

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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Literární inspirace Brittenových oper - aspekt homosexuality v jeho dílech
(analýza libreta *Utažení šroubu*)

The Literary Inspirations in Britten's Operas, With Focus on the Aspect of
Homosexuality in His Work (the analysis of the libretto *The Turn of the Screw*)

Diplomová práce

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Olomouc 2018

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V Olomouci dne 17. května 2018

Velmi děkuji Mgr. Emě Jelínkové, Ph. D. za odborné vedení práce, inspiraci, poskytování rad a materiálových podkladů.

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Introduction

Yale professor William Lyon Phelps called James “the best example of the psychological realist that we have in American literature” and *The Turn of the Screw* “the most powerful, the most nerveshattering ghost story I have ever read [...] This story made my blood chill, my spine curl, and every individual hair to stand on end.” When Phelps described his reaction to Henry James, he replied, “I meant to scare the whole world with that story; and you had precisely the emotion that I hoped to arouse in everybody.”¹

When professor David H. Richter in *The Critical Tradition* wanted to demonstrate the enormous scope of the literary theory in the twentieth century he used the example of *The Turn of the Screw* as the text both analysed and misread. Indeed, this “king of the short fiction” as it is sometimes called gained its fame only after the death of its author thanks to development of scientific disciplines and new literary approaches. Before and especially after WWII the new theoretical branches influenced by the political developments and “postmodern” trends such as feminism, marxism, deconstruction, formalism or psychoanalytic criticism flooded the universities changing the paradigm of the literature world; it also changed the paradigm of *The Turn of the Screw*. Its uniqueness is based on the fact it provoked the analyst to make their mark and explain the grey areas in the story, easily applying all of the above-mentioned approaches. Whether it provided the clarification of the novella’s meaning or just deepened its enigma has never been resolved, however, these active debates also inspired artists and filmmakers to contribute with their own visions.

The development of opera was rather peculiar in England because, it in fact started in baroque and continued as late as 1945 by Britten’s *Peter Grimes*. Paradoxically enough, the opera, usually the symbol of power and representation of a strong and sovereign nation, emerged in England in this dreary situation – nevertheless, its success might be considered as a sign of the rebirth of the new world and society after the “five years of darkness”. In this sense the work may be an epitome of the atmosphere of that era and interestingly, it even foreshadowed the importance of the opera (and music in general) in England in the second half of the 20th century.² Dealing with the novella *The Turn of the Screw* and its author, the music, the post-war era in England, this thesis will analyse the libretto of the opera by

¹ Peter G., Beidler, ed. *The Turn of the Screw* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 12.

² In spite of the fact that England was called “Das Land ohne Music” in the second half of the 20th century it experienced a real music boom. And it was not only in the field of the classical music (Edward Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, Michael Tippett and others) but also the popular music, namely The Beatles. Furthermore, British ballet was rapidly developing and in 1956 it was granted by Royal Charter to mark its 25th anniversary; after the war (in 1946) it premiered a new full-length production of *The Sleeping Beauty* and in the 1960’s it was the legendary ballets danced by Margaret Fonteyn and (the Russian emigrant) Rudolf Nureyev appeared there

Benjamin Britten premiered in 1954 in Venice, and suggest the hidden meaning behind his interpretation.

The text is divided into the six uneven chapters discussing the context of the origin of the both works, the opera and the novella, as well as their authors. At the beginning, there is a very brief introduction into the history of the opera genre and generally into music in England which flourished after WWII. The cultural (respectively musical) events are set against the historical, sociological, geographical and economical context as I believe it is crucial to bear in mind that all these changes shaped the culture enormously.

In the following section the text presents Benjamin Britten as the establisher of the opera in England, his influences, work and also his strong connection to literature. Apart from James's novella he set to music *Owen Wingrave*, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Crabbe's *The Borough*, Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* or Strachey's *Elizabeth and Essex* paying attention to a libretto which fits to both music and the narration. His very first librettist, mentor and the important figure in his career as a composer was the poet W. H. Auden, so their relationship is also discussed there as it was he who open the delicate question of homosexuality.

The third chapter presents Henry James as the original Anglo-American writer and suggests his inspirations for writing the story *The Turn of the Screw*: there are possible connections from his life as well as the expanding field of psychology. Also, it summarizes the main approaches (by no means all of them) which studied the novella as well as the various adaptations.

The short chapter titled "Libretto" depicts this special literary genre and emphasises the difficulties of creating a good text for opera. I present the list of Britten's librettists and co-operators, and of course, the most important one – Myfanwy Piper, the librettist of *The Turn of the Screw*.

The largest part of the text is the presentation of the libretto and its comparison with the original text by Henry James. From the changes, shortenings, certain emphasis and omissions it is clear how the opera shaped the story, laying stress on Miles-Quint relationship (the typical feature of Britten's works). Comparing the two works there are also several excursions into the theory of literature referring to different interpretations of the novella or opera. Although I am aware of the fact it is the literary analysis focusing on the texts, I did not want to omit the musical part at all as it is an integral part of the opera; therefore I made few notes concerning the specific usage of instruments, voices, techniques or tempo, always

in connection with the narration. The text is divided into two parts corresponding with its distribution in the opera, Act I and Act II.

Last part of the text suggests the reading of the opera as the opus sui generis that expressed Britten's hidden homosexuality. Putting the text under the scrutiny of Freudian analysis it reveals the symbolic value of many poetic parts of the libretto as well as the sexual scope of the whole work. Britten's interpretation of the opera as the narration by the insane governess allowed him to make surprising interventions into the story.

The primary sources were the novella by Henry James published by Collins Classic and the libretto taken from the opera librettos database <http://www.opera-arias.com/>. Concerning the secondary sources, as the most helpful was the publication edited by Peter G. Beidler who collected different texts by different authors analyzing the novella from many perspectives (which I cite on several places in the thesis). The opera itself has been analysed by many musicologists (the most interesting and complex was probably the publication by Claire Seymour *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion*) who emphasised the musical part of the opus, of course. However, the exclusive analyses of the opera librettos are very rare. For the general knowledge about Benjamin Britten and the historical context I used the excellent book depicting the history of music (and art) in the twentieth century *The Rest Is Noise* by Alex Ross. As a source for the history of the opera I quote from *History of the Opera* by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker. For the Freudian analysis I used the Czech textbook by Milan Nakonečný *Základy psychologie* (the quotations are my own translations), *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* and Freud's collected works (*The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* edited by Sames Strachey) from which the most helpful were sections from his books *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Ego and the Id*. Besides, numerous documentaries about the overall situation in post-war England were helpful, as well as several online databases: Grover, Oxford Music Online etc. I mentioned only the most important sources all of them are stated in the end of the thesis.

Regarding the formal parts of the thesis there are only few notes: all the characters are written with the capital letter, even these without a name, such as Governess and Guardian. This is practical custom from the opera which clarifies the differentiation between the character and profession, so the text respects it. Also, the fifth chapter contains many citations of the libretto: if the quotation is of one person and short, it is an integral part of the text, in case there two or more people in the quotation, I quote in little paragraphs (taken directly from the libretto).

The opera librettos are usually ignored genre from obvious reason: the musicologists regard it as a part of literature and the literary scholars regard it as a part of music so no one pays much attention to this category of literary composition. In spite of its general lack of interest I hope to contribute to this neglected interdisciplinary approach connecting the music field and literature.³

³ For more information about this interdisciplinary approach please see: Matthew Paul Carlson, "W. H. Auden and Opera: Studies of the Libretto as Literary Form." PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012.

Opera in Great Britain

Since its origin the theatre music was connected not only with great works of art, but also with the symbolic and representative values; opera, as the spectacular, sumptuous and the most expensive genre suited to these purposes very well: in the 15th century Florence the Medici family supported the opera to show their affluence, Louis XIV established the new form of musical theatre called “ballet de court” that clearly illustrated the hierarchy of absolutism in France from which the importance of dance in aristocratic circles emerged and the classical ballet developed.⁴ Later, opera played the key role in the particular national movements throughout Europe: the composers like Richard Wagner (1813–1883) in not-yet-united Germany, Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) in the Italian Risorgimento as well as Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) in the Czech lands were important figures in creating the national awareness since they all composed music on patriotic texts in their mother tongue. The British scholar John Tyrrell, an expert on the Czech music, summarized the significance of opera and theatre in Czech very accurately: “Where other nations expressed their nationhood in the adulation of the monarchy or the military, or in the obeisance to a flag, a constitution or ‘la gloire’, the Czech celebrated their nationhood in operatic rituals staged at the National Theatre. The building became endowed with unique, almost sacred seriousness of purpose.”⁵ The government, be it the monarchy or republic, supported the operatic performances to attach great importance to the particular country and even commissioned the pieces for their own acclaim. Yet the situation in Great Britain was rather different.

In the United Kingdom there has always been a great tradition of spoken drama which was one of the reasons the lavish opera did not take its roots there. Although the “court masques”⁶ based on allegorical subjects were particularly popular during the reign of James I

⁴ “Ballet de cour” embraced all the means of action on the stage: music, recitation, singing, playing as well as dancing. Louis XIV often participated in the performances in the leading role and his subjects played his servants; the most remarkable and famous performance was probably the one he played the sun, Ballet de la Nuit (1653). These performances became so rooted into the aristocratic life that they were even forbidden in the time of the French Revolution. For more information see: Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3–48.

⁵ John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 9.

⁶ “A masque was a spectacle performed at court or at the manor of a member of the nobility; its purpose was to glorify the court or the particular aristocrat. The masque included various elements at different stages in its development but invariably included choreographed dances by masqued performers; members of the nobility were often participants. These choreographed dances ended in the masqued dancers’ “taking out” of audience members, making concrete the glorification of the court by meshing the symbolic overtones of the masque’s praise with the reality of the attending court’s presence.” Leeds Barroll, “Inventing the Stuart Masque.” in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*. Edited by David Bevington and Peter Holbrook. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 121-143.

(1603–1625) and some of the masques became significant thanks to works of Ben Jonson (1572–1637) works such as *The Masques of Beauty* (1608), *The Golden Age Restored* (1616), *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1624). the opera as such could not develop because of the unique attitude of the monarchy towards the people. The English royal family suffered the disastrous civil war in the half of the 17th century, the conflict that reached its climax in 1649 when the king Charles I was beheaded. The symbolic position of his office reduced and, in spite of the fact the Stuarts were restored and the king Charles II regained the throne, the royals lost their power, whether cultural or otherwise.⁷

Due to the lack of local composers, England was often called “Das Land ohne Music”, a land without music. Mainly foreign authors participated on creation the English music tradition, and several came from Germany. The most important one was Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759), being both a theatre manager and a brilliant composer, became the establisher of the operatic and especially the oratorical tradition; the latter happened to be a representative form of music typical for England.⁸ Händel successfully merged the nationalistic, religious and martial aspects into a coherent whole which often bore a symbolic value. “The Old Testament subject matter, which was considerably modified by the librettists, had a strong appeal to Handel’s audiences. Not only were the audiences generally familiar with the stories, but they perceived a parallel between the Israelites and themselves: both intensely nationalistic, led by heroic figures, and given the special protection of God, who was worshiped with pomp and splendor.”⁹ Handel created more than twenty oratorios (*Messiah*, the most famous was premiered in 1741 in Dublin) and it seems like this genre in England substituted the role of the opera on Continental Europe.

Throughout the following eras England continued to search the composers in Germany for creating the new pieces. Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) who spent the last part of his career in London premiering the oratorios translated into English, *The Creation* (1798) and *The Seasons* (1801); Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdi (1809–1847) visited Scotland and England many times, spending some time at Edinburgh University and travelling around; he

⁷ Carolyn Abbateová, Roger Parker, *Dějiny opery posledních 400 let*, trans. Robert Novotný (Praha: Argo/Dokořán, 2017), 82–83.

⁸ “The usual meaning of the term [oratorio] as it is understood today is a sacred work for soloists, chorus, and orchestra on a large scale, neither liturgical nor theatrical, but intended for concert performance.” Denis Arnold, Nicholas Temperley, “Oratorio,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham, published online 2011.

<http://han.nkp.cz/han/OxfordMusicOnlineGroveMusicOnline/www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-4860?fromCrossSearch=true>

⁹ Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 2, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 351–52.

wrote oratorios such as *St. Paul* (1836) and *Elijah* (1846). From this enumeration it is clear the vocal tradition in England is enormous,¹⁰ oratorio is steeped in centuries of tradition and remains as one of the most popular genres until today.

The opera, by contrast, was since the beginning of the 18th century rapidly declining, especially after the performance of the legendary *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) the work of the English librettist John Gay (1685–1732) and the German composer Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752). The piece which ridiculed the Italian opera seria, caused the lamentable collapse of the Academy of Music and was one of the reasons why the English opera as such stagnated until the second half of the 20th century.¹¹

Henry Purcell (1659–1695) was the only remarkable opera composer of Albion before Benjamin Britten (1913–1976). His *Dido and Aeneas* (approximately 1688) is the oldest and the most famous opera written in English and it took more than 250 years to create another British opera of the same high quality. The premiere of *Peter Grimes* on 7th June 1945 in London right after the end of the World War II evoked an unprecedented sensation which not only initiated Britten's lifelong fame but also illustrated the difficult transformation of the society, caused by many different aspects. After the war Great Britain was not only a devastated country but also faced the process of decolonization, namely political territorial changes in the former Commonwealth. The independence of India (1947), Pakistan (1947), Israel (1948), Libya (1951) and many others caused large changes in British society. Apart from the decolonization the fundamental transformations brought the welfare state, which concerned the education, health care, the job vacancies and insurances.¹² Also, in the year 1946 England experienced a short baby boom significantly forming the stratification of the population of the later decades, particularly the 1960's. All this had an impact on the daily life and brought the "boom" in all fields in the 1950's as it summed up the British Prime

¹⁰ Interesting fact may be that the Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) presented in London his famous *Stabat Mater* in 1883.

¹¹ Generally, there was a problem with the authenticity of opera in which the performers do not speak but sing that seemed rather unnatural for the audience in England. That is why the masques or other genres which combined more forms were popular. The very first English opera is ascribed to William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodos* (?1656), music composed by Henry Lawes and William Locke is unfortunately lost. John Blow (1649–1708) composed the opera *Venus and Adonis* (?1684) which probably influenced Henry Purcell to compose his *Dido and Aeneas* (?1688). The popularity of the opera in 18th century decreased, however, the attempts to restore it appeared. Thomas Arnes (1710–1778), the author of the British anthem God Save the King, composed a number of masques and operas and even premiered few operas seria which were quite popular. In the 19th century it was probably only the Irish composer Michael William Balfe and his opera *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), otherwise the English stage was occupied by the foreign composers, especially by the German ones.

¹² One of the creators of a welfare state was William Beveridge (1879–1963), the author of many publications connected to development of the welfare state in Great Britain: *Unemployment: A problem of industry* (1909), *Prices and Wages in England from the Twelfth to the nineteenth Century* (1939) and the most important one *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942) containing The Beveridge Report.

Minister Harold Macmillan in 1957 “You’ve never had it so good.”¹³ Opening the universities for the large amount of students and for the socially disadvantaged too, meant a certain decline of elitism and establishing more egalitarian society.¹⁴ In this context it may be surprising that the British monarchy preserved its position and status, playing an important role in the society until nowadays.

After the WWII the development of music, just like literature and art, was influenced by this merging of the high-brow and low-brow culture (one of the postmodern aspects of the after-war era) causing the changes in the concept of traditional classical music. The unique combination of conservatism and progress was typical for English music of which Benjamin Britten became a key figure as he was present to key episodes of post-war reconstruction, including Festival of Britain in 1951, the Coronation of Elisabeth II two years later, and the rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral, bombed in wartime raids. The fact that Britten became professional opera composer after the year 1945 was unusual and very archaic in comparison with other European countries in which opera was in period of stagnation. However, this feature may be point to that unique combination of progress (country changed beyond recognition in the course of the twentieth century) and English traditionalism.

¹³ In 1950’s there was nearly full employment in Britain, full automatization, strong competition on the market, many new factories. Economic difficulties became eased, new cars were affordable for many people, there was also world first airline jet in 1953). Overall, the economy was rapidly growing, confidence and optimism was over the whole country, also there were many new inventions such as hovercraft etc. “Britain in the 50’s,” youtube, published August 10, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqVwc6nrHjI>.

¹⁴ This act was highly criticised by T.S. Eliot and by Evelyn Waugh, the “ferocious snob.”

Benjamin Britten as the Establisher of the Opera in England

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) and George Crabbe (1754–1832) were born in Suffolk on the banks of the North Sea, and, although being fifteen decades apart, Britten felt inexplicable fondness for this writer: they both could watch the sea with fascination for hours and they both felt sympathy for the outsiders around them. These features they applied into their most famous works *The Borough* (1820) and *Peter Grimes* (1945) which were also intertwined. Interestingly enough, their paths finally met in Aldeburgh where was Crabbe born and Britten lived and died. This little town Britten was a center of the international “Aldeburgh Festival of Music and Arts” and even once stated that all his music comes from this place: “I believe in roots, in associations, in backgrounds, in personal relationships.”¹⁵

Britten came from the middle class family, the youngest of four children. The outstanding musical talent he probably inherited from his mother, a gifted pianist, who gave the little boy his first music lessons. His father was, on the contrary, to a significant degree disinterested in music and even refused to have a gramophone or radio in the house. He worked as a dentist, the profession he purportedly hated and as a parent he was often described being very cold and distant.¹⁶

As a precocious young man, Benjamin Britten studied Royal College of Music in London and from 1935 he became a professional composer for the General Post Office. It was a post requiring versatile personality because the task was to write music for many different occasions, projects and films; for instance for King George V’s Jubilee stamp, *Coal Face* (a documentary about the miners, 1935), *Telegrams*, *Gas Abstract*, *Men Behind the Meters*, *How the Dial Works*, *Negroes*, and *Night Mail*. There he not only sharpened his composing skills but also met W. H. Auden (1907–1973) who wrote the texts for these projects. The young poet became his mentor for the following years, shaping and opening his mind. Furthermore, as Alex Ross puts it in his remarkable book *The Rest Is Noise* “Auden made it his mission to bring Britten out of his shell, socially, sexually, and intellectually,”¹⁷ the mission which was successful, eventually. “Stand up and fold / Your map of desolation / Strike and you shall conquer” Auden advised the young composer in a poem “Underneath an Abject Willow” that he wrote for him in 1936.

¹⁵ Alex Ross, *Zbývá jen hluk* (Praha: argo/dokořán, 2011), 374.

¹⁶ Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

¹⁷ Ross, *Zbývá jen hluk*, 375.

Britten met Auden when he was in his early twenties and was avowed by the older, charismatic and sophisticated poet, who was the leftist political activist and already a renowned writer.¹⁸ Auden's connection to Rupert Doone's Group Theatre in London, (founded in 1932) brought them with Britten even closer because he joined them as a song composer. Britten's sensitivity for English language (which was often said to be an impossible tongue to sing) proved to be extraordinary so his works immediately caught Auden's attention.¹⁹ Since then the two artists spent much time together, being members of the Communist Party of Great Britain and also of intellectual leftist circle that included among others Basil Wright, Rupert Doone, Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender. In the view of egalitarian thinking it is not surprising that Britten was disgusted by Elgar's pompous music celebrating the monarchy: "I swear that only in Imperialistic England could such a work be tolerated,"²⁰ he stated in 1935. If someone would have told him he would compose the opera for the coronation of the Queen Elisabeth II in less than twenty years he would certainly not believe it.²¹

In England during the 1930's appeared a notion that Europe is unsuitable for the artists and that the United States offer both freedom and independence. (Only two decades ago, the artists from "across the ocean" were coming to Europe and often stayed there for the rest of their lives – it was also the case of Henry James.) To seek the artistic independence was certainly a compelling reason for Britten to leave England however, as the most persuasive argument for his actions seems to be his homosexuality which was incompatible with the British social norms.²² Britten's feeling isolated might have contributed to the final decision to follow Auden and Isherwood in hope for brighter future; he and Peter Pears arrived to American in 1939, one year after the poets, very probably with the intention to settle there permanently.

