempts to disclose these Victorian echoes through his novel. The governess as major and senior position at Bly appears to be careful with the social status and rank of other character. Analyzing her first, second and third encounters with Peter Quint this can be proved. During her first encounter, the governess happens to see him on top of one tower, which makes her question about his status; “was he a gentleman?” (James 43). Upon knowing the real status of Peter as a ghost figure and a previous servant, her attitude to her gets changed. Not just that, even Mrs. Grose call him “a horror” (47). Knowing the status of the Peter, she does not see him again on the top of tower. In her second and third encounters, she happens to see Quint outside the window and at the bottom of the stairs. “He was absolutely [. . .] a living detestable dangerous presence” wrote the governess of the experience, but in the moment, the “dread had unmistakably quitted [her] [. . .] there was nothing in [her] unable to meet and measure him” (67). This shift on the governess attitude toward Peter proves the reality and importance of social status in Victorian era.

During the Victorian era, each member of the society had a fixed social role and they were required to perform accordingly. People of upper class were bound with morality, where the working or servant class were bound to demonstrate the loyalty to the upper class. Mark Girouard, a British Historian in the *Victorian Values and Upper* notes “a just estimate of rank and property” (51). This shows that each individual was judged by their adherence to societal expectations. While examining this echo in *the Turn of the Screw*, it is found vividly that the relationships between characters such as governess, Mrs. Grose, Peter and others reflect this class consciousness of the era. For example, Mrs. Grose embodies the loyalty to the household and this loyalty can be found when she calls the kids as “the little gentleman” and “the little lady” throughout the novel. Despite kids having their fixed names, Mrs. Governess never calls them by their name. This shows how the people were adherence to their roles and duties in the society, which aligns with the Victorian notion of respect to the Upper class.

The novella also embodies the rigid Victorian social hierarchy and gender roles which can be found through its intricately woven narrative. The central character of the novel, the governess is a right example of Victorian women. Jane Nardin argues that “the adult characters in *The Turn of the Screw* are trying to live by a set of social and moral norms...” (132). The governess as an adult and the most senior employee at Bly is fully committed to live with her responsibilities to safeguard and care the two children morally and physically. In addition, her role as a governess as sought by the then society, she makes no loopholes to fulfill it.

Furthermore, *The Turn of the Screw* depicts the condition of Victorian middle-class women through the character of governess. In the novel, the governess stands between the upper-class master and the servants who are nameless and in the supporting roles except housekeeper, Mrs. Grose. The governess seems to embody the tension between ambition and societal limitations. For Nardin, the fascination of governess with her master is a representation of a “frustrated love relationship,” constrained by “conventional ideas about ‘proper’ marriages” (134). In the novel, the Victorian practices forced put the governess in social limbo, which made her unsuitable as a wife of her employer despite her fascination to the master in her first sight. This is highlighted when Mrs. Grose comments on the governess’s feelings: “she was a lady...And he is so dreadfully below” (James 54-55). The governess remains silence despite her fascination with the master of Bly and is forced to oppress it not only her awareness of class distinction but also by her acceptance of societal expectations. The governess’s limited conversation to her master and yet tension-filled interactions with him showcase James’s critique the rigid Victorian Social structure.

The close analysis to the relationship between Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, the former governor at Bly highlights the Victorian notion on relation, pointing the important of social boundaries or class for the issues of relationship or marriage. In

the novel, Quint is just a valet to the master at Bly and has no any rank or position, while Jessel as a governess holds better rank and position than other employees at the Bly. So, the relation between the two appear as unimagined union as per the Victorian standards where the class consciousness was at its peak. Nardin points out that “In Victorian era it was considered infinitely more shocking for a lady to wish to marry beneath her than a gentleman to do so” (133). The Victorian society was not in a position to accept “intermarriage between class” (133). This can be seen in the novel when Mrs. Grose answers to the governess about the class of Jessel that “there was everything...she was a lady...he so dreadfully below” (James 54-55). This class dynamic in the relationship between Quint and Jessel mirrors the picture of destructive nature of Victorian class hierarchy. Not coming from the same social class, James seems intentionally ending their relation not letting to turn into marriage to respect the Victorian norms.

The Turn of the Screw also depicts the Victorian social class hierarchy while examining the fascination of the governess towards master in her first encounter during her interview. The governess, a member of middle-class family, working in the upper-class households is seriously aware of her social position. As Nardin observes “the governess in Victorian society was usually seen as socially inferior to her employer’s daughters, and was not considered a suitable match for her employer’s son” (133). This is the reason why the governess is just taken as an employee to the Bly. But the governess is awestruck by the charm of the master and she cannot speak to him anything. Not just that she even does not want to hurt or disappoint him by rejecting any terms as set by the master. She notes, “He told her frankly all his difficulty” (James 10). This justifies her feeling to the master, but the master does have no any feeling to her because of her social status that is beneath him. Nardin stresses that “the wealthy and independent master could marry the governess if he wanted but social snobbery and a habit of viewing inferiors...it would never occur to him to do so” (133). The class consciousness was heavily found between the governess and the master.