What was refreshing about America was its liberalism and the lack of political tension which affected Europe in the end of 1930's, i.e. appeasement and fascism. Coupled with the offer from Hollywood to write music for a film by Lewis Milestone (who also cooperated with Aaron Coplan), the constellation for Britten appeared to be perfect. Nevertheless, the cooperation never happened and, as Alex Ross writes "it's just as well, since Britten's

¹⁸ In 1928 Auden made his first dramatic work *Paid on Both Sides* and in 1930 published *Poems*.

¹⁹ Claire Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004) 18.

²⁰ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 19.

²¹ *Gloriana*, the coronation opera in three acts, premiered on 8th June 1953 in Covent Garden. The libretto, inspired by the novel *Elizabeth and Essex* by Giles Lytton Strachey wrote William Plomer.

²² Homosexuality was in England illegal until 1967, and the scandal of Oscar Wilde, which happened only few decades ago and was still topical.

sensitive ego would probably have suffered terrible scars in the movie business.”²³ The composer was later bitterly disappointed not only because of the negative reviews of the operetta *Paul Bunyan* which he created in cooperation with Auden,²⁴ but also by America as such. Filled with absolute contempt he wrote to the poet:

America seems to be letting us down in every way... She is so narrow, so self-satisfied, so chauvinistic, so superficial, so reactionary, and above all so ugly... This country is dead, because it hasn't been lived in, because it hasn't been worked on...Everything comes too easily – success, wealth, luxury. They have no standards; no culture –²⁵

Britten left the New World in 1942, in the middle of the war. Auden, who stayed there and obtained the American citizenship after the war, wrote at the beginning of the year 1942 to Britten:

As you know I think you [are] the white hope of music; for this reason I am more critical of you than of anybody else, and I think I know something about the dangers that beset you as a man and as an artist because they are my own. [...] For middle class Englishmen like you and me, the danger is of course the second. Your attraction to thin-as-a-board juveniles, i.e. to the sexless and innocent, is a symptom of this. And I am certain too that it is your denial and evasion of the attractions and demands of disorder that is responsible for your attacks of ill-health, i.e. sickness is your substitute for the Bohemian.²⁶

The letter which Auden wrote to Britten reveals not only their homosexuality but also the composer's more intimate issue concerning his favour to teenage boys, a specific kind of attraction which he also mirrored in his work.

Britten's songs, these which also impressed W. H. Auden, are the pieces of work in which his homosexual aspects appeared for the first time. For instance his *Les Illuminations* were inspired by the work of the French “poète maudit” Arthur Rimbaud, who was notorious for the bisexual affairs. The work was dedicated to Wulff Scherchen (in England known as John Woolford 1920–2016), Britten's first muse whom he met at Italian festival in 1934.²⁷

²³ Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, 317.

²⁴ The prolific music critic Virgil Thompson wrote to New York Herald Tribune: “What any composer thinks he can do with a text like ‘Paul Bunyan’ is beyond me. It offers no characters and no plot. [...]it never did get going, and I never did figure out the theme.” Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 20. The work was disparaged by numerous other reviews and Britten never counted this work among his opuses. *Paul Bunyan* remained unseen until 1974 which was partly caused by the death of W. H. Auden in the previous year.

²⁵ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 33.

²⁶ Auden to Britten, 31 January 1942, quoted in Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed (eds.), *Letters from a Life: The Selected Letters and Diaries of Benjamin Britten 1913–1976*, vol. 2 (London: Faber & Faber, 1991), pp. 1015–16. Quoted from Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 2.

²⁷ Their romantic relationship could develop when Scherchen came to England in 1936 to escape the Nazism in Germany. He settled in Cambridge and Britten often invited him to Suffolk. Some sources talk about their “ill-defined” relationship which led Britten to leave Great Britain in 1939; four years later Wulff Scherchen married Pauline Woolford, and in order to sound English, he adopted her name and changed his first name.

Another song cycle *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* for tenor voice and piano from 1940 resembling love letters to Peter Pears, who requited his love and became the first performer of these pieces.²⁸

The main characters in Britten's works are very often slightly shifted to fit into the "homosexual frame." When he started thinking about the eponymous character of the opera *Peter Grimes*, he initially adopted the character from George Crabbe's work: an unhappy man living in the small town who happens to be a witness (a potential culprit) of the several manslaughters. The librettist Montagu Slater, a passionate leftist, also contributed to this character by making him more sensitive and more like the innocent victim of the evil society. However, it was Britten and Pears who added the clear sexual overtones – it is the boys' beauty which provokes the fisherman. "Love me darn you" he aggressively tells to the apprentice.

The aspect of homosexuality in Britten's work is evident in the masterpiece *Peter Grimes* (1945) premiered in 1945 which tells the story about a violent fisherman whose apprentices are found dead, one by one. Grimes is followed by their ghosts, goes insane and commits suicide in the end of the opera; he is depicted as not only the villain but the poor victim of the society he lives in. This realistic picture of a non-idyllic English countryside shows the badness and evil sides of the humans.²⁹ As Britten put it: "The more vicious the society, the more vicious the individual."³⁰ Another literary adaptation which was openly homosexual was the novel by Hermann Melville *Billy Budd* premiered in 1951; casting only male singers the desire of John Claggart towards Billy Budd is more than obvious.³¹ After their meeting Claggart sings the aria "O beauty, handsomeness, goodness!" and captain Vere's last words before he dies are "Billy Budd" so there is even a love triangle. These two operas, *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd*, were openly homosexual adaptations, whereas the following pieces are prototypically homosexual already in their literary origin: in the Shakespearean comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is an Indian changeling who plays an

"John Woolford, Benjamin Britten's muse – obituary." Telegraph.co.uk, last modified August 22, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2016/08/22/john-woolford-benjamin-brittens-muse--obituary/>

²⁸ Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, 317.

²⁹ Alex Ross aptly compares the Peter Grimes with Berg's famous atonal opera *Wozzeck*, premiered 14th December 1925 in Berlin. "In many ways, Grimes is an English *Wozzeck*, extending sympathy to an ugly man, using his crimes to indict the society that sired him." Ross, *The Rest Is Noise*, 318.

³⁰ Benjamin Britten about *Peter Grimes*. <https://brittenpears.org/>.

³¹ The premier of *Billy Budd* in Prague National Theater on 18th January 2018 was an exceptional event as this piece was performed on the Czech stage for the very first time. Unusual approach of the director Daniel Špinar focused on the homosexuality of the evil character Claggart and using the choir of (half-naked) male dancers aptly created the tense atmosphere of eroticism. This concept eliminated any questions or ambiguities connected to the interpretation of the work.

important (however a silent) role in the whole storyline because causes the conflict between Oberon and Titania – they both want to possess the “beautiful boy.”³² Because Oberon never “owns” the boy, Britten adapts the drama developing the crucial relationship between Oberon and Puck. Similarly, the novel by Thomas Mann from the year 1912, tells the story about an old composer’s obsession with the teenage boy. In all these works there is a desire of an older often superior man towards a young or teenage boy – the feature which, according to many sources (and Auden’s letter), corresponded with Britten’s personal life.³³ These works were not only minor coincidences which proves the fact that they cover his whole operatic activity starting in the year 1945 and ending in 1973, three years before his death, by the premiere of *Death in Venice*.

Britten’s homosexuality merged with his personal feeling of intolerance and alienation giving birth to his famous operatic characters: outsiders who struggle against the mass and secretly desire to be accepted. The reappearing themes such as innocence, pacifism, oppression and death are visible in many of his works and the composer himself summed the characteristics of his works: “the theme of the individual against the community, I think it must be something that interests me very deeply. I’m never aware of having a set idea... but it does quite clearly fit into the Grimes, Albert Herring, Lucretia – a feeling of the innocence betrayed, perhaps.”³⁴ Not only works such as *Peter Grimes*, *Albert Herring*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, as the author mentioned, but also in *Death in Venice*, definitely in *Billy Budd* and especially in *The Turn of the Screw* one may observe the features of the “innocence betrayed.”³⁵ Claire Seymour in her PhD thesis *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion* aptly sums up the aspects of Britten’s style: “There is often strongly opposing conflict between diametrically opposed forces: peace and violence, love and ostracism, youth

³² “A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king; / She never had so sweet a changeling; / And jealous Oberon would have the child / Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild; / But she performe withholds the loved boy, Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy.” William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (London: Collins Classics), 2.1.26-31.

³³ For more information see: Heather Wiebe, *Britten’s Unquiet Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56–87. Claire Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004) 1–17. Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

³⁴ “Benjamin Britten Discusses Owen Wingrave,” youtube, last modified June 7th, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxRUAbTlaME>.

Owen Wingrave the television opera premiered on 16th May 1971, the libretto was written by Myfanwy Piper and the main character sung by Peter Pears. Regretfully, the opera was not very successful.

³⁵ There were even some speculations that Britten had been raped at school which may be the reason for his obsession with this topic. His friend Eric Crozier summed it up in his “Notes”: “Having been corrupted as a boy, he seemed to be under a compulsion to corrupt other small boys.” Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 207.

and age, innocence and experience, art and life – which suggests that these texts were potential sites of schizophrenic anxiety which feed Britten’s own neuroticism.”³⁶ This enumeration of contrasts is particularly fitting for his sixth opera *The Turn of the Screw*.

In his lifetime Britten was very active, being a promoter of the English music and culture in Great Britain and abroad. In 1946 he participated in the formation of the English Opera Company which was quite innovative as the opera did not receive much attention at that time. Two years later Britten with Peter Pears founded the festival in Aldeburgh which transformed but lasts until today. As the first musician he was granted a life peer in 1976, at the end of that year he died.

³⁶ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 6.

Henry James and the Germ of *The Turn of the Screw*

“Who was it she was in love with?”
“The story will tell,” I took upon myself to reply.
“Oh. I can’t wait for the story!”
“The story won’t tell,” said Douglas; “not in any literal, vulgar way.”³⁷

Henry James (1843–1916), the “father of the psychological literature,” a representative of modernism and realism wrote in the end of the 19th century one of the most enigmatic and the most frequently analysed piece of short writing the novella *The Turn of the Screw*. Despite having been three times nominated for the Nobel Prize, he got the full attention decades after his death. His deeply psychological works became praised and appreciated in the context of completely new literary approaches, namely the New Criticism applying the method of “close reading.” This subjective way of evaluating the texts became the cornerstone of the Formalism/New Criticism which particularly appreciated open-endedness and enigmatic works so James’s writings became the target of endless debates.

While analyzing *The Turn of the Screw* Peter Beidler, the Jamesian scholar, problematised the fact the writer remained unmarried for his whole life.³⁸ A conspicuous feature which may, however, be easily explained by stating that he was “married to his art” and refused to waste his time with the domestic concerns; the men in the Victorian England had to take care of the economic situation and secure the family, therefore his act may look like the attempt to avoid the potential financial stringency (which may, considering his profession, appear). Yet the alternative hypothesis came with the notion James might have been a homosexual. One of the evidence are his letters that reveal a number of quasi-romantic relationships with young men; for instance while travelling in Europe in 1890’s he met a young American journalist. In letters he called him “my dearest boy” and later, when he invited him to England he wrote: “You are beautiful; you are more than tactful, you are tenderly, magically tactile, [...] I’m alone and think of you [...] I’d meet you at Dover – I’d do anything for you.”³⁹ James was certainly aware of homosexuality and he also knew about the danger of being caught in a compromising situation. In fact he could have observed the

³⁷ Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (London: Collins Classic, 2011), 4.

³⁸ Peter G. Beidler, ed., *Henry James The Turn of the Screw* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 35.

³⁹ Beidler, Henry James, 8.

scandal of Oscar Wilde in 1890's which may have scared not only homosexuals but everyone.⁴⁰

James wrote the novella *The turn of the Screw* after several years of failure, illnesses and experiences with death: in 1881 both his parents died, his good friend Ivan Segejevič Turgenev died two years later and the biggest shock was the death of his sister Alice in 1892 in the age of forty-four. She suffered lifelong health problems and severe depression, she was also fixated on their brother William.⁴¹ Henry James spent with his sister the last moments of her life which he described as a particularly traumatic experience.⁴² Moreover, what caused him a particular distress was the suicide of a writer Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840–1894), the grand-niece of James Fenimore Cooper. James and Woolson met 1840, became very close friends and exchanged many letters (which James himself destroyed). When he learned that she leaped from the window of her flat in Venice he utterly collapsed. “Miss Woolson was so valued and close a friend of mine and had been for so many years that I feel an intense nearness of participation in every circumstance of her tragic end.”⁴³ The next year, in 1885 James appeared on the verge of despair when the play *Guy Domville* miserably failed (having been replaced by *The Importance of being Earnest*); he was even considering suicide at that time. Thus the short novella, sometimes called the best ghost story *The Turn of the Screw* showing the dark side of human nature may be the illustration of the difficult time James had endured.⁴⁴

In the year 1895, shortly after the failure at the premiere of *Guy Domville*, James visited his friend Edward White Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury. They were talking about ghosts and James after the meeting wrote into his notebook the outline of the narration Benson told him that evening:

[...]the story of the young children (indefinite number and age) left to the care of servants in an old country-house, through the death, presumably, of parents. The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children; the children are bad, full of evil, to a sinister degree. The servants die (the story vague about the way of it) and their apparitions, figures, return to haunt the house and children, to whom they seem to beckon, whom they invite and solicit, from across dangerous places, the deep ditch of a sunk fence, etc. - so that the children may destroy themselves, lose themselves, by responding, by

⁴⁰ Having mentioned Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) he was James's main rival in writing for theatre. Wilde's unreachable popularity was the reason why James's works (as well as plays of many other playwrights) ended in a fiasco.

⁴¹ There were suggestions that their relationship was unusually closed and even included some erotic aspects. Alice James, *The Diary of Alice James*. Edited by Leon Edel. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1964).

⁴² Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life* (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 25.

⁴³ Beidler, *Henry James*, 23.

⁴⁴ Robert Lee Wolff, “The Genesis of *The Turn of the Screw*,” *American Literature* 13, (1941): 5.

getting into their power. It is all obscure and imperfect, the picture, the story, but there is a suggestion of strangely gruesome effect in it. The story to be told by an outside spectator, observer.⁴⁵

Indeed, that notebook record was the germ of *The Turn of the Screw*, nevertheless James did not work on it until almost three years later. He started writing only after an order from New York magazine Collier's Weekly to publish a twelve-part ghost story in 1898. This offer meant not only extra money, but also a wider and more popular readership, so James agreed. After all, he still had that brief story told by Edward Benson in his drawer.⁴⁶

Apart from the archbishop's story there are possible influential works, such as *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë,⁴⁷ and especially *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë,⁴⁸ or Fielding's *Amelia*.⁴⁹ Also an important role played James's fascination with the supernatural which is understandable as his brother William James was active psychical researcher and member of the Society for the Psychical Research and their sister Alice suffered from neurosis of the kind they ascribe to the Governess from the novella.

In spite of the fact James did not succeed as a playwright, *The Turn of the Screw* is one of the most theatrical pieces he wrote: it is set in one place, the shadowy estate Bly, there are many dramatic dialogues and the mysterious figures which keep appearing and disappearing. Together with the famous critical controversies (that caused strong emotions) it is not surprising that this novella inspired many artists to produce a great number of adaptations, literary reworkings as well as many different interpretations, which include ballets, musicals, films, dramas and opera too.

One of the very first adaptations is the drama *The Innocents* by William Archibald from 1950 directed by Harold Pinter on Broadway. This very play Myfanwy Piper saw in London before she started working on the libretto for Britten's opera in 1953. *The Innocents* was made in 1961 into the famous horror directed by Jack Clayton and adapted by Truman Capote. Another piece, the prequel of the story *The Nightcomers* from 1971 directed by Michael Winner starring Marlon Brando is also a prolific example of the art of adaptation as in this version the children become the murderers of Mrs. Jessel and Peter Quint. From other examples let us mention Spanish film version *The Turn of the Screw* (1985), *Presence of*

⁴⁵ Beidler, Henry James, 12-13.

⁴⁶ Beidler, *Henry James*, 12-13.

⁴⁷ Alcott, Miriam. "Mrs. Gaskell's 'The Old Nurse's Story': A Link between *Wuthering Heights* and *The Turn of the Screw*." *Notes and Queries* 8 (1961): 101-02. Also, there other opinions of the influences, for example Goethe's *Erkoning*, Feuerlicht, Ignace. "'Erkoning' and *The Turn of the Screw*." *Journal of English and German Philology* 58 (1959): 68-74.

⁴⁸ Petry, Alice Hall. "Jamesian Parody, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Turn of the Screw*." *Modern Language Studies* 4 (1983): 61-78.

⁴⁹ May L. Ryburn, "*The Turn of the Screw* and *Amelia*: A Source for Quint?" *Studies in Short Fiction* 16 (1979): 235-37.

Mind (1999) or *The Others* (2001) with Nicole Kidman which does not exactly follow James's novella but keep main ideas. In 1980 a ballet adaptation by Italian choreographer Luigi Zaninelli appeared and nineteen years later a piece created for Royal ballet by Will Tusket. It is certainly the ambiguity of the work, the possibility to think back (what had happened) or forward (what will happen) as well as to analyse many situations in the course story. The versatility of *The Turn of the Screw* resembles the "Shakespearean universality" because most of the analysis and adaptations refer to the fact that "the ghost-story is about the ghosts only on the surface."

There are many evaluations of the governess, most of the deal with her health condition: due to her hallucinations she may be insane and many analysts observe the apparitions as a consequence of a sex repression (connected with the austerity of the Victorian society). Leon Edel, probably the most important Jamesian scholar proposed that she hides her real nature and in fact haunts the children herself.⁵⁰ The Marxist approach emphasises the class division in the story and sees the governess as the rescuer of the upper class which is, however, lost.

There are always problems with a single approach to the story as the Governess is presented and shaped into any literary theory: she is innocent, responsible, evil, obsessed and neurotic as well as sane. There were even "deconstructive" opinions that the exhausted reader is so frustrated in an endless search for the right version of interpretation that he rather gives up. Although the only right answer to the omnipresent "so which is the right interpretation?" is "none", I will add "another turn of the screw" by suggesting one more.

⁵⁰ Edel, *Henry James: A Life*, 28.

Libretto

As we know from the history of opera, well-written libretto is a very rare piece of work. Not even the most renowned composers wrote music for a high quality texts: Verdi's opera *Troubadour* (1853) or Smetana's *The Brandenburger in Bohemia* (1866) are the famous operas with extremely poor librettos; on the contrary Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was lucky enough to cooperate with the brilliant Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838) so the masterpieces such as *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), *Così fan tutte* (1790) and *Don Giovanni* (premiered in Prague in 1787 and dedicated to the Praguers) could have been created. Another case are the composers such as Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) and Richard Wagner (1813–1883) who wrote librettos for their operas themselves which made the process of composition much easier. The collaboration between the librettist and the composer was not always harmonious because the demands on the author of the text were often excessive: the text as such had to clearly tell the story so the listener could follow, it had to meet the requirement of the psychological depth corresponding with the particular character, furthermore the text had to fit into the score and melodic line in respect of its rhythm and stresses of the words and phrases. Also, the composer in most cases cooperated with the interpreters of the piece so the remarks and possible requirements of the singers might have influenced the work of the librettist too.

There is a never-ending debate about the prominence of the music and words in the opera. In spite of the fact that originally the genre was supposed to merge all the artistic forms which means poetry, music and dance, it developed unequally and even the genre itself has been redefined during its four hundred years of existence. The baroque opera in Italy preferred the music to words, since the castratos' voices with their dazzling display of virtuosity filled Italian churches and theatres therefore financially secured these institutions. The operas resembled the singing concert as the action on the stage was practically missing due to the large and opulent costumes and (pointless) difficulty of the singing part; also, the storyline was often so simple (or generally well known) that the libretto did not bear any importance at all. On the other hand in France they resented the artificial voices of castratos so the realism and psychological truth together with dance (which had a great tradition there) became the prominent features of the French opera. In the 18th century the first reforms criticising the superiority of music in Italian opera appeared so the Mozart's works influenced by this process could blend the music and words into his progressive masterpieces, *Idomeneo*

(1781) being the very first one. In the following century the problem occurred again this time in connection with the national movements during which the librettos were written (or translated) in(to) different languages. Therefore the operas in Czech, German and Russian emerged and the words became again “load-bearing.” In the 20th century the opera composers were often inspired by the plays and literature; for example Dmitri Shostakovich’s (1906–1975) hilarious opera *Nose* (1928) and the scandalous one *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1934) were both inspired by the Russian literary works. Similarly, Leoš Janáček used the materials from different Czech or Russian authors: Gabriela Preissová (*Jenufa*, 1904), Rudolf Těsnohlídek (*The Cunning Little Vixen*, 1924), Karel Čapek (*The Makropulos Affaire*, 1926), Alexander Ostrovsky (*Katya Kabanova*, 1921) or Fyodor Dostoyevsky (*From the House of the Dead*, 1927) as well as the German composer Alban Berg (1885–1935) based his opera *Wozzeck* (1925) on the play by Georg Büchner and the unfinished opera *Lulu* (1937) on the two plays by Frank Wedekind, *Earth Spirit* (1895) and *Pandora’s Box* (1904). As can be seen the literature and music became in the 20th century intertwined (more than ever before) which also appeared in the work of Benjamin Britten. He himself mentioned many times that he hardly ever had a musical thought without a verbal context, which means that the narration was a crucial factor for his work.⁵¹

Benjamin Britten cooperated with a number of different librettists: as has already been mentioned W. H. Auden wrote the libretto for Britten’s first opera/operetta *Paul Bunyan*.⁵² Montagu Slater (1902–1956), Oxford graduate, leftist and friend of W. H. Auden, wrote the libretto for *Peter Grimes*, Britten’s first real opera. The creation of the libretto from the 19th century texts was not easy, coincidentally the name of its anti-hero was strikingly similar to the name Peter Pears. Also, Slater’s libretto contained cues for actual songs and parodies of the sounds as opposed to the music composed in traditional operatic conventions. Eric Crozier (1914–1994), the theatrical director cooperated with Britten for a long time was the co-

⁵¹ Britten mentioned to his friend Ronald Duncan that the only real troubles he had during the composing was when he dealt with the *Second String Quartet* – because it had no words. Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 5.

⁵² Since he arrived in America in 1939 until his death Auden spent much time writing for the musical stage cooperating with one of the most significant composers of the 20th century. Beside Benjamin Britten it was the Russian Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) and Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012) who left Germany in the 1950’s because of his homosexuality and leftist thinking. The most famous libretto is *The Rake’s Progress* (premiered 11th September 1951 in Venice) which was based on the William Hogarth’s paintings of the same name from the 18th century. It is very often dismissed that Auden was a successful librettist (since John Dryden none of the English poets dealt with operatic librettos) and also an author of the theoretical texts about libretto. For example in *W. H. Auden: A Commentary* the librettos are explicitly overlooked, being “in their details of limited poetical interest.” which may be the evidence of the lack of understanding for the libretto. Matthew Paul Carlson, “W. H. Auden and Opera: Studies of the Libretto as Literary Form” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012).

founder of the Aldeburgh Festival in 1948 and also the author of the libretto for *Albert Herring*, the opera inspired by the novella of Guy de Maupassant *Le Rosier de Madame Husson*. He kept the storyline, only exchanged the French setting for the English one. The libretto in the famous *Billy Budd* was the cooperation between Eric Croizier and the Nobel Prize laureate English novelist E. M. Forster (1879–1970). He was not only the librettist but the very first inspiration for Britten's work as because he heard Forster's lessons about the English literature (published as *Aspects of the Novel*) in which he talked about the Melville's works and that excited composer's interest. Furthermore, Britten wrote some librettos himself. For example *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960) was firstly commissioned to Myfanwy Piper but, eventually, he wrote it in collaboration with Peter Pears, reducing the five acts into three, focusing on the characters Oberon and Puck and on the events set in the enchanted forest.

The Welsh art critic Mary Mifanwy Piper (1911–1997) was the poet who cooperated with Britten nearly all his career. She made two adaptations of Henry James's works, *The Turn of the Screw* (1954) and *Owen Wingrave*, the opera written for the television and premiered on 16th May 1971. Although this work had only little success compared to their first collaboration, Britten retained confident and Piper was commissioned the libretto for his last scenic work *Death in Venice* (1973).⁵³ Piper's husband, the painter John Piper (1903–1992), was Britten's long-time friend who also became a stage designer of most of Britten's operas; during the twenty-seven years he designed the operas from *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) until the last one *Death in Venice*.

In the case of *The Turn of the Screw* Piper's task was to encapsulate the storyline into approximately a hundred minutes preserving its tension and momentum as well as the claustrophobic atmosphere of the novella. She had to deal with the ambiguities (in the novella as well as in Britten's score) which proved to be very potent aesthetic function. Using the nursery rhymes as well as the quotation from renowned poets she was capable to reach the psychological truth as well as the individual characterization. The numerous inventive contrasts she makes in the text whereby creating the ambivalent situations are the evidence of her outright mastery of English language.

⁵³ The short novel by Thomas Mann was reshaped in Piper's rendition, it also included the mute action and dance. Tadzio, the boy, had the silent role embroidered by the exotic music expressing the desire of Gustav von Aschenbach.

The Turn of the Screw – Libretto, Opera, Novella

“Nobody but me, till now, has ever heard. It’s quite too horrible.” [...]“It’s beyond everything. Nothing at all that I know touches it.” “For sheer terror?” I remember asking. He seemed to say it wasn’t so simple as that; to be really at a loss how to qualify it. He passed his hand over his eyes, made a little wincing grimace. “For dreadful – dreadfulness!” “Oh, how delicious!” cried one of the women.⁵⁴

Britten read the novella for the first time in June 1932. In his diary he characterized the story as “a wonderful, impressive but terribly eerie and scary play,”⁵⁵ however it took more than twenty years for the opera to reach the stage of the Teatro La Fenice in Venice on 14th September 1954.⁵⁶ According to Piper, she was the one who proposed him the James’s text as highly suitable subject for the next opera. “I knew he was interested in the effect of adult, or bad, ideas on the innocence of children. I also thought it was densely musical prose which would suit his work.”⁵⁷ In the context of Britten’s works, the operas written between the years 1951 and 1954, *Billy Budd*, *Gloriana* and *The Turn of the Screw*, are considered the peak of his compositional effort.⁵⁸

The whole opera lasts about 110 minutes; the two acts consist of sixteen uneven parts which are always preceded by musical intermezzos called “Variations” and one extra part that opens the work, “Prologue”. This structure follows the concept of the novella which also consists of the initial part set in the “ghost-story evening” framing the main plot and only after the real story begins and is distributed into the twenty-four chapters.⁵⁹

The “first person narrative of the first person narrative” that creates the most ambiguities in the novella is not so straightforward in the opera libretto. The reliability of the

⁵⁴ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 1.

⁵⁵ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 183.

⁵⁶ The year 1954 was in the literal context in England extremely prolific: it was the year of publication of *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding as well as *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. Two of them established completely new literary genre typical for Great Britain – “campus novel” and “high fantasy.” Curiously, Golding’s allegory about the ostensibly innocent children who turned to be vicious seems to correspond a little with the plot of *The Turn of the Screw*. In the same year Jay D. Scott who was the editor of *The Spectator* coined a term “The Movement” to describe a group English poets inspired by the work of the 19th century writer Thomas Hardy; the group included writers such as Philip Larkin (1922–1985), Kingsley Amis (1922–1995), John Wain (1926–1994), Elizabeth Jennings (1926–2001) and Thom Gunn (1929–2004). Concerning the music there were contrapuntal attempts to classical style – popularity of American rock n’ roll, Cliff Richard (*1940) and, as the most important event is pointed the meeting of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Most of these examples happened to be the cornerstones of British as well as world literature and music. This enumeration of different genres (poetry, fantasy, humour, classical as well as popular style in music) mirrors the diversity of the British society in the 1950’s.

⁵⁷ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 184.

⁵⁸ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 210.

⁵⁹ *The Turn of the Screw* was first published in serial format in the journal *Collier’s Weekly*, from the 27th January to 16th April 1898. The twenty-four chapters were published in the twelve instalments, illustrated by John La Farga and Eric Pape. The novella as a whole was published in October in the same year in the volume titles *The Two Magics* and published in New York (Macmillan) and London (Heinemann).

third-person narrative is usually unquestionable whereas the first-person narrative, Governess's story, clearly distorts the reality of which the reader must be well aware. Moreover, the fact that a woman in Victorian era told a story, nota bene spoke/think for herself, was not only unusual but a daring act putting her reputation at stake. Ross Murfin in her feminist analysis of *The Turn of the Screw* explains the status of women in the nineteenth-century England: "Victorian women were spoken to; they were not speakers. They were not generally thought of as thinking, feeling subjects *with* desires but, rather, as the objects of [both italics in the original] male desires. If they did come to be viewed as having desires of their own [...], then they were thought of as lunatics or whores."⁶⁰ From this reason the mental health of Governess is object of several analyses usually concluding by the claim that she is seriously mentally ill. The approach of the opera is aware of the "unreliability of the narrator" which Britten uses for his own (artistic) purposes.

Taking into consideration the traditional concept of the opera genre, the libretto is usually based on the dialogues and interaction of the characters, in a similar way as it is in a drama. Therefore all the characters in the opera are given the voice (except of the guardian), including the two ghosts. This is a very striking moment in the opera, because the (non-)existence of the ghosts as well as sanity of the Governess are the most discussed topics in the scholarly papers.⁶¹

The fundamental question dealt with in the scholarship on *The Turn of the Screw* is how real the ghosts are. Are Peter Quint and Miss Jessel real in the sense that they are spirits of the dead come back to haunt the living? Or are they real only in the sense that the governess has hallucinations that make them seem real to her? Do they haunt the children or do they haunt only the governess's troubled imagination? Virtually every book and article on *The Turn of the Screw* - and there have been hundreds-deals at least indirectly with that question. It is almost impossible to read the story without taking sides and almost impossible to approach the story critically without knowing where one stands on it.⁶²

These concerns are crucial in any interpretation of the novella and the issue whether the ghosts are real or not was one of the first problems that Britten and Piper faced. By giving them voices and mutual interaction the authors created the villains, very real and threatening, especially when they communicate with the children. This suggests that the opera is an interpretation of the Governess's point of view, because beside her nobody else in the novella

⁶⁰ Ross C. Murfin, "Feminist Criticism and *The Turn of the Screw*," in *The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 247–48.

⁶¹ The different interpretations are presented in the following texts: Peter G. Beidler *Ghosts, Demons, and Henry James: "The Turn of the Screw" at the Turn of the Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989). Wayne C. Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). 284–301. Oscar Cargill, "The Turn of the Screw and Alice James." *PMLA* 78 (1963): 238-49. Thomas Mabry Cranfill and Robert Lanier Clark, Jr. *An Anatomy of "The Turn of the Screw."* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965).

⁶² Beidler, *Henry James*, 127.

saw the ghosts. Therefore Britten's and Piper's approach seems to be a serious revelation of the Governess's "insane mind." There are some comments on her character from the Piper's notebook:

I see a series of heroic soliloquies. [...] The ordinary fears and doubts of an inexperienced girl faced with responsibility & possibly loneliness and boredom buoyed up by romantic love. [...] The lyrical imagining of an interview with the beloved employer leading up to the 1st appearance. [...] After the 2nd appearance & the long conversation with Mrs Grose a Heroic imagining of herself as the influence for good and protection full acceptance of the role of guardian angel 'I was a screen – I was to stand before them. The more I saw the less they would.' [...] Realisation that she would not be a protection – that they were already too deeply involved.⁶³

As will be shown in the following sections, they kept this structure. And, although Piper commented the work that "neither Britten nor I ever intended interpret the work, only to recreate it for a different medium"⁶⁴ it is quite clear that the transformation they made was significant.

Next dilemma referred to the title of the opera. Primarily, there were suggestions reflecting the key moments of the storyline so the places where the ghosts repeatedly appear with strong Freudian overtones that dominate the whole opera, *The Tower and the Lake*. Eventually, Britten relinquished this title – possibly because of the fame of the original title and after realizing that the Freudian aspects appear there too.⁶⁵ The title was kept, however, the libretto does not contain any reference to the "turn of the screw" as it is in the novella on several places. Firstly, right at the beginning it set the claustrophobic and rather alarming atmosphere.

"I quite agree—in regard to Griffin's ghost, or whatever it was—that its appearing first to the little boy, at so tender an age, adds a particular touch. But it's not the first occurrence of its charming kind that I know to have involved a child. If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to TWO children—?"
"We say, of course," somebody exclaimed, "that they give two turns! Also that we want to hear about them."⁶⁶

Later this "motif" is connected to an uneasy situation requiring surpassing oneself, when the Governess is alone with Miles. She described the situation full of excessive pressure as if she presupposed what was going to happen (Miles died shortly afterwards).

⁶³ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 196–97.

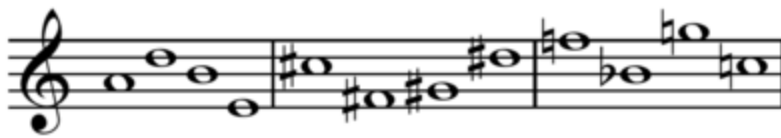
⁶⁴ Quoted by Patricia Howard, in Patricia Howard, ed., *Benjamin Britten: The Turn of the Screw* (Cambridge Opera Handbooks, 1985), 23.

⁶⁵ The deconstructionist scholar Shoshana Felman in her paper analysing the different meaning of the words grasp, metaphor of helm and the chain of the words mast-master-mastery concludes that the title itself is has sexual connotations: "And since the mast, which is a figure of the phallus, is also a figure of the *screw*, it seems that the crucial question raised by the text and valorized by its title might be: what is, after all, a *screw* in *The Turn of the Screw*?" Shoshana Felman, "'The grasp with which I recovered him': A Child Is Killed in *The Turn of the Screw*", in *The Turn of the Screw*, edited by Peter G. Beidler (New York: St. Martin's Press) 201.

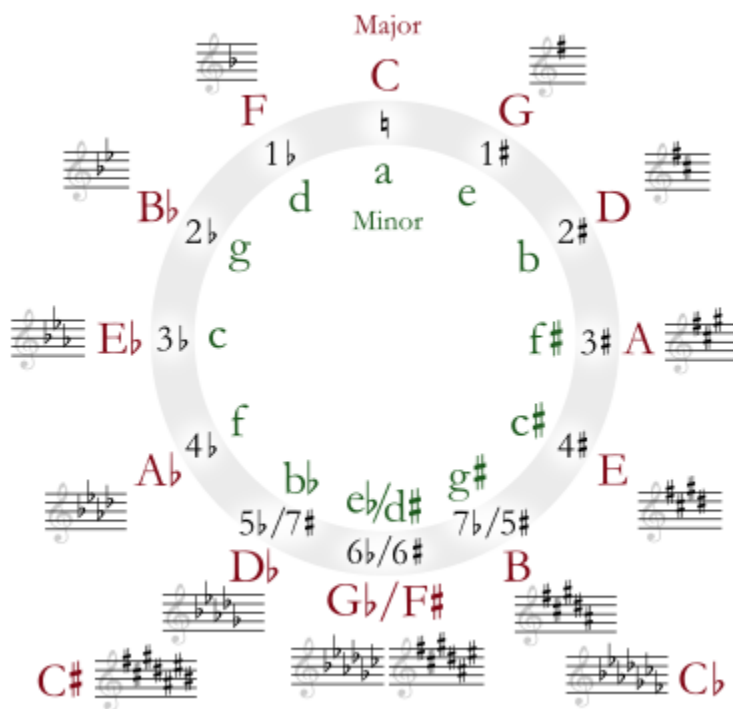
⁶⁶ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 2.

Here at present I felt afresh—for I had felt it again and again—how my equilibrium depended on the success of my rigid will, the will to shut my eyes as tight as possible to the truth that what I had to deal with was, revoltingly, against nature. I could only get on at all by taking “nature” into my confidence and my account, by treating my monstrous ordeal as a push in a direction unusual, of course, and unpleasant, but demanding, after all, for a fair front, only another turn of the screw of ordinary human virtue.⁶⁷

In both cases the “turn of the screw” is connected to a certain tension and nervousness, even horror; this atmosphere which is present in the opera but exclusively in the music. The motif of the “turning” is implanted into the score in a very sophisticated way, using the twelve-note technique (so called dodecaphony) aptly expressing the anxiety and distress.



Obr. 1



Obr. 2

The motif of the screw (obr. 1) in the opera is based on the circle of the fifths, which represents not only the circular motion of the “turning” but also the growing tension. Also the visualization of the circle of the fifths (obr. 2) supports the idea illustrating the “turning” as

⁶⁷ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 138.

such.⁶⁸ The intervals are arranged in the order to create the cycle that it ends always where it has begun. Moreover, the interval of the fifth is crucial part of melody which contains the vocal lines identified with questions “Who is it?” “What is it?” in this fashion the fifths (or inverted fourths) are connected with the unanswered questions.⁶⁹

Although the whole opera is not atonal, this little recurring theme gives the music very strong ambiguous feeling and, furthermore, the sharp contrast between tonality and atonality usually represents the clash between order and disorder, day and night, conscious and unconscious which may be applied on novella, too – the contradiction between an unconscious dreaming and a conscious state of mind, the “ordered” good and “disordered” evil. From this example it is clear how the musical and literary quality of the work may be cleverly intertwined.

Act I

“The reader may choose to hesitate once more over the visitants, governess, or children; or he may choose to hesitate over hesitation.”⁷⁰

The opera begins with the “Prologue,” a condensed frame of the whole story omitting the “ghost-story evening”, which presents the setting and gives the necessary information about the characters, Miles, Flora, Mrs. Grose and the former governess: “The children were in the country with / an old housekeeper. There had been a / governess, but she had gone. The boy, / of course, was at school, but there was / the girl, and the holidays, now begun. / This then would be her [the new Governess’s] task.”⁷¹ Although the “Prologue” was composed only few weeks before the premiere as the opera faced the risk being too short, this hasty adjustment does not sound disturbing at all, quite the opposite; it seems to be a perfect opening which creates a nervous atmosphere already full of ambiguities. In the theatre it is performed in front of a drop curtain by the same singer as the one who is going to perform the character of Peter Quint.⁷² Whether intentionally or not there was created an illusion of

⁶⁸ Although the history of publishing *The Turn of the Screw* explains exactly why the novella has this number of chapters, it strikingly well corresponds with the notion of wholeness: the 12-note technique expresses a certain compactness in the same manner as the 24 chapters suggest a certain concluded whole (a day lasts 24 hours).

⁶⁹ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 206.

⁷⁰ Tobin Siebers, “Hesitation, History, and Reading: Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 25 (1983): 560.

⁷¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 8–13.