The echoes of Victorian upper class can be traced in the novel. The Victoriana upper class viewed their privileges as “gifts from God...a delicate sense of honor” (Girouard 51). This shows that the Victorian upper class had significant economic and social power that could even shape the cultural norms. Their status was taken as divinely. This notion of upper class can be explored while examining the master uncle in *The Turn of the Screw*. The uncle/ master who is a handsome bachelor and lives in London. His wealth that leads to devote himself to “expensive habits” (James 6). His wealth is the power to determine the upper class as God gift. With this power of wealth, the uncle exercises his “charming ways with women” (7). This is profound evidence how power of wealth for Victoriana upper class helps to have romantic life, an order that the upper-class could only experience in the society. Besides, the depiction

of master in living in “Harley Street” further highlights the life of upper-class people in Victorian period (6). The “Harley Street” metaphorically stands for the place of Victorian upper-class people which was not a place for the middle class and working-class people. Thom, Colin, and Harriet Richardson acknowledge that “stretch of Harley Street generally had the largest and best houses”, a metaphor to inform that the street is only for the upper class (5).

The role of women in *the Turn of the Screw* mirrors the realities of women position in Victorian era. The societal expectation of female behavior, morality and social status can be navigated once the women characters are examined. In the novel, the governess has been presented from the beginning as subordinate in comparison to upper class people. This can be found from the governess’ feeling after meeting the master uncle of Bly for the first time in London. Meeting the master, the governess finds him “handsome and bold and pleasant...in glow of high fashion, of good looks, of expensive habits...” (James 8). Despite the governess being an educated young girl, her connection to the middle class makes her inferior in front of the upper-class master. This social conciseness leads the Victorian middle-class people attracted to the upper-class people. The governess in her first sight to the master draws her attention to appreciate him, a member of upper class. Besides, the governess after accepting her new role from master uncle, she leaves for the Bly from London. During her journey to the Bly, she remains nervous and full of self-doubt about her position as governess. This shows that the Victorina middle class often keep doubt about their position and roles in front of the upper class. At the same time, the Victorian middle-class people find themselves a moment of prestige and pride while they used to have connection with the upper-class people. In the novel, the governess feels “a little proud” despite her low confidence to take up the roles.

Conclusion

In examining the characters, their roles, activities, ways of communication and the language they use, Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* clearly reveals the echoes of colonial dynamics. Through his Gothic narrative, which incorporates ghostly figures and the haunting setting of Bly Manor, James subtly exposes the imperial mindset and colonial tensions of the time. This demonstrates that Gothic literature, while often associated with sensational horror, also serves as a vehicle for revealing the underlying social and historical realities of its era. The supernatural elements in the story are not merely engineered to provoke fear, but are mindfully tied to the larger imperial and colonial context in which the narrative unfolds.

Furthermore, James's narrative of Victorian class hierarchies and gender roles showcases the hidden social dynamics of the period. The novella not only depicts the class-based oppression of its characters, particularly through the governess’s position, but also subtly critiques the gendered power structures that defined Victorian society.

By weaving these elements into the narrative, James indirectly strengthens the colonial themes within the text, showing how social order, authority, and morality are deeply connected to imperialist ideologies. Thus, this paper argues that *The Turn of the Screw* can be understood as both a colonial text and a reflection of the social class and gender dynamics prevalent in Victorian society

Works Citation

- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994. Key insights on hybridity, ambivalence, and colonial authority.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *The Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914*. Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Girouard, Mark. *Hierarchy in Victorian Period*. Proceedings of the British Academy, 1992, pp. 49–60.
- James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. New York, 1967.
- Lustig, T.J. *Henry James and the Ghostly*. Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 34.
- Nardin, Jane. "The Turn of the Screw: The Victorian Background." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1978, pp. 131-142.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1993, pp. 2–3.
- — —. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1978.
- Sherma, Amar Bahadur, et al. "Becoming an Ecological Citizen: The Concept of an Ecological Citizen in the movie Avatar". *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2024, pp.63-76. DOI: 10.54855/ijte.24424
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313
- "The British Raj." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/event/British-raj. Accessed 20 Nov. 2024.
- Thom, Colin, and Harriet Richardson. "Harley Street." Yale University Press/Paul Mellon Centre, 2017.
- Thapa, Mahendra. "Unveiling Displacement: Examining Refugees Suffering in Dave Egger's *What is the What*". *Praxis International Journal*, vol. 7, no. 11, 2025, pp. 10-17. DOI: 10.51879/PIJSSL/071102
- Wilson, Edmund. "The Ambiguity of Henry James." *Hound and Horn*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1934, pp. 20-30.