⁷² Concerning the fact how complicated would be to search for a new performer only few weeks before the premiere the most probable reason for this arrangement was the practicality of the performance. The tenor Peter Pears, the performer of Peter Quint, was the singer Britten was very familiar with, so the composition of additional parts for his voice was fairly suitable.

the one and the same person – the former servant and the omniscient narrator of the tale recollecting the past events: “It is a curious story. I have it written in / faded ink - a woman’s hand, governess / to two children - long ago.”⁷³ In the novella there is an unnamed narrator of the framed Douglas’s story, and from the first chapter till the end it is the “unreliable narrator,” the Governess. This concept merging Quint and the narrator of the story significantly transforms the character of Quint-the-ghost as well as the potential point of view of the Governess.

The Governess is in the libretto presented very much in the same way as she is in the novella, “untried, innocent.”⁷⁴ Her affection towards the guardian is quite clear and confirmed in many situations in the novella, as well as in the opera. Firstly, in the final part of the “Prologue” there is a moment in which she hesitates to accept the position, however, she finally agrees, clearly enchanted by the attractive man: “But / she was carried away: that he, so gallant / and handsome, so deep in the busy / world, should need her help. / At last ‘I will,’ she said.”⁷⁵ This ambiguous “I will” corresponding with the marriage vows is the first example of Piper’s mastery work, the strong and telling atmosphere which she created on relatively little space is remarkable. Let us compare the equivalent section from the novella which also appears in the initial part of the text: “He struck her, inevitably, as gallant and splendid, but what took her most of all and gave her courage she afterwards showed was that he put the whole thing to her favour, an obligation he should gratefully incur. [...] The moral of which was of course the seduction by the splendid young man. She succumbed to it.”⁷⁶

The Guardian is the person whose name neither the reader nor the listener never learns, is only seemingly a minor character who does not participate in the developments at Bly at all. In the opera the listener knows about his existence indirectly because he is not given a voice. In the “Prologue” there is a remark about the guardian in London who was “a young / man, bold, offhand and gay, the / children’s only relative.”⁷⁷ Later, his busyness is mentioned and the most important requirement that the newly hired Governess must meet: “But there / was one condition: he was so much / engaged; affairs, travel, friends, visits / always something, no time at all for / the poor little things. She was to do everything, be responsible / for everything, not to worry him at all / no, not to write, but to be silent, and / do

⁷³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 1–3.

⁷⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” line 4. “She was young, untried, nervous: it was a vision of serious duties and little company, of really great loneliness.” James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 8.

⁷⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 21–25.

⁷⁶ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 6, 8.

⁷⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 5–6.

her best.”⁷⁸ This is one of the key moments which has an enormous impact on the following events both in the novella and in the opera. Despite the fact that the character is “hidden”, he is omnipresent as his above-mentioned condition influences all participants and the subsequent events at Bly.

The first act consists of the “Prologue” and the eight scenes named after the most significant events: 1) “The Journey,” 2) “The Welcome,” 3) “The Letter,” 4) “The Tower,” 5) “The Window,” 6) “The Lesson,” 7) “The Lake,” 8) “At Night.” From this summary it is clear that the libretto roughly follows the novella.

In the first scene the Governess is in the couch, thinking about her decision to stay at Bly under the weird condition of the children’s guardian: “not to worry him at all, / no, not to write, but to be silent, and / do her best.”⁷⁹ She is full of doubts, fear and uncertainty. “Who will greet me? The children...the children. Will they be clever? Will they like me? [...] If things go wrong what shall I do? Who can I ask, with none of my kind to talk to? [...] I must not write to their guardian, that is the hardest part of all. [...] O why did I come?”⁸⁰ At this place her feelings to the guardian are revealed again, even using the same expression as before: “No! I’ve said I will do it, and for him I will.”⁸¹ The unstable state of her mind changes the moments full of doubts with the moments full of responsibility and later she tries to encourage herself: “There's nothing to fear./ What could go wrong? / Be brave, be brave”⁸² and in calming section she continues telling herself: “Very soon I shall know, very soon I shall know.”⁸³ In this section Piper uses isolated words and rather fragmented sentences to achieve not only the density of the text, but also to express the real isolation, loneliness and nervousness of the Governess during her journey to Bly. Her inner dialogue using the method similar to the “stream of consciousness” aptly mirrors her feelings and even may reveal her mental instability and proneness to easily succumb the stress. In the novella there is only a slight innuendo indicating her inner monologue full of disquiet.

After rising, in town, to meet his appeal, I had at all events a couple of very bad days—found myself doubtful again, felt indeed sure I had made a mistake. In this state of mind I spent the long hours of bumping, swinging coach that carried me to the stopping place at which I was to be met by a vehicle

⁷⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 13–21.

⁷⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: “Prologue,” lines 20–21.

⁸⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 1 – “The Journey,” lines 29–46.

⁸¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 1 – “The Journey,” lines 47–8.

⁸² Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 1 – “The Journey,” lines 49–51.

⁸³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 1 – “The Journey,” lines 27, 53–4.

from the house. [...] I suppose I had expected, or had dreaded, something so melancholy that what greeted me was a good surprise.⁸⁴

Before the Governess's arrival the children feel the same excitement. "Will she be nice? [...] Will she be cross? Why doesn't she hurry? [...] Will she like us? Shall we like her?"⁸⁵ And into this atmosphere she appears. In spite of her doubts she is warmly welcome by the children and Mrs. Grose and instantly befriends them all. "This must be Flora? / And Miles? (*Flora curtseys, Miles bows.*) / How charming they are, how beautiful too."⁸⁶ Mrs. Grose felt immediately relieved after her arrival. "I'm happy, / so happy that you've come, Miss. / Miss Flora and Master Miles are happy, / so happy that you're here too. / They are good children, / yes, they are, they're good, Miss. [...] Yes, they're clever – / they need their own kind, / they're far too clever for me."⁸⁷ The housekeeper is presented as a very simple and in many occasions a powerless woman whose illiteracy contrasts with the children's precocity.

In the opera Miles features right from the beginning (does not arrive later as it is in the novella) which is one of the manoeuvres to push the story forwards. For the first sight it seemed that the Governess's fears were unnecessary as she is impressed by the children and by the whole estate. "How charming they [Miles and Flora] are, / how beautiful too. / The house and park are so splendid, / far grander than I am used to. / I shall feel like a princess here. Bly, I begin to love you."⁸⁸ So the first impressions of the Governess at her new workplace were very pleasant, she likes the spacious and beautiful place and finally in the end of the second scene she happily declares "Bly is now my home."⁸⁹

The first clouds appear when the Governess receives the letter from Miles's school, announcing his immediate expulsion. She feels helpless therefore only hardly resists the temptation to write the Guardian as the situation seems to be very serious.

GOVERNESS.

Tell me, Mrs Grose,
have you ever known
Miles to be bad?

Mrs. GROSE

A boy is no boy for me

⁸⁴ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 10.

⁸⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 2 – "The Welcome," lines 1–5.

⁸⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 2 – "The Welcome," lines 28–31.

⁸⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 2 – "The Welcome," lines 36–41, 55–57.

⁸⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 2 – "The Welcome," lines 30–35.

⁸⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 2 – "The Welcome," line 72.

if he is never wild.
But bad, no, no!⁹⁰

Miles's "badness" is not only the topic of the following debate with Mrs. Grose but the enigma of the whole story. The Governess tries to reveal what was the true reason for his expelling but there are only subtle innuendoes which in some cases raise even more questions. Their discussion in low voices about the boy's "badness" is interrupted by children's distant play in the novella and the nursery rhyme in the opera, the well-known English simple song *Lavender's Blue*.

MILES, FLORA
Lavender's blue, diddle, diddle,
Lavender's green,
When I am King, diddle, diddle,
You shall be Queen.
Call up your men, diddle, diddle,
Set them to work,
Some to the plough, diddle, diddle,
Some to the cart.
Some to make hay, diddle, diddle,
Some to cut corn,
While you and I, diddle, diddle -⁹¹

The contrast of the innocence of the nursery rhymes and the "badness" of the letter is another inventive moment of Mifanwy Piper's work. The simple children's songs effectively characterise the ambiguous situations depicting the seeming innocence gives effortless and natural impression. The Governess is attracted by Miles's gentle game with Flora so decides not to act. "See how sweetly he plays, / and with how gentle a look / he turns to his sister. / Yes! The Child is an angel! / it is nonsense - never a word of truth. / it is all a wicked lie."⁹² In the novella Miles has not arrived yet so there is only Flora who convinces the Governess of the false accusation.

She expressed in her little way an extraordinary detachment from disagreeable duties, looking to me, however, with a great childish light that seemed to offer it as a mere result of the affection she had conceived for my person, which had rendered necessary that she should follow me. I needed nothing more than this to feel the full force of Mrs. Grose's comparison, and, catching my pupil in my arms, covered her with kisses in which there was a sob of atonement.⁹³

⁹⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 3 – "The Letter," lines 21–26.

⁹¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 3 – "The Letter," lines 31–41.

⁹² Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 3 – "The Letter," lines 42–47.

⁹³ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 18.

Later, one evening the Governess walks in the park and again confesses her happiness at Bly and her affection towards the Guardian: “Only one thing I wish, / that I could see him - / and that he could see how well / I do his bidding. / The birds fly home to these great trees, / here too I am at home. / Alone, tranquil, serene.”⁹⁴ Her dreaming is suddenly interrupted by a strange apparition of an unknown man up on the tower. This contrasting atmosphere is of course mainly caught in the musical score, but the libretto also aptly mirrors her change of moods: “No! No! Who is it? / Who? Who can it be? / Some servant - / no! I know them all. / Who is it who? / Who can it be? / Some curious stranger? / But how did he get in? / Who is it, who? / Some fearful madman / locked away there? / Adventurer? Intruder? / Who is it, who? / Who can it be?”⁹⁵ These short cries and the repetitions of the word “who” are the accurate illustrations of the Governess’s shock.

In the novella she came out for a stroll and imagines a meeting of someone. “One of the thoughts that, as I don’t in the least shrink now from noting, used to be with me in these wanderings was that it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone. Someone would appear there at the turn of a path and would stand before me and smile and approve.”⁹⁶ This corresponds with the notion of her having vivid fantasy and imagining things; in the novella there are several references to the Governess’s insane “mind” and her “imagination.”⁹⁷

At the moment the figure disappears she is still in a state of shock and goes inside where the children play. Again, the disagreeable psychological tension of the Governess is in this situation combined with the “innocent game” of the children who are singing *Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son* and running in the background.

MILES, FLORA
 Tom, Tom, the piper’s son
 Stole a pig and away he run.
 Pig was eat and Tom was beat,
 Tom ran howling down the street.

MILES
 Now I’ll steal the pig! I’ll steal the pig!

FLORA
 Go on then, go on!

MILES, FLORA
 Tom, Tom, the piper’s son!

⁹⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 4 – “The Tower,” lines 13–19.

⁹⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 4 – “The Tower,” lines 21–34.

⁹⁶ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 25.

⁹⁷ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 26, 27.

Stole a pig and away he run –

MILES

Now chase me! Chase me!

FLORA

I'll catch you.

MILES, FLORA

Pig was eat and Tom was beat,
Tom ran howling down the street.

FLORA

Let's do it again! Let's do it again!⁹⁸

On the stage this section has often sexual overtones which contrast with their seemingly innocent game and with the following events. The last Flora's line provokes to various conclusions. In some interpretations there was even the incestuous relationship between the siblings.⁹⁹ The horror of the Governess continues since she sees face of that unknown man behind the window again. She is shaken and runs outside to the window and looks into the room from the same place as the man was watching. In the novella this is the point when the identification of the Governess with Peter Quint begins: "He remained but a few seconds—long enough to convince me he also saw and recognized; but it was as if I had been looking at him for years and had known him always. [...] It was confusedly present to me that I ought to place myself where he had stood. I did so; I applied my face to the pane and looked, as he had looked, into the room."¹⁰⁰ More places in the novella demonstrate that the Governess resembles the former employees, not only Quint but also Miss Jessel, in contrast to the libretto which omits this aspect totally.

When the Governess describes the mystical figure to Mrs. Grose, she is appalled as she recognizes that the man must be the master's valet.

GOVERNESS

His hair was red, close-curling,
a long, pale face, small eyes.
His look was sharp, fixed and strange.
He was tall, clean-shaven, yes,
even handsome.
But a horror!

⁹⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – "The Window," lines 1–14.

⁹⁹ This may evoke the relationship between James's siblings, Alice and William who were very close and from their letters one may observe the explicit eroticism. When William married she suffered a break down and died few years later in the age of forty-four. See more in Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life* (New York: Harper, 1985).

¹⁰⁰ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 34–35.

Mrs. GROSE
Quint! Peter Quint!
Dear God, is there no end
to his dreadful ways?¹⁰¹

Notwithstanding the fact that this revelation is the most convincing reason for the existence of the ghost in the novella (after all Mrs Gross recognised him), the theory applying the nineteenth century diagnosis so called sexual hysteria disproved it; Stanley Renner analysed the Governess's visions as textbook examples of hysterical attacks with which the author had much experience.¹⁰² Moreover, Renner in his article "'Red hair, very red, close curling': Sexual Hysteria, Physiognomical Bogeymen, and the 'Ghosts' in *The Turn of the Screw*" proves that the man depicted by Governess and recognised as Peter Quint was a stereotypical image of a personification of evil in Victorian England. Red-haired males were according to the Bible connected to Satan,¹⁰³ according to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* the "red-haired of both sexes are more libidinous and mischievous than the rest."¹⁰⁴ So the appearance of Peter Quint might have been only Governess's imagination of prototypical evil (therefore sexual in nineteenth century England) man.¹⁰⁵

However, after the disclosure Mrs. Grose tells the whole story about the former employees at Bly, Peter Quint and the governess Miss Jessel, and their destructive influence over the children.

But I saw things elsewhere I did not like. / When Quint was free with everyone - / With little Master Miles. [...]Hours they spent together. / Yes, Miss. He made free with her too, / with lovely Miss Jessel, governess to those pets, / those angels, those innocent babes, and she a lady, so far above him. / Dear God! Is there no end! / But he had ways to twist them round his little finger. / He liked them pretty, I can tell you, Miss - / and he had his will, morning and night.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – "The Window," lines 34–43.

¹⁰² There is again the little note about the serious illness of James's sister Alice who suffered most probably suffered from sexual hysteria "thus it should not be surprising that in *The Turn of the Screw* he [Henry James] could portray an accurate, virtually textbook case of this illness." Stanley Renner, "'Red hair, very red, close-curling': Sexual Hysteria, Physiognomical Bogeymen, and the 'Ghosts' in *The Turn of the Screw*," in *The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 225.

¹⁰³ Remarkable feature of Satan was also being disguised as somebody else, in other words wearing clothes of gentleman in order to be taken for what he decidedly was not. In novella there is clear reference to this situation on the page 40: "And dressed—?" "In somebody's clothes." "They're smart, but they're not his own."

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (London: Collector's Library, 2004), 326. There are more examples from literature of the red-haired people being evil and villains; even the example from Fielding's *Amelia*, the novel mentioned in the novella, presents the red-haired character Robinson, who is a criminal. Among others in the novels *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* or *Vanity Fair* also such a figure appear. More humorous conclusion of the depiction of Peter Quint made by Elizabeth A. Sheppard was: "He is George Bernard Shaw." E. A. Sheppard. *Henry James and "The Turn of the Screw"* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1974), 61–62.

¹⁰⁵ Renner, *Sexual Hysteria*, 237–39.

¹⁰⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – "The Window," lines 56–72.

In spite of the fact the ghosts in the novella do not do hardly anything besides appearing and disappearing, Governess is, from then on, in a state of serious distress.

GOVERNESS

Is this sheltered place
the wicked world
where things unspoken of can be?

Mrs. GROSE

Dear God!

GOVERNESS

Only this much I know;
things have been done here
that are not good,
and have left a taste behind them.¹⁰⁷

In this situation the Governess decides to protect the children from this evil that she feels occupies the house. “I was there to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable, the appeal of whose helplessness had suddenly become only too explicit, a deep, constant ache of one’s own engaged affection.”¹⁰⁸ Soon she becomes obsessed by the children’s safety but Mrs. Grose expresses her assistance.

GOVERNESS

But I see it now,
I must protect the children,
I must guard their quiet,
and their guardian’s too.
See what I see, know what I know,
that they may see and know nothing.

Mrs GROSE

Lord, Miss!
Don’t understand a word
of what you say!
But I’ll stand by you.
Lord, Miss,
indeed I will.¹⁰⁹

From the libretto it is clear that Mrs. Grose is again presented as a sincere but rather unintelligent woman who only repeats what is said to her. In the novella the relationship between her and the Governess is more complicated as Mrs. Grose’s behaviour seems rather suspicious especially when they mentioned the former employers.

¹⁰⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – “The Window,” lines 97–104.

¹⁰⁸ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 47.

¹⁰⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – “The Window,” lines 111–123.

“Did she [Miss Jessel] die here?”

“No—she went off.”

I don't know what there was in this brevity of Mrs. Grose's that struck me as ambiguous. “Went off to die?”

[...]I heard from the master that she was dead.”

I turned this over. “But of what?”

“He never told me! But please, miss,” said Mrs. Grose, “I must get to my work.”¹¹⁰

This ambiguity in Mrs. Grose's and Governess's relationship is totally missing in the opera which keeps the storyline clear.

The adaptation of the 9th chapter is one of the most imaginative part of the opera, namely the sixth scene titled “The Lesson.” There are several hints on children's brightness and precocity in the novella: “They got their little tasks as if they loved them, and indulged, from the mere exuberance of the gift, in the most unimposed little miracles of memory. They not only popped out at me as tigers and as Romans, but as Shakespeareans, astronomers, and navigators.”¹¹¹ Children's knowledge and their hunger for more:

children are with Governess in the classroom having the lesson of Latin, of which both Flora and Miles surprisingly prove extensive knowledge:

MILES, FLORA

(*echoing*)

Many nouns it is we find

To the masculine are assigned:

¹Amnis, axis, caulis, collis,

²Clunis, crinis, fascis, follis,

³Fustis, ignis, orbis, ensis.

⁴Panis, piscis, postis, mensis,

⁵Torris, unguis and canalis,

⁶Vectis, vermis, and natalis,

⁷Sanguis, pulvis, cucumis,

⁸Lapis, casses, manes, glis.

Many nouns it is we find

To the masculine are assigned.¹¹²

Let us make the translation of these Latin words:¹¹³

¹brook/river, axis, stem/stalk, hill

²leg/bottom, hair, bundle, pouch/ball

³cosh/stick, fire, wheel, sword

¹¹⁰ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 20–21.

¹¹¹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 66.

¹¹² Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 6 – “The Lesson,” lines 1–12.

¹¹³ The meaning is approximate as the words are not in the sentence, for this reason I decided to emphasize the meaning fitting into the context of Freudian analysis.

⁴bread, fish, door, moon

⁵burning leg, claw, ¹¹⁴ pipe

⁶ lever/stick, worm, birth

⁷blood, dust/arena/wrestling mat, cucumber

⁸stone/milestone, net/trap/helmet, ¹¹⁵ bat, dormouse/growing¹¹⁶

As is evident from these translated words, the Freudian aspects (corresponding with the original title of the opera) are getting more and more prominent. Also, the amount of knowledge seems to bear the stamp of sexuality. Flora is echoing, repeating after Miles which gives the notion of her being somewhat less experienced than he is. Furthermore, translating the Latin words, let us translate the children's names, too: the name Miles comes from Latin *mīles*, *itis m* meaning soldier, and also belongs to the same category as the aforementioned list of words; similarly, *flōs*, *flōris m* meaning flower or blossom is, strikingly enough, also a masculine. Interestingly, these two nouns are often the paradigms in the Latin textbooks,¹¹⁷ which may suggest that Miles and Flora represent all the (uncovered) meanings behind the list of the words. Nevertheless, Flora does not enjoy Latin very much and she would like to do different subject.

FLORA

(frisking around)

Can't we stop now?

Let's do history!

Boadicea on her chariot!

Look at me!

GOVERNESS

Don't tease, dear!

We must do Miles' Latin.

Come now!

What else do you remember?

Now think.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Ad unquam – wholly, completely, absolutely;

¹¹⁵ The word is rather ambiguous as it may be both feminine and masculine: *cassis*, *idis*, *f* means helmet, however, the same form in nominative *cassis*, *is m* is more frequently used in plural *casses*, *ium*, *m* in the meaning of trap, net.

¹¹⁶ Unfortunately the noun does not fit into our context therefore I decided to provide the translation of a very close word, which is not a noun in masculine, but a verb: *glisco*, *ere* – to grow, swell which makes sense in the list of words.

¹¹⁷ Július Špaňár, Emanuel Kettner, *Latina* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1966), 40–44. J. C. McKeown, *Classical Latin: An Introductory Course* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2010) 84–92.

¹¹⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 6 – “The Lesson,” lines 16–24.

And in the end of the lesson Miles starts singing a song, giving all the meanings of the Latin word “malo” in English, much to the Governess’s surprise. This poem was not written by Piper, but she took it from an old Latin grammar book, as she stated.¹¹⁹

MILES

(to himself hesitating)

¹Malo: I would rather be

²Malo: in an apple-tree

³Malo: than a naughty boy

⁴Malo: in adversity.¹²⁰

51 Slowly moving (♩ = 60)
MILES (to himself, hesitating)

Ma - lo, Ma - lo, Ma - lo I would ra - ther be
Ma - lo, Ma - lo, Ma - lo jöh würd tie - ber sein

Ma - lo, Ma - lo in an ap - ple tree Ma - lo,
Ma - lo, Ma - lo in dem Ap - fel - baum Ma - lo,
Ma - lo, Ma - lo, Ma - lo

This part seems to be the mirror of Miles’s state of mind. Musically it contrasts with anything Miles has performed until now stressing his separation from the surrounded world and uncovering his inner self. The Latin rhymes are again rather ambiguous: firstly, *mālō*, *māllē*, *mālluī* is a verb, the expression *mālō* literary means *I prefer*. The second and the thirds expressions are forms of the noun *mālum*, *īn* which means *apple* as well as *evil*. Interestingly enough, these two words look exactly the same in Latin which may suggest the connection with the Biblical apple linked to Satan signifying the fall and sin. Further, the adjective *malus*, *a*, *um* means *bad* and the noun *mālus*, *īm* means *mast*, and the same form (but in

¹¹⁹ “The strange words of the final version were taken from a Latin mnemonic rhyme which Britten found in an old-fashioned Latin grammar belonging to my aunt.” Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 203.

¹²⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 6 – “The Lesson,” lines 25–28.

femininum) means *apple tree*. The question remains who taught him this song, and, therefore who is the potential source of Miles's evil knowledge.

GOVERNESS
Why, Miles, what a funny song!
Did I teach you that?

MILES
No, I found it.
I like it.
Do you?
Malo, Malo, Malo...¹²¹

The precocity of the children becomes rather unnatural and suspicious and the next scene confirms it. The Governess walks with Flora around the lake, giving her the lesson of geography and the girl again demonstrates her extensive knowledge.

GOVERNESS
Come Flora,
what seas do you know?

FLORA
Adriatic and Aegean,...

GOVERNESS
Yes!

FLORA
... Baltic, Bosnian and the Caspian,...

GOVERNESS
Good!

FLORA
... Black and Red and
White and Yellow,...

GOVERNESS
And?

FLORA
... Medi-medi-terra-nean!

GOVERNESS
Go on!

FLORA
And... and... and... the Dead Sea.

GOVERNESS
And this one?

¹²¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 6 – “The Lesson,” lines 29–34.

FLORA
Is the Dead Sea.

GOVERNESS
Oh!¹²²

In the novella there is only short description of the lesson by the lake which Flora titled the Sea of Azof.

FLORA
How can a sea be dead?

GOVERNESS
They call it dead
because nothing can live in it.

FLORA
Then I wouldn't go in it,
and neither would Miles.¹²³

The motif of death develops into the aria of little Flora who lulls her dolly

FLORA
Dolly must sleep
wherever I choose.
Today by the dead salt sea,
Tomorrow her waxen lids may close
On the plains of Muscovy.
And now like
a Queen of the East she lies,
With a Turk to guard her bed,
But next,
when her short-lived daylight dies,
She's a shepherdess instead.
But sleep dear dolly, O sleep and when
You are lost in your journeying dream
The sea may change to a palace again,
For nothing shall stay the same...¹²⁴

The motif of sleeping (or dreaming) suggests the sudden shifts between the conscious and unconscious states of mind. In the novella Flora plays by the lake which leads, again, to psychoanalytical conclusions:

She had picked up a small flat piece of wood, which happened to have in it a little hole that had evidently suggested to her the idea of sticking in another fragment that might figure as a mast and make the thing a boat. This second morsel, as I watched her, she was very markedly and intently attempting

¹²² Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – “The Lake,” lines 6–21.

¹²³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – “The Lake,” lines 22–26.

¹²⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – “The Lake,” lines 34–49.

to tighten in its place. My apprehension of what she was doing sustained me so that after some seconds I felt I was ready for more. Then I again shifted my eyes—I faced what I had to face.¹²⁵

This scene is quoted on many places as a proof of Flora’s sexual awareness (or even experience) and another example of Freudian aspects. Also, the word “mast” was by the deconstructionists analysed as the word closely connected with the words “master” and “mastery” in the novella.¹²⁶

After Flora’s lullaby the Governess notices Miss Jessel at the other side of the lake. She is overtaken by panic because she is certain that Flora saw the ghost, pretends she did not, and Governess deduces that it may be fatal for her.

GOVERNESS
(getting up)
Flora! Come along!
We must go now, go,
and find Miles.

MILES
(shouting off)
Hullo! Where are you, you two?

GOVERNESS
There he is!
Go to him! Go to him!

MILES
(off)
Hullo!

*(Flora runs out.)*¹²⁷

And when Flora disappears Governess expresses her terrible shock. She feels totally useless and to her utter despair, she finds out the children are irredeemable.¹²⁸

GOVERNESS
Miss Jessel!
It was Miss Jessel!
She returns too, - she too, - she too, -
And Flora saw, I know she saw,
and said nothing.
They are lost! Lost!
I neither save nor shield them.
I keep nothing from them.

¹²⁵ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 50.

¹²⁶ Shoshana Felman, “‘The grasp with which I recovered him’: A Child Is Killed in *The Turn of the Screw*”, 201.

¹²⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – “The Lake,” lines 50–56.

¹²⁸ “I sobbed in despair; ‘I don’t save or shield them! It’s far worse than I dreamed—they’re lost!’” James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 56.

O, I am useless, useless.
What can I do?
It is far worse than I dreamed.
They are lost!
Lost! Lost!¹²⁹

In the same manner as in the apparition of Quint on the tower, Piper repetitively uses the vowel [u] which has very expressive quality in these two contexts. It fits into the context for it perfectly illustrates the desperate situation and anxiety.

The last scene of the first act is culmination and projection of the Governess's fears and doubts which are only indicated in the novella. "The four, depend upon it, perpetually meet. If on either of these last nights you had been with either child, you would clearly have understood"¹³⁰ said Governess to Mrs. Grose. It is the interpretation of the 10th chapter of the novella when the children are not in their bed during the night and at that very night the Governess does not sleep either as she read Fielding's *Amelia* in the library. "I remember that the book I had in my hand was Fielding's *Amelia*; also that I was wholly awake. I recall further both a general conviction that it was horribly late and a particular objection to looking at my watch."¹³¹ Shortly after this scene Peter Quint appears again, this time on the stair. In the novella the ghosts are slowly approaching the Governess as every apparition is closer and as a result she reveals that after each of these experiences they are more and more interconnected.

[...] it [the apparition of Peter Quint] 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; and so, in the cold, faint twilight, with a glimmer in the high glass and another on the polish of the oak stair below, we faced each other in our common intensity. [...] I had plenty of anguish after that extraordinary moment, but I had, thank God, no terror. And he knew I had not—I found myself at the end of an instant magnificently aware of this.¹³²

Neither this apparition of Quint nor their connectedness appears in the opera. The eighth scene of the first act is the "materialization" of her discussion with Mrs. Grose in the eighth chapter, in which she learns more about the relationship between the former employers and the children. "When they had been about together quite as if Quint were his tutor—and a very grand one—and Miss Jessel only for the little lady. When he had gone off with the fellow, I mean, and spent hours with him."¹³³ The Governess starts imagining their relationship even

¹²⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – "The Lake," lines 56–69.

¹³⁰ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 82.

¹³¹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 68.

¹³² James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 69.

¹³³ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 61.

more and when she catches Flora coming back from outside to her bedroom, she is certain it has something to do with the ghosts, especially because she uncertainly mentions there might have been someone outside which distresses the Governess even more.

[the Governess] “You thought I might be walking in the grounds?” [Flora:] “Well, you know, I thought someone was”—she never blanched as she smiled out that at me. Oh, how I looked at her now! “And did you see anyone?” “Ah, no!” she returned, almost with the full privilege of childish inconsequence, resentfully, though with a long sweetness in her little drawl of the negative. At that moment, in the state of my nerves, I absolutely believed she lied;¹³⁴

The mistrust from the previous part (when Miss Jessel appeared by the lake) is confirmed and the Governess becomes obsessed with the evil influence of the ghosts over the children. In the opera, the conclusion of the first act is the first part in which the ghosts are not only seen but also heard. This part is mainly dedicated to Quint who lures Miles out of his bed singing in exotic and seductive (even erotic) voice about his passionate power, wicked trickery and a dark secret which they (most probably) share.

QUINT
(unseen)
Miles!
Miles!
Miles!

(The lights fade in on the front of the house and the tower. Quint is on the tower. Miles in the garden below him in his night things.)

MILES
I'm here... O I'm here!¹³⁵

In the following part which resembles a dream Quint wakes Miles up and speaks to him in riddles in an enchanting voice.

QUINT
I am all things strange and bold,
The riderless horse Snorting,
stamping on the hard sea sand,
The hero-highwayman
plundering the land.
I am King Midas with gold in his hand.

MILES
Gold, O yes, gold!

QUINT
I am the smooth world's double face,

¹³⁴ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 72.

¹³⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – “At Night,” lines 1–4.

Mercury's heels feathered with mischief
and a God's deceit.
The brittle blandishment of counterfeit.
In me secrets,
and half-formed desires meet.

MILES
Secrets, O secrets!

QUINT
I am the hidden life that stirs
When the candle is out;
Upstairs and down, the footsteps
barely heard.
The unknown gesture, and the soft,
persistent word,
The long sighing light of the
night-winged bird.

MILES
Bird!¹³⁶

Piper's rich metaphors used to describe Quint are full of inventive language and mythological allusions. He calls himself "riderless horse" and a "highwayman" which signify the wild passion and anti-authorial character; however, this power seems to be ravaging and devastating everyone and everything around. King Midas, the symbol of wealth and power, is also somehow unsatisfied since he changes into gold completely anything he touches therefore "destroys" everything. This damage he sings about may be the reference to his relationship to Miles that might have been harmful. In the second stanza he calls himself a "double-face" that may stand for pretence and hypocrisy that was probably part of his life at Bly. Mentioning Mercury, who is the Roman God of financial gain, communication and travelling as well as trickery and thieves, Quint may call himself a fraudster; nevertheless in connection with the mythological God's "heels feathered" and "the brittle blandishment" the low deceit is elevated into something genteel and even sophisticated. The half-formed desires which meet in Quint might be the reference to his bisexuality since Mrs. Grose reveals it quite openly: "Mrs. Grose considered as if it were perhaps a little a case for a sense of shades. "I've never seen one like him. He did what he wished." "With HER?" "With them all."¹³⁷ In the last stanza Quint calls himself the "hidden life that stirs" again provoking the allusions of a scandalous secret which cannot be revealed to anyone and which does not exist for the surrounded world at all. Also, it may suggest the double-life of conscious and unconscious

¹³⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – "At Night," lines 5–27.

¹³⁷ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 55.

parts of human soul, the part of Freudian psychoanalysis according to which the unconsciousness is the true revelation of oneself. Enchanted Miles repeats his words in a total captivation and follows the voice from his bedroom outside into the darkness. It is important to realize that this depiction of the children's possession by the ghosts' is not fully developed in the novella, only in Governess's mind, and becomes topical in the opera. Of course, the Governess tries to intervene but soon she realizes that it is in vain because it becomes clear that it is impossible to break their bonds, as she expresses it in the novella:

It has been easy to live with them, because they're simply leading a life of their own. They're not mine—they're not ours. They're his and they're hers!"
"Quint's and that woman's?"
"Quint's and that woman's. They want to get to them."
Oh, how, at this, poor Mrs. Grose appeared to study them! "But for what?"
"For the love of all the evil that, in those dreadful days, the pair put into them. And to ply them with that evil still, to keep up the work of demons, is what brings the others back."¹³⁸

The tight connection of evil and ghosts is evident in both novella and in the libretto – it is particularly visible from the encounter of Flora and Miss Jessel in the night. The meeting of Miles and Quint is set near the tower (Quint sings from the tower) whereas Flora and Miss Jessel meet by the lake. In spite of the fact that the opera gives more space to the encounter of Miles and Quint, Miss Jessel not only discloses the evil itself but also presents herself as someone who is aware of their detrimental influence.

Miss JESSEL
Their dreams and ours
Can never be one,
They will forsake us.
O come to me! Come!

FLORA
Tell me, what shall I see there?

QUINT
(to Miles)
What goes on in your head,
what questions?
Ask, for I answer all.¹³⁹

As was mentioned above Quint is the probable source of Miles's knowledge, which is confirmed in this part, in which Quint sings "ask, for I answer all". Moreover, dream and inner thoughts are very important concerns.

¹³⁸ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 83.

¹³⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – "At Night," lines 42–49.

Miss JESSEL
All those we have wept for together;
Beauty forsaken in the beast's demesne,
The little mermaid weeping on the sill,
Gerda and Psyche seeking
their loves again Pandora,
with her dreadful box, as well.¹⁴⁰

The allusions to fairy tales (that may be understood as the horrors, too) *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Snow Queen*, may be the reminders of Miss Jessel's lessons with Flora. And additionally, they mark sharp contrast between the beauty and evil – exactly in the same way as it is presented in the novella. For instance at the very beginning the Governess totally captivated by Flora's beauty: "She was the most beautiful child I had ever seen, and I afterward wondered that my employer had not told me more of her."¹⁴¹ When the problems with the letter appear, she cannot believe the boy being "bad" after seeing his angelic face. "He was incredibly beautiful, and Mrs. Grose had put her finger on it: everything but a sort of passion of tenderness for him was swept away by his presence."¹⁴² Appearance plays a crucial role in *The Turn of the Screw* (in the beginning of the novella the children are frequently described as extraordinarily beautiful, and, on the contrary, in the end Flora's inner change is associated with her physical change: "I've said it already—she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly."¹⁴³) as it does in the mentioned fairy tales and the mythological stories: Pandora may be the most important of all the figures mentioned (what is notable, all of them are female) because she is famous for bringing the evil on Earth by opening the box. The question what is evil and why is it there is omnipresent on the novella. The Beauty represents the physical as well as inner beauty which contrasts with the Beast which is evil, therefore a monster. This concordance, however, does not work in the novella, in which the beautiful does not necessarily mean a good. Gerda from the *Snow Queen* by H. Ch. Andersen and Psyche, the youngest and the most beautiful of all the muses, seek love, just like Miss Jessel was. Furthermore, Psyche who is personification of soul should reveal the true inner self. Regarding the conclusion of Miss Jessel's part about Pandora's box, the true inner self may be the evil. Also, from the following part it is clear that the ghosts intend to seize the "dreaming" children and destroy them.

QUINT
(to Miles)

¹⁴⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – "At Night," lines 50–62.

¹⁴¹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 11.

¹⁴² James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 22.

¹⁴³ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 125.

What goes on in your dreams?
Keep silent!
I know, and answer that too.

Miss JESSEL
Their knowledge and ours
Can never be one,
They will despise us.
O come to me, come!

QUINT, Miss JESSEL
On the paths, in the woods,
on the banks, by the walls,
in the long, lush grass,
or the winter leaves,
fallen leaves, I wait -
On the paths, in the woods,
on the banks, by the walls,
in the long, lush grass
or the winter leaves,
I shall be there, you must not fail.¹⁴⁴

They express their determination to wait anywhere to take the children, keep them for themselves and destroy them, eventually. Suddenly, during this duet Mrs. Grose and the Governess suddenly appear.

GOVERNESS
(approaching)
Miles!
Where are you?

Mrs. GROSE
(approaching)
Flora!
Are you there?

Miss JESSEL
Flora!
Come to me! -

FLORA
Yes!
I shall be there -

MILES
I shall never fail -

QUINT
Come!
Miles!

*(The Governess appears in the porch.
Mrs. Grose appears in the window.
Quint and Miss Jessel disappear.)*

¹⁴⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – “At Night,” lines 56–72.

The Governess runs to Miles.)

GOVERNESS

Mrs. Grose!

Go to Flora!

Mrs. GROSE

Why, whatever's going on?

Miss Flora out of bed!

GOVERNESS

Miles!

What are you doing here?

(Mrs. Grose takes Flora away.)

MILES

You see, I am bad, I am bad,
aren't I?¹⁴⁵

The ghosts disappear and children go back to the house, being under the protection of the Governess. The sudden mysterious disappearance of the ghosts suggests the dream-like situation as if Quint and Miss Jessel were part of the children's reverie.

¹⁴⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 7 – “At Night,” lines 84–91.

Act II

The second act differs from the original more than the previous one because Governess's point of view is getting more and more prominent. This act lasts approximately the same time as the Act I and also consists of the same number of scenes: 1) "Colloquy and Soliloquy," 2) "The Bells," 3) "Miss Jessel," 4) "The Bedroom," 5) "Quint," 6) "The Piano," 7) "Flora," 8) "Miles."

The opening of the second act appears to be the extension of the previous scene as there are ghosts in the night and they seem to continue in their performance but of course, without the children. The scene is divided into two parts as it is evident from the title "Colloquy and Soliloquy," in the first part the ghosts appear and interact, in the second part "Soliloquy" there is a monologue of Governess. The "Colloquy", the conversation between Quint and Miss Jessel became the target of vociferous criticism as "Quint's power is the focus of the drama and Flora's relationship with Miss Jessel, a significant aspect of James's tale, is diminished in the opera."¹⁴⁶ Regarding the necessary shortening of the novella and Britten's artistic intentions (used in his other works, too) the episode developing the relationship of Flora and Miss Jessel into depth would, in my opinion, load the work. The focus on the Miles-Quint relationship creates coherent and compact piece.

At the beginning the listener learns about Quint's aggression and Miss Jessel's potential death:

Miss JESSEL
Why did you call me
from my schoolroom dreams?

QUINT
I call? Not I!
You heard the terrible sound
of the wild swan's wings.

Miss JESSEL
Cruel!
Why did you beckon me to your side?

QUINT
I beckon? No, not I!
Your beating heart to your own
passions lied.

Miss JESSEL
Betrayed! Where were you
when in the abyss I fell?

¹⁴⁶ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 193–94.

QUINT
Betrayed? No, not I!
I waited for the sound
of my own last bell.¹⁴⁷

From the libretto it is not clear whether the former governess literally fell down in the abyss or the abyss refers to moral breakdown and consequently to her general degradation. In the novella there are several hints to the fact Miss Jessel was a “fallen woman” (“She [Mrs. Jessel] slowly came back to me. ‘Miss Jessel—WAS infamous.’”¹⁴⁸) and even in the film adaptation (exactly in *The Turn of the Screw* from the year 2009) she commits suicide due to her pregnancy with a man “so dreadfully below.”¹⁴⁹ In spite of the fact the reader never learns how Miss Jessel died, this version, corresponding with decline as well as Quint’s own death, makes another connection to the evil (which meant in Victorian England nothing else than sexual¹⁵⁰) nature of the ghosts.

Peter Quint was found [...] stone dead on the road from the village: a catastrophe explained—superficially at least—by a visible wound to his head; such a wound as might have been produced—and as, on the final evidence, HAD been—by a fatal slip, in the dark and after leaving the public house, on the steepish icy slope, a wrong path altogether, at the bottom of which he lay.¹⁵¹

All the vocabulary such as “wrong path,” “bottom,” “a fatal slip,” and “dark” in connection to Quint in the novella closely correspond with “Miss Jessel’s abyss” in libretto. Quint’s last lines in libretto even suggest he waited for the life after death to finish what he had started, he waited for his “last bell”; this notion also suggests the following section:

Miss JESSEL
And now what do you seek?

QUINT
I seek a friend.

Miss JESSEL
She is here!

QUINT
(laughing)
No! - self-deceiver!

Miss JESSEL
Ah! Quint, Quint, do you forget?

QUINT

¹⁴⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 1 – “Colloquy and Soliloquy,” lines 1–15.

¹⁴⁸ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 54.

¹⁴⁹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 55.

¹⁵⁰ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 15.

¹⁵¹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 47.

I seek a friend -
Obedient to follow where I lead,
slick as a juggler's mate
to catch my thought,
proud, curious, agile, he shall feed
my mounting power.¹⁵²

The opera presents Quint as villain who searches for the partner to seize the children. His intentions are terrifying and one may think Miss Jessel would object but evidently she seems to be under his influence. She begins to repeat after him and in mutual interaction they confirm their collusion. The Marxist literary approach even suggested this is an image of the revolution of the lower class, represented by Peter Quint, who wants to take his revenge on the upper class which humiliated him during his life. In the first part of Act II, in Colloquy and soliloquy, Quint and Miss Jessel explain their motives and their desire for power which should compensate their previous servile status which correspond with the Marxist approach.

Then to his bright subservience
I'll expound
the desperate passions
of a haunted heart,
and in that hour
"The ceremony
of innocence is drowned"

Miss JESSEL
I too must have a soul to share my woe.
Despised, betrayed,
unwanted she must go
forever to my joyless spirit bound,
"The ceremony
of innocence is drowned"¹⁵³

In this part Piper quotes a line from the poem by W. B. Yeats "The Second Coming" written after The First World War in 1919 inspired by the Bible and its last part, the Apocalypse. It depicts the situation in Europe after the war and right before the Irish revolution; in the libretto it emphasizes the important theme – the "corruption of innocence" – one of the most important features of Britten's operatic works, as he himself mentioned above.

TURNING and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst

¹⁵² Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 1 – "Colloquy and Soliloquy," lines 16–26.

¹⁵³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 1 – "Colloquy and Soliloquy," lines 27–39.

Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?¹⁵⁴

Its title, which in Yeats's drafts was "The Second Birth", alludes with the Biblical second coming of Christ. Mentioning the title, it may also suggest the second coming of Peter Quint (who also returned after his death) to Bly.¹⁵⁵ In the novella Governess describes her vivid imagination which is reflected in the opera.

"Don't they [the ghosts] do enough?" I demanded in a lower tone, while the children, having smiled and nodded and kissed hands to us, resumed their exhibition. We were held by it a minute; then I answered: "They can destroy them!" [...] They don't know, as yet, quite how—but they're trying hard. They're seen only across, as it were, and beyond—in strange places and on high places, the top of towers, the roof of houses, the outside of windows, the further edge of pools; but there's a deep design, on either side, to shorten the distance and overcome the obstacle; and the success of the tempters is only a question of time."¹⁵⁶

It unveils quite clearly the intention of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel to destroy the children: "Day by day the bars we break, / break the love that laps them round, / cheat the careful watching eyes, / The ceremony / of innocence is drowned"¹⁵⁷ they continue in a duet repeating the quotation from Yeats' for the third time. Nothing which would resemble this scene exists in the novel and it is another component in creating Governess's insane state of mind real.

¹⁵⁴ W. B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. David Wright (London: Dent, 1990), p. 235.

¹⁵⁵ Although one does not to "overinterpret" the work, let us mention curious detail about the Yeats' poem: apart from the title which may correspond with the "second coming" of Peter Quint, the first lines of the poem seem to be linked with the motif of *The Turn of the Screw*. The first line "Turning and turning in the widening gyre" refers to the omnipresent motif in the novella and the libretto, the turning. "The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." The shattering world full of chaos and disorder is also the world of *The Turn of the Screw*. So the world was shattered in 1898 when James wrote the novella, in 1919 when Yeats as well as in 1954 when Britten wrote the opera (and it is very probably shattered even now).

¹⁵⁶ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 84.

¹⁵⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 1 – "Colloquy and Soliloquy," lines 40–44.

When the ghosts disappear, in the second part, “Soliloquy,” Governess confesses her distress and confusion over the whole situation. She is desperate and does not know how to save the children, singing the aria about her total hopelessness.

GOVERNESS

Lost in my labyrinth

I see no truth,

only the foggy walls

of evil press upon me.

Lost in my labyrinth

I see no truth.

O innocence, you have corrupted me,

which way shall I turn?

I know nothing of evil,

yet I feel it, I fear it,

worse - imagine it.

Lost in my labyrinth

which way shall I turn?¹⁵⁸

Her desperation presented after the terrifying performance of the ghosts is understandable, yet, she repeatedly said she is lost in her labyrinth which suggests her own mind, not any objective problem. Neither she names it, only speaks about evil that she “feels, fears and imagines.”

The following scene “The Bells”, confirms her bewilderment. It is set on the sombre churchyard just before the beginning of the mass so the bells are ringing and at that moment the Governess is seriously considering secretly leaving Bly. Mrs. Grose talks to her but she does not concentrate on what she says while Flora and Miles are playing around.

MILES, FLORA

(chanting off)

O sing unto them a new song:

Let the congregation praise him.

O ye works and days:

Bless ye the Lord.

(They walk in like choir boys.)

O ye rivers and seas and lakes:

Bless ye the Lord.

O amnis, axis, caulis, collis,

clunis, crinis, fascis, follis:

Bless ye the Lord.

Praise him and magnify him for ever.

(The children settle themselves on
the tomb as the Governess and Mrs.
Grose enter.)

¹⁵⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 1 – “Colloquy and Soliloquy,” lines 45–57.

Mrs. GROSE
O Miss, a bright morning... to be sure.

GOVERNESS
(absently)
Yes.

MILES, FLORA
O ye tombstones and trees:
Praise him.

Mrs. GROSE
Bright as the Sunday morning bells,
how I love the sound.

GOVERNESS
Yes.

MILES, FLORA
O ye bells and towers:
Praise him.

Mrs. GROSE
And the dear children,
how sweet they are together.

GOVERNESS
Yes.¹⁵⁹

The children singing in riddles uncover their connection with the ghosts by summarizing all the symbols related to them: water which is linked to Miss Jessel, the Latin vocabulary (brook/river, axis, stem/stalk, hill, leg/bottom, hair, bundle, pouch/ball) uncovering the Freudian sexual symbols and tower which refers to the phallic symbol linked to Peter Quint.

In the novella the Governess feels the presence of the ghosts but does not understand how to prove it, so she imagines her break out in conversation with Flora and Miles, demanding their confession: “‘They’re here, they’re here, you little wretches,’ I would have cried, ‘and you can’t deny it now!’ The little wretches denied it with all the added volume of their sociability and their tenderness, in just the crystal depths of which—like the flash of a fish in a stream—the mockery of their advantage peeped up.”¹⁶⁰ In this passage the Governess may look even paranoid which supports the ambiguity of the situation in the original. As it has been already mentioned, in the second act of the opera there is gradually

¹⁵⁹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – “The Bells,” lines 1–23.

¹⁶⁰ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 89.

more and more references to the Governess's point of view, because her seemingly preposterous concerns are fully exposed here.

This second scene is an interesting melange of Governess's fears, Mrs. Grose's ignorance and the children's ambiguous games connected with their unique relationship with the ghosts.

MILES, FLORA
O ye paths and woods:
Praise him.
O ye frosts and fallen leaves:
Praise him.
O ye dragons and snakes,
worms and feathered fowl:
Rejoice in the Lord.

Mrs. GROSE
Come Miss, don't worry
It will pass I'm sure.
They're so happy with you.
You're so good to them.
We all love you, miss.

MILES, FLORA
O Mrs. Grose, bless ye the Lord:
May she never be confounded.

GOVERNESS
(taking Mrs. Grose aside.)
Dear good Mrs. Grose -
They are not playing,
they are talking horrors.

Mrs. GROSE
Oh! Never!¹⁶¹

In the first and second performance of the children there are clear allusions to the previous events: to the night's ghosts' duet ("paths and woods"), to fallen leaves and frost which may refer to autumn that is the symbol of dying and an imminent end as well as to the "fall" of their former governess. Further, the snakes may have a number of meanings: firstly, it has, according to the Bible, always been linked with both betrayal and "knowledge or wisdom, though a false or even fatal knowledge, and with human mortality."¹⁶² Secondly, they are extremely dangerous and sneaky but they can look very beautiful, too. Thirdly, it is an unequivocal phallic symbol playing an important role in psychoanalysis. Dragon, according to Ferber's Dictionary of Literary Symbols, plays analogous role as snake as these two creature were on many places in literature exchanged: "in the Christian scheme the serpent of

¹⁶¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – "The Bells," lines 24–46.

¹⁶² Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 186.

Eden became ‘the great dragon,’”¹⁶³ On the other hand every hero had to slay a dragon in order to prove his bravery (St. Georger, Siegfried or Beowulf to name only few) therefore it may stand for a threat or a grave danger. Another negative symbol is the worm; according to the Bible they are “the lowest of creatures, as far removed as possible from God.”¹⁶⁴ As they devour the dead they are the symbol of decomposition, decay and “mortality itself.”¹⁶⁵ Lastly feathered fowl, the bird, does not represent the negative element, quite on the contrary. It may be a symbol of freedom, it is the animal which “links the sky with the earth and sea, birds also resemble gods, so the ancients often considered birds either incarnations of gods or their messengers.” This last animal does not seem to be the “evil-bearer” like the others, much more it seems to be connected with the living human being to such an extent to which the others represent the death and the monstrous creatures. Claude Lévi-Strauss compared the birds to humans and found many similarities: they are given Christian names (Robin, Polly) because they appreciate the same aspects of life as the people do, namely the life in community but a certain independency; they love freedom and build themselves nests, where they take care of their family and they communicate together in a special language. From this enumeration it seems the evil prevails but human aspect and freedom is suppressed there which contrasts with the whole situation – it is Sunday and they go to mass.

Governess starts slowly realizing the contrasts between the goodness, beauty and the hidden evil of the children. Most compelling evidence of her distress is her intention to let know the guardian about the situation.

GOVERNESS

Why are they so charming?
 Why so unnaturally good?
 I tell you they are not with us,
 but with the others.

Mrs. GROSE

With Quint - and that woman?

GOVERNESS

With Quint and that woman.

Mrs. GROSE

But what could they do?

GOVERNESS

Do! They could destroy them.

¹⁶³ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 186.

¹⁶⁴ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 241.

¹⁶⁵ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 242.

Mrs. GROSE
Miss! You must write to their uncle.

GOVERNESS
That his house is poisoned,
the children mad -
or that I am?
I was changed not to worry him.

Mrs. GROSE
Yes. He do hate worry.¹⁶⁶

Because one learns about the guardian obliquely, his character is rather vague. Is he that busy or he only does not care? In the novella there is a part (that is missing in the opera) in which Miles wishes his uncle visits them at Bly.

“I [Governess] don’t think your uncle much cares.”
Miles, on this, stood looking at me. “Then don’t you think he can be made to?”
“In what way?”
“Why, by his coming down.”
“But who’ll get him to come down?”
“I will!” the boy said with extraordinary brightness and emphasis.¹⁶⁷

It might seem that Miles’s behaviour was to a considerable extent just the seeking of his uncle’s attention. In Marxist literary criticism guardian’s behaviour was castigated as immoral since he preferred the amusement and a great social life to care of his niece and nephew. His complacency may be the reason for the fatal consequences; however, the fact is he never received the letter Governess decided to write him.

GOVERNESS
I shall never write to him.
Can you not feel them
round about you?
They are here, there, everywhere.
And the children are with them,
they are not with us.

Mrs. GROSE
Come Miss, don't worry.
It will pass I'm sure.
They're so happy with you,
you're so good to them.
We all love you so.
Never you mind,
well be all right, you'll see.

MILES, FLORA
O ye paths and woods:
Bless ye the Lord.
O ye walls and towers:

¹⁶⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – “The Bells,” lines 47–60.

¹⁶⁷ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 97.

Bless ye the Lord.
O ye moon and stars,
windows and lakes:
Praise him and magnify him for ever.

Mrs. GROSE
Come Miss!
It is time we went in.
Come to church, my dear,
it will do you good.
Flora!
Miles!
Come along, dears.¹⁶⁸

(She takes the children off towards
the church and goes in with Flora.
Miles hangs back and then comes up
to the Governess.)

Her growing concerns are in sharp contrast with Mrs. Grose's good mood and children's games, as if each of them lived her/their own world. The housekeeper tries to quieten her while the children sing allusions to the ghosts: the parts from the night's duet "paths and woods", the references to the places where the ghosts appeared, lake, tower and window. The children's "pray" may have been another proof of their evilness. The last scene on the churchyard before the Sunday mass is dedicated to conversation between Miles and Governess only. Similar scene, but longer, is also in the novella, here for the first time Miles calls her "my dear":

"Look here, my dear, you know," he charmingly said, "when in the world, please, am I going back to school?" [...] You know, my dear, that for a fellow to be with a lady ALWAYS—" His "my dear" was constantly on his lips for me, and nothing could have expressed more the exact shade of the sentiment with which I desired to inspire my pupils than its fond familiarity. [...] "Well—I [Miles] want to see more life." "I see; I see." We had arrived within sight of the church and of various persons, including several of the household of Bly, on their way to it and clustered about the door to see us go in. I quickened our step; I wanted to get there before the question between us opened up much further; I reflected hungrily that, for more than an hour, he would have to be silent.¹⁶⁹

In the libretto there is more stress on the Governess's state of mind which also Miles mentioned, that she "thinks and thinks."

MILES
Do you like the bells?
I do.
They're not half finished yet.

GOVERNESS
No.

¹⁶⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – "The Bells," lines 61–87.

¹⁶⁹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 94–95.

MILES
Then we can talk
and you can tell me when
I'm going back to school.

GOVERNESS
Are you not happy here?

MILES
I'm growing up, you know.
I want my own kind.

GOVERNESS
Yes, you're growing up.

MILES
So much I want to do,
so much I might do...

GOVERNESS
But I trust you, Miles.

MILES
You trust me, my dear,
but you think and think...
of us, and of the others.
Does my uncle think what you think?¹⁷⁰

Miles expresses his desire to do new things which he cannot do at Bly with Governess; in the novella it is quite clear that she is not able to learn the children more than they already know – knowledge may here represent the mature sexuality. When Freud began studying unconscious, Oedipus complex and the three parts of personality in the ground-breaking book *The Interpretation of Dreams* he caused a scandal due to his very discovery of children's sexuality. Interestingly enough, this happened only three years after *The Turn of the Screw* was published, in 1900. Miles' mature behaviour may scare her even more so, after their short talk, she decides to leave Bly and under no circumstances stay longer there: "I must go away now, / while they are at church; / away from those false little lovely eyes; / away from my fears, / away from the horrors; / away from this poisoned place; / away, away!"¹⁷¹ Similarly, in the novella: "Here was my chance; there was no one to stop me; I could give the whole thing up—turn my back and retreat. It was only a question of hurrying again, for a few preparations, to the house which the attendance at church of so many of the servants would practically have left unoccupied."¹⁷² She runs away from the churchyard straight to her bedroom where she finds Miss Jessel sitting behind her desk. In horror the Governess observes her:

¹⁷⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – "The Bells," lines 88–105.

¹⁷¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 2 – "The Bells," lines 115–121.

¹⁷² James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 99.

GOVERNESS

She is here!

Here, in my own room!

Miss JESSEL

Here my tragedy began,
here revenge begins.

GOVERNESS

Nearer and nearer she comes,
from the lake, from the stair.

Miss JESSEL

Ah, here I suffered,
here I must find my peace.¹⁷³

According to some of the analysis this scene suggests the merging characters of the two governesses, the former and the current. Bruce Robbins in his paper “‘They don’t much count, do they?’: The Unfinished History of *The Turn of the Screw*” suggest that all the apparition of the ghosts are mere “mirror images, duplications, re-enactments of the governess and her situation.”¹⁷⁴ This suggests that in describing the ghosts and the evilness of the ghosts, she is actually revealing herself. Miss Jessel, just like Quint is approaching her, getting closer to her as Governess with horror remarks “nearer and nearer she comes” so it may have been the result of her introspection she was really scared of.

Miss JESSEL

I shall come closer, closer,
and more often.

GOVERNESS

There she sheds
her ghastly influence.
She shall not!
She shall not!
I won't bear it!

Miss JESSEL

So I shall be waiting,
waiting for the child.

(The Governess braces herself to
speak directly to her.)

GOVERNESS

Why are you here?

¹⁷³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 3 – “Miss Jessel,” lines 1–8.

¹⁷⁴ Bruce Robbins “‘They don’t much count, do they?’: The Unfinished History of *The Turn of the Screw*” in: *The Turn of the Screw*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (New York: St. Martin’s Press) 295.

Miss JESSEL
(rising)
Alas! Alas!

GOVERNESS
It is mine, mine, the desk.

Miss JESSEL
Alas! Alas!

GOVERNESS
They are mine, mine, the children.
I will never abandon them.¹⁷⁵

At the moment the Governess hears about Jessel's threat to revenge, she abandons her selfish plan to escape. "I can't go - I can't. / But I can no longer support it alone. / I must write to him, / write to him now."¹⁷⁶ Unaware of the fact she is more harming than helping, she writes a letter to the guardian – the act that is seen by some commentators as both a plea for help and a declaration of love.¹⁷⁷ "Sir - dear Sir - / my dear Sir - / I have not forgotten / your charge of silence, / but there are things that you must know, / and I must see you, / must see and tell you, at once. / Forgive me. That is all."¹⁷⁸ The darker interpretations also suggest that the malevolent part of the Governess's mind also wills the children's destruction.¹⁷⁹

The Governess requests Miles's confession about what happened at school and at Bly before her arrival; she feels this confession may free him from Quint's possession. Notwithstanding how hard the Governess tries to get the information, the boy refuses to respond to her as he hears the seductive calls of Quint. The "bedroom scene" appears twice in the novella, but only once in the opera. It begins by distant Miles's "malo song" from Latin lesson:

MILES
Malo: than a naughty boy..
Malo: in...
(The Governess is seen approaching
the room.)
I say, what are you waiting for?

GOVERNESS
(comes in)
Why Miles, not yet in bed?
Not even undressed.

¹⁷⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 3 – "Miss Jessel," lines 15–29.

¹⁷⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 3 – "Miss Jessel," lines 37–40.

¹⁷⁷ Arnold Whittall, "The Turn of the Screw" in *Oxford Music Online*, edited by Stanley Sadie. 7th May 2018, <http://han.nkp.cz/han/OxfordMusicOnlineGroveMusicOnline/www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/search?q=the+turn+of+the+screw&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true>

¹⁷⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 3 – "Miss Jessel," lines 41–48.

¹⁷⁹ Whittall, "The Turn of the Screw."

MILES

O I've been sitting,
sitting and thinking.

GOVERNESS

Thinking?
Of what were you thinking?

MILES

Of this queer life,
the life we've been living.

GOVERNESS

What do you mean by that?
What life?

MILES

My dear, you know.
You're always watching.

GOVERNESS

I don't know, Miles,
for you've never told me,
you've told me nothing,
nothing of what happened before I came.
I thought till today
that you were quite happy.

MILES

I am, I am.
I'm always thinking, thinking.

GOVERNESS

Miles, I've just written to your guardian.

MILES

What a lot you'll have to tell him.¹⁸⁰

The letter to the Guardian is one of the main issues of the last part of the novella and the opera as well as the debates concerning the questions of Miles's expulsion from school and the relationship to the previous employees. The atmosphere of tension is escalating due to the more and more ambiguous situations: [Governess:] "You're tired of Bly?" "Oh, no, I [Miles] like Bly." "Well, then—?" "Oh, YOU know what a boy wants!"¹⁸¹ Then, talking about the problem of expulsion and the notification to the guardian, governess is getting closer and closer to the boy, as if she was trying to seduce him.

"I just want you to help me to save you!" But I knew in a moment after this that I had gone too far. The answer to my appeal was instantaneous, but it came in the form of an extraordinary blast and chill, a gust of frozen air, and a shake of the room as great as if, in the wild wind, the casement had crashed in. The boy gave a loud, high shriek, which, lost in the rest of the shock of sound, might have seemed,

¹⁸⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 4 – "The Bedroom," lines 1–25.

¹⁸¹ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 109.

indistinctly, though I was so close to him, a note either of jubilation or of terror. I jumped to my feet again and was conscious of darkness. So for a moment we remained, while I stared about me and saw that the drawn curtains were unstirred and the window tight. "Why, the candle's out!" I then cried. "It was I who blew it, dear!" said Miles.¹⁸²

In the opera there are three voices, Miles, Governess and Quint, which are intertwined and musically totally different so it is clear that it is Quint who prevents the boy from answering the questions. His intruding voice kept whispering so Miles could not concentrate, moreover, in order to stop the Governess's investigation it may have been Quint who blew the candle.

GOVERNESS

So will You, Miles.

(Miles changes his position, but does not answer.)

Miles - dear little Miles,
is there nothing you want to tell me?

(Miles shifts again.)

QUINT

(unseen)

Miles - are you listening?

GOVERNESS

Miles, what happened at school?

What happened here?

(Miles turns away from her.)

QUINT

(unseen)

Miles - I am here.

GOVERNESS

Miles,

if you knew how

I want to help you,

how I want you to help me save you.

QUINT

(unseen)

Miles - I'm waiting, I'm waiting,

waiting, Miles.

(The candle goes out.)

MILES

Ah!

GOVERNESS

Oh, what is it?

What is it?

Why, the candle's out!

MILES

¹⁸² James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 111.

Twas I who blew it,
who blew it, dear!¹⁸³

Miles calls the Governess “dear” and “my dear” more frequently by the end of the opera (correspondingly in the novella) that may suggest the change of his behaviour and their closer relationship in which he became the superior. On several places he makes innuendos about her weak authority:

“You forget?”—he spoke with the sweet extravagance of childish reproach. “Why, it was to show you I could!”

“Oh, yes, you could.”

“And I can again.”

I felt that I might, perhaps, after all, succeed in keeping my wits about me. “Certainly. But you won’t.”

“No, not THAT again. It was nothing.”¹⁸⁴

The Variation XII, placed between the Scene 4 and 5, is the only variation containing the vocal component. The intensity and repetitiveness of Quint’s voice urging Miles to steal letter for his uncle is escalating as both of the ghosts are trying to restore their status quo – to keep the children under their control. “What does she know? / What does she know? / What does she know? / It is there on the desk, / there on the desk. / Easy to take! / Easy to take! / Easy to take!”¹⁸⁵ Miles is rather hesitant but Quint insists: “Take it! / Take it! / Take it!” After short resistance Miles does so, confirming Quint’s power over him and anticipating the following confrontation.

As it was suggested in the novella (in the ninth chapter, to be exact) the children sometimes made a plan that one keeps the adult entertained and the other secretly flees. “I perhaps came across traces of little understandings between them by which one of them should keep me occupied while the other slipped away.”¹⁸⁶ This happens when Miles played the piano and Flora played cat’s cradle with Mrs. Grose; she is again associated with another symbol of sleep, passivity, unconsciousness and sleeping. The Governess is so much impressed by Miles’s play that she does not even realize that Mrs. Grosse falls asleep and the little girl disappears.

Mrs. GROSE, FLORA
(echoing)
Cradles for cats
Are string and air.
If you let go
there's nothing there.
But if we are neat

¹⁸³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 4 – “The Bedroom,” lines 26–44.

¹⁸⁴ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 95.

¹⁸⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Variation XIII, lines 6–13.

¹⁸⁶ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 67.

and nimble and clever
pussy-cat's cradle will
go on for ever.

FLORA

Mrs. Grose, are you tired?

(During this conversation Miles
begins showing off at the piano.)

Mrs. GROSE

Well, my head do keep nodding.
It's this warm room.

GOVERNESS

(softly)
Ah, Miles!
Miles!

FLORA

Shut your eyes
then and you shall have a cradle,
Mrs. Grose's cradle -

Mrs. GROSE

And Master Miles' playing.

FLORA

(to Mrs. Grose)
Go to sleep!
Go to sleep!¹⁸⁷

Firstly, the “cradle game” resembles the other nursery rhymes sung earlier in the opera, not only by the rhymes but also by the tempo and specific rhythm. Later, the Flora’s part musically resembles the passage of the “doll’s lullaby”, the part when she sings to Mrs. Grose “go to sleep” and she really fell asleep in a while. Flora is repeatedly connected with the sleeping, she sings lullabies, cradle is a special place for sleeping.

In the novella there is passage depicting the children’s fond of music and Miles’s exceptional talent for playing the piano. “The musical sense in each of the children was of the quickest, but the elder in especial had a marvelous knack of catching and repeating. The schoolroom piano broke into all gruesome fancies.”¹⁸⁸ Naturally, the passages concerning the music are in the opera developed into a great length aptly illustrating the events and characters. The grandiloquent Miles’s piano play should attract the Governess’s attention as well as to make another contrast between the innocence and experience; his parody of

¹⁸⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 6 – “The Piano,” lines 20–38.

¹⁸⁸ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 66.

classical sonata which is praised by both the Governess and Mrs. Grose is one example of the musical ambiguity which are in opera used repeatedly.¹⁸⁹

When the Governess realizes Flora has gone, she is convinced that it is because of Miss Jessel. She and Mrs. Grose rush to find her outside by the lake and they find Flora exactly at the place where Miss Jessel appeared in the past and reappears again. The situation is similar to the one with Miles, Governess tries to talk with Flora but Miss Jessel prevents her from breaking their secret.

GOVERNESS

Ah! She is there!

Look! She is there!

(Pointing.)

Look! You little unhappy thing!

Look! Mrs. Grose!

She is there!

Miss JESSEL

Flora! Do not fall me!

Mrs. GROSE

Indeed Miss, there's nothing there.

GOVERNESS

Only look, dearest woman,
don't you see, now, now!

Miss JESSEL

Nothing shall they know.

Mrs. GROSE

(to Flora)

She isn't there, little lady,
nobody is there.

GOVERNESS

But look!

FLORA

I can't see anybody, can't see anything,
nobody, nothing, nobody, nothing;
I don't know what you mean.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Listening to the opera one may think that a progressive and highly effective element in the piano playing would be to put the piano out of tune. It would illustrate both mockery and irony of the classical pieces as well as the decay of the whole place. However, this idea would probably never cross Britten's conservative mind and, being a professional (and a very successful) pianist he would certainly never let anyone to "destroy" piano in such a way.

¹⁹⁰ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 7 – "Flora," lines 10–25.

Flora hears Miss Jessel's voice and so her reactions become rather excessive: "I can't see anybody, / can't see anything, / nobody, nothing. / I don't know what she means. / Cruel, horrible, / hateful, nasty! / We don't want you! / We don't want you! / Take me away, take me away from her! / Hateful, cruel, / nasty, horrible!"¹⁹¹ Flora responds in a very aggressive way, both musically and verbally, which suggests that she in fact saw Miss Jessel therefore knows about all the apparitions. In the novella, this scene is accompanied by the Governess's observation of the little girl, who was all of the sudden changing into an "old, old woman"¹⁹² which is in the opera, strikingly missing.

Flora continued to fix me with her small mask of reprobation, and even at that minute I prayed God to forgive me for seeming to see that, as she stood there holding tight to our friend's dress, her incomparable childish beauty had suddenly failed, had quite vanished. I've said it already—she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly. "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!"¹⁹³

This scene, as it is the scene seen by the Governess's eyes, would have accurately fitted into the concept of the interpretation from her point of view. She is only in total despair after Flora's leaving. "Ah! my friend, you have forsaken me! / At last you have forsaken me. / Flora, I have lost you, / she has taught you how to hate me. / Am I then horrible? / No! No! / But I have failed, most miserably failed, / and there is no more innocence in me. / And now she hates me! / Hates me! / Hates me!"¹⁹⁴

Mrs. Gorse is appalled by Flora's behaviour and because she believes the little girl is possessed by the evil she takes her away to London. "O Miss, / you were quite right, / I must take her away. / Such a night as I have spent - / (She cries.) / No, don't ask me. / What that child has poured out / in her dreams - / things I never knew nor hope to know, / nor dare remember."¹⁹⁵ Also in this moment, they find out the letter written for the uncle has never been sent so Miles is accused of taking it. When Mrs. Grose and Flora depart for London and the Governess and Miles stay alone.

MILES
So, my dear, we are alone.

GOVERNESS
Are we alone?

MILES
Oh, I'm afraid so.

¹⁹¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 7 – "Flora," lines 54–64.

¹⁹² James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 119.

¹⁹³ James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 125. There would be only a problem of how to perform this on the stage.

¹⁹⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 7 – "Flora," lines 65–75.

¹⁹⁵ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 8 – "Miles," lines 2–10.

GOVERNESS
Do you mind?
Do you mind being left alone?

MILES
Do you?

GOVERNESS
Dearest Miles,
I love to be with you -
what else should I stay for?

MILES
So, my dear,
for me you stay?¹⁹⁶

From the surviving sketches we know that Britten reworked this section many times, elaborately combining the voices of Miles, Governess and Peter Quint. He managed to create a great deal of tension and momentum in the situation when Miles is torn between Governess to whom he promised to tell what had happened (at school and at Bly before her arrival) and Quint whose voice prevents him from the betrayal.

GOVERNESS
Miles, dear little Miles,
who is it you see?
Who do you wait for, watch for?

QUINT
Do not betray our secrets.
Beware, beware of her!

MILES
I don't know what you mean.

GOVERNESS
Who is it, who?
Say - for my sake -
look at me, Miles!

QUINT
Miles, you're mine!
You must be free.

MILES
Is he there, is he there?

GOVERNESS
Is who there, Miles?
Say it!

QUINT

¹⁹⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 8 – “Miles,” lines 29–39.

Don't betray us, Miles!

MILES

Nobody, nothing.

GOVERNESS

Who? Who?

Who made you take the letter?

Who do you wait for, watch for?

Only say the name

and he will go for ever, for ever.

QUINT

On the banks, by the walls,
remember Quint.

At the window. on the tower,
when the candle is out,
remember, Quint.

He leads, he watches,
he waits, he waits.¹⁹⁷

In Mile's last cry Quint is defeated and his melismatic voice dies out. Governess full of optimism holds the boy who suddenly collapses and dies.

MILES

Peter Quint, you devil.

(He runs into the
Governess's arms.)

GOVERNESS

Ah, Miles, you are saved,
now all will be well.

Together we have destroyed him.

QUINT

Ah Miles, we have failed.

Now I must go.

Farewell.

Farewell, Miles, farewell.

(Quint slowly disappears)

GOVERNESS

Ah! What is it?

What is it?

Miles, speak to me, speak to me.

Why don't you answer?

(She realises that the boy is dead.)

Miles, Miles, Miles!

Ah. ah, don't leave me now!

(She lays him down on the ground.)

Ah! Miles!

Malo, Malo!

Malo than a naughty boy.

Malo, Malo in adversity.

¹⁹⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 8 – “Miles,” lines 71–98.

What have we done between us?
Malo, Malo, Malo, Malo, Malo...¹⁹⁸

According to her notebook, it was Piper's idea to conclude the opera by Miles's words spoken by the Governess.¹⁹⁹

Deconstructive analysis suggests the link between the different uses of the word "grasp" in the last chapter of the novella, in its first and last paragraph. The first meaning of the word "grasp" is to comprehend, to understand that leads us to one of the main elements of the story, i.e. the knowledge.²⁰⁰ Another meaning of the word is to hold somebody firmly and the relationship between the "comprehension" and the "physical hold" illustrates the last scene of the novella.²⁰¹ Although the grasp should suggest the embrace of understanding it is the embrace of death, the embrace of a corpse.

Many studies try to illuminate why Miles died in the end of the novella.²⁰² Beidler in *The Turn of the Screw* gives a long list of possible reasons, so let us mention only few of them: there some which suggest Miles died of pure shock, be it caused by the Governess "she has literally frightened him to death,"²⁰³ or fear: "In a burst of fear and terror ... he dies of shock."²⁰⁴ The fatal ending is in other versions justified by the presence or absence of the evil: "Little Miles is dead [...] exhausted by the ordeal [...] too corrupted to live without evil,"²⁰⁵ or: "Miles's soul is purged by confession. [...] He dies, worn out by the struggle between good and evil, in the moment of triumph."²⁰⁶ Many others mention the evil and fatal influence of Peter Quint ("His face gives a 'convulsive supplication' – that is, actually a

¹⁹⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 8 – "Miles," lines 96–118.

¹⁹⁹ Her scene synopsis illustrates the development of her ideas: "Scene 6: Interior school-room . . . I should like if possible to get Miles [sic] fool song in here. He could have written it and she could make them sing it in parts or canon. [...] Scene 8: [...] Miles dies. I simply haven't faced up to this scene – and can't tell until I see how the other scenes with Miles go how this ought to be] I'd like if possible some sort of repetition of the fool song. I think it is the only good thing I have written so far and cling to it a bit because it expresses for me the particular odd mixture old-fashioned imaginativeness [...] But there easily might be something far better. The things one clings to are usually terrible stumbling blocks." Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 204.

²⁰⁰ "My grasp of how he received this suffered for a minute from something that I can describe only as a fierce split of my attention—a stroke that at first, as I sprang straight up, reduced me to the mere blind movement of getting hold of him, drawing him close, and, while I just fell for support against the nearest piece of furniture, instinctively keeping him with his back to the window." James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 146.

²⁰¹ "But he had already jerked straight round, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him—it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped." James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 152.

²⁰² Peter G. Beidler, *The Turn of the Screw*, 141.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

prayer, for and to Quint, the demon who has become his total deity. But the god isn't there, and Miles despairs and dies."²⁰⁷) and also their homosexual relationship:

The boy had a homosexual dependency upon Peter Quint. This power of Peter Quint's extends even after the valet's death. Yet this relation with Peter Quint protects him against the dangerous attachment to a mother figure. When the governess destroys Peter Quint's influence, she turns the clock back. The warded-off exciting oedipal relationship comes again to the fore. Out of necessity the boy has to die, for James had no other solution left. It was this dramatic ending through which James hoped to prevent the reader from having any discharge of the castration anxiety that James intended to arouse.²⁰⁸

Another bold analysis suggested Miles did not die at all because he was Douglas himself. "What I am suggesting, of course, is [...] that Douglas *is* Miles, and that the story Douglas reads, supposedly about another little boy and the governess, is in fact about *him*. If this were so, then the scarcely-disguised erotic implications of the narrative are of direct importance. They would mean that ... Miles [did] not die at all at the close."²⁰⁹ Neither Joyce Carol Oates in her retelling of the story "Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly" from 1994 kills Miles in the end, because he escapes from the Governess's grasp and "cries in a hopeful, dreading voice, 'Quint – Quint?'"²¹⁰ Other conclusion made Mrs. Grose guilty: "*The Turn of the Screw* is ... a tragedy about an evil older woman [Mrs. Grose] who drove an unstable younger woman completely out of her mind, and whose jealousy was the indirect cause of a little boy's death."²¹¹ One of the most compelling reasons of Miles death is newer than the others and makes the link with the problem of sexuality, the taboo of the nineteenth century England. "To deprive a person of sexuality is to deprive him of life; for, on an unconscious level, it may well seem that the loss of erotic freedom is what kills little Miles at the end of the tale."²¹² This seems to be the case of Britten himself.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 142.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Joyce Carol Oates, "Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly," In *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque* (New York: Dutton, 1994) 254-83.

²¹¹ Peter G. Beidler, *The Turn of the Screw*, 141.

²¹² Ibid, 143.

Governess as the Reliable Narrator of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*

To us he is no more a person now but a whole climate of opinion.

W. H. Auden, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," 1940

Several works by Henry James are considered to contain the textbook examples of the "fallible" or "unreliable narrator", the term which firstly appeared in the American literary criticism in 1961. The discovery of "unreliable narrator" was a part of Formalism or American New criticism as it was sometimes called, a stream of literary theory which encouraged the readers to think critically and to evaluate the credibility and meanings of the events and characters in the story. Significantly fruitful was this process in the psychological and ambivalent works which are typical for James's writings; the short stories such as "The Aspern Papers" or "The Liar" as well as *The Turn of the Screw* "are works [...] in which, according to some critics, the clues for correcting views of the fallible narrator are inadequate, so that the facts and evaluations intended by the author remain problematic."²¹³ The "open-endingness" tempts the readers to make a conclusion himself and discover what really happened and potentially reveal an untold secret. Interestingly enough, the unreliable narrator uncovers much more about herself than she does about the other characters or events in the novella; and similarly the analyst who projects his or her views into the work.

Considering *The Turn of the Screw*, most of the above-mentioned interpretations count with the presence of the "unreliable narrator" and try to "correct" the Governess's subjective view because she was (almost) unanimously declared a mentally ill person. However, if one follows the story accepting her insanity (and ignoring it at the same), there suddenly appear a completely new dimension that allows one to reveal just anything simply because "we observe the story through the eyes of an insane person." Benjamin Britten was perfectly aware of this fact and so he applied it in his opera. Moreover, the topic as well as the event (Venice Biennale) was convenient because the composer intended to leave the social sphere for a while; he had two reasons to escape the reality in 1954: firstly, it was shortly after the debacle with the coronation opera *Gloriana*, which led the composer to leave the form of "grand opera"²¹⁴ and to retreat to the safety of festivals (namely the Aldeburgh

²¹³ M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Orlando: The Dryden Press, 1988), 147.

²¹⁴ Grand opera was connected to socio-political trends more than any other kind of opera, undoubtedly it was connected with the role of aristocrats in the same way as it was in France between 1820 and 1848. For more information see: Robert Cannon, *Opera*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 169–93.

festival). Secondly, it was Britten's homosexuality. As we know from the biographies he suffered bursitis, an inflammation which did not have any particular reason in Britten's case, however, this malady may be explained by the investigation of the homosexuals which was happening at 1953.²¹⁵ Britten was interviewed and in spite of the fact no actions were taken against him, it traumatized him so much he was not able to work. A year after this experience he started composing and could have projected his frustration into *The Turn of the Screw* which was conveniently open enough to accommodate his secret desires and fantasies.²¹⁶

Sigmund Freud, having focused on sexuality, stated that any fantasies are always the outcome of a (long-term) frustration. Their projection is often linked with the dreams, which are, as the Austrian psychologist stated, "the royal road to unconscious."²¹⁷ Freud depicted the nature of the dreams on his structure of the personality: the instincts ("id"), the perception of reality ("ego"), and conscience, sometimes compared with the moral authority being often the father-figure ("superego").²¹⁸ He claimed that every person is full of sexually aggressive impulses which are caught by the "superego" therefore do not emerge into reality but appear in a modified way, always unconsciously and the most frequently in the dreams; even Plato wrote about the "lascivious ideas" which come up when all senses sleep. Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1889) claimed that the nonsensical nature of the dream is only illusory which covers the real meaning of the symbols leading to the very self of the person's mind; that leads us to grasp the libretto of *The Turn of the Screw* in two levels: firstly, to see it as a revelation of Governess's mind which was not only insane but also influenced by the Victorian morality on one side and her own desires on the other. Secondly, one may apply the Freudian structure of the personality on the Britten's version of the novella, uncovering the symbolic roles of the ghosts, Governess and the children, matching them with the three attributes of the personality; I will clarify and exemplify the aspects of Freudism arguing that

²¹⁵ "Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, initiated a police investigation into homosexual activity in Britain which resulted in the arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of a number of prominent public figures" Seymour, the operas of Benjamin Britten, 200.

²¹⁶ Curiously enough, the story corresponds with Britten's own life: there is the unresolved problem at Miles's school which indirectly points to sexual abuse, that the composer, according to some sources, also experienced. If Britten projected himself to Miles (he was as a young boy considered precocious and as he was also a pianist) it is hardly surprising he made Peter Pears the character of Peter Quint.

²¹⁷ Milan Nakonečný, 293. „Únikovou funkci fantazie zdůraznil jednostranně S. Freud, ve svém výroku: šťastný člověk nemá fantazii, která je korekturou neuspokojené skutečnosti.“ Milan Nakonečný, *Základy psychologie* (Praha: Academia, 1998), 281.

²¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Freud – Complete Works, edited by Ivan Smith, 3896. https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf

Britten implemented this very psychological theory to code into the opus his own homosexuality.

The Turn of the Screw is the work which may be read, in the case of opera listened and observed, on many levels: firstly it may be the most elementary storyline, the ghost-story about the hunted estate Bly and a young Governess who arrived there and becomes a witness of the tragic event. When one starts investigating what happened there into the depth, the darker side leading to certain suppressed desires of the narration is revealed. While investigating, the third level of the narration, hiding the aforementioned, is necessarily uncovered too. In summary, there are three aspects of the opera corresponding with the three divisions of personality namely “ego,” “id” and “superego.” The “ego” is caught between the “id” and the “superego,” as Freud described it in his work about psychoanalysis from 1923 *The Ego and the Id* (*Das Ich und das Es* in the original): “it is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility - that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams.”²¹⁹ So we will try to analyse particularly the “id” of the story which is revealed occasionally when the censorship is indifferent that is especially in the dream and the “super-ego” which always attempts to prevent “id” from its function.²²⁰

Regarding the importance of unconscious in revealing the “id”, there is a significant amount of dreaming in the opera. Firstly, there are several references to sleeping, especially in the active involvement of Flora: in the first act, the seventh scene titled “The Lake” Flora has the lesson of geography with Governess, after which she lulls her doll, singing the lullaby “Go to sleep” after which Miss Jessel suddenly appears across the lake. Similarly, in the second act in the sixth (“The Piano”) and seventh (“Flora”) scene Flora lulls Mrs. Grose (with the very same lullaby), goes to lake and Miss Jessel appears there again. As if the lullaby and the consequent dreaming was a shibboleth of their meeting, and potential revelation of the “id”. Secondly, Miles during the Latin lesson in the first act, sixth scene titled “The Lesson” sings introspective “Malo song” during which he seems to be half-dreaming; the music suddenly slowed down and lowered so the changed atmosphere might suggest he moved into the realm on unconscious in which he revealed his secret feelings. Not only because he

²¹⁹ Ibid, 3891.

²²⁰ John Silver, “A Note on the Freudian Reading of *The Turn of the Screw*.” *American Literature* 29 (1957): 207-11.

confessed himself “I found it, I like it”²²¹ but also because he does not sing it in English but he codes it into Latin. Also, the only accompaniment is a harp, a very quite instrument which was often used in impressionistic compositions portraying dreaming.²²² Thirdly, and most importantly, the climax of the first act, the eighth scene “At Night” in fact resembles a dream: it is happening in the middle of the night and the children are obviously not quite conscious, which is clear from Miles’s dreamy and totally passive reactions on Quint’s calling which are mere repetitions of his last words: “I’m here... O I’m here! [...] Gold, O yes, gold! [...] Secrets, O secrets! [...] Bird!”²²³ The poetic figurative language may be another element of dream. Moreover, there are several references to his unconsciousness and dreams in which Quint is, curiously enough, interested very much: “What goes on in your head, / what questions? / Ask, for I answer all. [...] What goes on in / your dreams? / Keep silent! / I know, and answer that too.”²²⁴ So the unconscious part of Miles’s mind is of crucial importance for Quint not only because it reveals the boy’s real (probably the wicked) self but also because a dream represents, according to Freud, “the fulfillment of one’s wishes.”²²⁵

The “super-ego” is in several situations represented by Governess who always comes as someone who represses the desires, as she feels she must “protect the children.”²²⁶ Primarily she disturbs the night meeting of the ghosts and the children. When she (the “super-ego”) appears, the ghosts (as the representatives of the “id”) vanish and the children start surprisingly quickly perceive what is/was happening on which Miles even comments: “You see, I am bad, I am bad, / aren't I?”²²⁷ In the second act there are more examples of the struggle between the “id” and the “superego” in the children, especially the scenes “The Bedroom”, “Flora” and “Miles”. In all these scenes Governess and the ghosts perform simultaneously, creating the dilemma very similar to the one Freud depicts as the “conflict between the ‘id’ and the ‘superego’” and the children represent the “ego” which is struggling between the two forces, the instinctive one and the socially-acceptable one. The dispute between Governess and ghost forms into a fight for “possession” of the children which is in novella related to the access to “knowledge”, associated with sexuality and experience. The “fight” for Flora is rather short it appears in the seventh scene and unsuccessful for

²²¹ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 6 – “The Lesson,” lines 31–32.

²²² Claude Debussy (1862–1918), the French impressionistic composer, used a harp in many of his works (*La Mer* 1905) and the technique of playing the harp he applied also on the piano.

²²³ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – “At Night,” lines 4 [...] 11 [...] 18 [...] 26.

²²⁴ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – “At Night,” lines 47–49 [...] 56–58.

²²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of the Dreams*, in Freud – Complete Works, edited by Ivan Smith, 3896. https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf

²²⁶ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 5 – “The Window,” line 113.

²²⁷ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act I: Scene 8 – “At Night,” lines 90–91.

Governess, on the other hand fight for Miles is more complex, longer and dramatic. The most poignant part is the unison section of Governess and Quint in the last scene of second act:

GOVERNESS: Ah, Miles! you are saved!
QUINT: Ah, Miles! we have failed!²²⁸

The ghosts are real, physically present, not only because they are projections of Governess's mind, but also because Britten's intention was to reveal the homoerotic aspects of the opera. And it was this fearful presence of the ghosts (a personification of the "id") was loudly criticised in the reviews after the premier, the explicit relationship between the ghosts and the children in particular.

"[Mrs Piper] had occasionally been insensitive to some of Henry James's silences and reticences, without the one conceivable justification of using a definitive interpretation of them. The unhappiest example is the last scene of Act 1, in which the episode with Miles on the lawn at night is expanded into a quartet in which the relationship between the children and the ghosts is made crudely explicit, and yet no more intelligible."²²⁹

Other critics complained that the ghosts were "two too solid stage villains" or that they "appear too often [...] and say too much."²³⁰ Some reviews problematized the topic of the opera as if Britten's sexual orientation was in question. "[We] ask not whether he has succeeded in his aim but why did he choose this subject, that story or a particular libretto. It is an improper question for criticism to ask, but it recurs so invariably that it must have some relevance to his art."²³¹ Claire Seymour quotes one French review which may have been even provocative at that time, however seems to be unmasking:²³² "Writing in *Paris L'Express*, Antoine Golea made one of the first explicit references to Britten's homosexuality in a review of his music, noting that the opera illustrated: 'the composer's customary intense preoccupation with homosexual love and the futility of struggling against it.'²³³ In this sense Britten's opera is a "redirection of primitive, libidinous impulses into new, learned,

²²⁸ Piper, *The Turn of the Screw*, Act II: Scene 8 – "Miles," lines 100 [...] 103.

²²⁹ Colin Mason, in *The Guardian*, 15 September 1954. Quoted from Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 207.

²³⁰ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 192

²³¹ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 207.

²³² The homosexual "id" was not revealed on the stage only, it reached even further. Benjamin Britten, fell in love with the main protagonist of the opera, with the thirteen-year-old David Hemmings (1941–2003) the singer of Miles, and nearly became Quint-like seducer. "That 'the composer seemed besotted with the boy. [...] He was in love with him, but as far as I know there was nothing more.'" Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 207.

²³³ Seymour, *The Operas of Benjamin Britten*, 207.

‘noninstinctive’ behaviours.’²³⁴ In Freudian terminology Britten’s work represents the sublimation of the artist, the escape from the “world which does not understand him.”

But since the ego’s work of sublimation results in a defusion of the instincts and a liberation of the aggressive instincts in the super-ego, its struggle against the libido exposes it to the danger of maltreatment and death. In suffering under the attacks of the super-ego or perhaps even succumbing to them, the ego is meeting with a fate like that of the protista which are destroyed by the products of decomposition that they themselves have created. From the economic point of view the morality that functions in the superego seems to be a similar product of decomposition.²³⁵

Governess may be the representation of the rigid and strict morality of Victorian era, that may be broaden to the post-war England that imposed sanctions against homosexuality until 1967. Britten was certainly felt restriction as a man and in this sense the last scene of the opera (as well as of the novella) may be the metaphorical picture of himself: Miles calling his beloved’s name is suffocated by the Governess who meant to help him but, eventually, totally destroyed him.

²³⁴ Arthur S. Reber, *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 742.

²³⁵ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 3991.

Conclusion

The novella *The Turn of the Screw*, sometimes called the “small problem child” of James fiction, is an excellent example of the development of the literary theory during the twentieth century because almost every important approach provided an analysis of this work. Be it the American New Criticism, Feminism, Marxism, Deconstruction or Freudian psychoanalysis each of the approaches revealed the hidden points about the children, Governess or the approach itself. The versatility of the work was also proved by the number of different interpretations of the opera, ballet, theatre or film. The numerous questions which the work raises such as were the ghosts real or not? Is the Governess schizophrenic? Are the children really evil or innocent? Who is corrupted? Or is there anyone corrupted? And is the knowledge an implicit sexual innuendo? Although there are still more and more contributions clarifying the novella, there is no agreement whatsoever on how to read and understand the story, mainly because of the simple fact that from whichever way you read it, it still remains open.

After all the struggling in encoding the characters’ intentions one cannot help to think what if Henry James did not intend to make the enigma but a plain joke, a “trap” into which we have fallen. This seems to cross Britten’s mind as he with his opera created another “trap” when the “unreliable narrator” happens to be the reliable one. The Governess’s point of view, which may in certain aspect correspond with the Britten’s own view is examined into a great detail. The opera emphasises the Governess’s worries concerning the relationship of the ghosts and the children which is presented in rather explicit way; the relationship between Miles and Quint may represent Britten himself and Peter Pears, his partner who performed the role of Quint. Also, analysing the “unconscious” level of the opera, the sexual aspects of the work, (shockingly) associated with the children, are openly revealed. On the other side analysing the “conscious” level connected with the Governess, the strict and rather superficial feature of the Victorian society is unmasked. So this conflict between the “id” and the “superego” in the opera *The Turn of the Screw* revealed the numerous Freudian aspects as well as Britten’s own homosexuality which he was trying to hide due to its illegality. In this sense Miles death may be Britten’s expression of the disagreement to live in the society with his own suppressed sexuality.

Resumé

Mnoho nejvýznamnějších děl se setkala s prvotním neúspěchem a nejinak tomu bylo i v případě novely *Utažení šroubu* angloamerického spisovatele Henryho Jamese, která jednoznačně patří mezi nejdiskutovanější díla dvacátého století. Fakt, že v době svého publikování, tedy v roce 1898, žádný výraznější ohlas nesklidila, budiž dokladem, kolik se toho za několik dekád v literárním světě změnilo. Novela začala získávat na atraktivitě v době rozmachu literárně-teoretických disciplín zejména po 2. světové válce. Její enigmatická „nedořečenost“ provokovala příznivce zcela odlišných směrů – formalismu, dekonstrukce, feminismu, marxismu či freudismu, ať už k objasnění „bílých míst“, nebo k demonstraci právě zvoleného literárně-vědného přístupu. Tato zcela unikátní univerzalita se stala nejen inspirací literárních analýz, ale také řady adaptací filmových, divadelních či hudebních. Námětem předložené diplomové práce byla analýza právě jedné adaptace, konkrétně opery Benjamin Brittena z roku 1954 a jejího libreta, které napsala velšská básnířka Myfanwy Piper.

Do poloviny dvacátého století měl operní žánr ve Velké Británii, na rozdíl od kontinentální Evropy, velmi špatné postavení. Nevznikla zde žádná kontinuální tradice a navíc, nejvýznamnější představitelé anglické hudby byli cizinci (například Georg Friedrich Händel). Za jediného skutečně anglického operního skladatele bylo možné považovat Henryho Purcella díky barokní perle *Dido a Aeneas* (?1689), a na jeho činnost, byť je dělilo více než dvě stě let, Benjamin Britten ve dvacátém století navázal. Bouřlivý ohlas *Petera Grimese* (Brittenovy první opery) v roce 1945 nesl řadu symbolických konotací týkajících se nejen konce války, ale také nových proměn společnosti a celé Velké Británie, jejíž celosvětový vliv začal postupně opadat. Není bez zajímavosti, že oblibu a vývoj opery v poválečné Anglii do značné míry povzbudila britská monarchie, která se tímto způsobem rovněž snažila resuscitovat svůj společenský význam; tato tendence ostře kontrastovala s vývojem operního žánru na evropském kontinentu, kde aktuální operní tvorba stagnovala a operní domy čerpaly takřka výhradně z historie. V tomto kontextu tedy post Benjamin Brittena jako „operního skladatele na plný úvazek“ působil archaicky a poněkud kuriózně; nicméně je možné v tom vidět i svébytný vývoj anglické společnosti vyznačující jak silným konzervatismem, tak progresivitou, atributy, jež se v Brittenově práci snoubily.

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) se narodil v Suffolku, vystudoval v Londýně a jako mladý skladatel začal skládat „funkční“ filmovou hudbu. Před válkou odjel krátce do USA,

kam následoval svého mentora a libretistu, básníka W. H. Audena, jenž se tam usadil natrvalo; naopak Brittena i jeho partnera Petera Pearse americká dravost a povrchnost otrávil natolik, že se ještě před koncem války do Anglie vrátili. Po premiérách oper *Zneuctění Lukrécie* (1946), *Albert Herring* (1947), *Žebrácká opera* (1948), se Britten etabloval jako skutečný operní skladatel, ale byla to až díla z padesátých let, *Billy Budd* (1951), korunovační opera *Gloriana* (1953) a *Utahování šroubu*,²³⁶ která jednoznačně definovala jeho kompoziční styl. Výčet děl naznačuje, že velkou inspirací pro něj byla literární díla, což ostatně stvrzují i opery pozdější, například komedie *Sen noci svatojánské* (1960), Jamesův *Owen Wingrave* (1971) nebo slavná Mannova novela *Smrt v Benátkách* (1973). Tato díla by bylo možné rozdělit do několika kategorií, nicméně nejvýraznějším společným jmenovatelem většiny z nich je fakt, že jde o přední anglická díla, která se už v minulosti dočkala řady ztvárnění; dalším aspektem je motiv „zkažené nevinnosti“ a homoerotické lásky, rysy, které charakterizovaly veškerou Brittenovu práci a rovněž souzněly s jeho životem. Homosexualita, ač byla v Anglii do roku 1967 ilegální, se vyskytuje v řadě jeho děl, a také v jeho šesté opeře *Utahování šroubu*.

Tato opera měla premiéru 14. září 1954 v Teatro La Fenice a vznikla na objednávku festivalu v Benátkách.²³⁷ I přesto, že předloha je pro divadelní adaptaci velmi vhodná (jednota času a prostoru), tvůrci řešili dilemata spojená s (ne)existencí duchů bývalých zaměstnanců Bly a také zda zachovat původní název. Ačkoli existuje řada operních děl s němými postavami (například česká opera *Rusalka*), Britten se rozhodl Petera Quinta a slečnu Jesselovou oživit tím, že jim dal hlas. Díky tomuto kroku se opera stala interpretací „šílené guvernanky,“ což Brittenovi umožnilo dát do opery takřka cokoli. Zpívající duchové vzbudily podezření zejména svým „příliš blízkým vztahem k dětem“, libretistka byla dokonce nařčena z necitlivosti a zničení veškerých ambivalentních kvalit Jamesova díla. Ambivalence však byla na mnoha místech zachována, měla pouze jinou podobu: do scén, které v originálu obsahují nejasné sdělení týkající se (ne)zkaženosti dětí, libretistka vpravila anglické říkanky. Jednoduché, nevinně působící veršované zpívání dětmi na pozadí zlověstné hudby představují velmi jednoduchý a efektní prvek dokazující jednoznačný libretistčin talent pro uměleckou adaptaci.

Henry James toto dílo napsal na sklonku devatenáctého století, kdy prožil několik psychických otřesů a dokonce zvažoval, že spáchá sebevraždu. Vzhledem k tomu, že se

²³⁶ Český překlad Jamesovy novely zní *Utažení šroubu*, zatímco překlad opery je *Utahování šroubu*. Vzhledem k tomu, že hovoříme o opeře, používám „operní“ verzi.

²³⁷ První české provedení tohoto díla se uskutečnilo (až) 9. února 2000 ve Státní opeře v Praze.

Utažení šroubu zcela vymyká soudobému literárnímu kánonu i kontextu Jamesovy tvorby, literární historici a analytici hledali možné souvislosti v díle a autorově životě. Je možné vidět jisté souvislosti v jeho životě osobním (náhlá smrt sestry Alice a rodičů, přítele Turgeněva, přítelkyně Constance Fenimore Woolson) i profesionálním (neúspěch jeho dramatických děl, především jeho poslední hry *Guy Domville* z roku 1895); mnoho badatelů rovněž zvažovalo i vliv Jamesova hlubokého zájmu o psychologii a okultismus, což patrně pramenilo z výzkumu jeho bratra Williama, věhlasného amerického psychologa. V Jamesově deníku se v roce 1895 našel zápis po návštěvě jeho přítele, Canterburského arcibiskupa, jenž mu vyprávěl příběh, který se velmi nápadně podobal budoucí novele. Není možné opomenout pochybnosti kolem Jamesovy sexuální orientace vyplývající nejen z faktu, že se nikdy neoženil, ale rovněž z korespondence, kterou vedl s několika novináři; také v kontextu pátrání po inspiraci díla *Utažení šroubu* jsou tyto dojmy na místě. A konečně, pokud jde o literární inspirace, je možné zmínit díla sester Brontëových, *Na Větrné hůrce* (1847) a *Jana Eyrová* (1847), obsahující výrazné prvky gotického románu a romantismu, jiné zdroje hovoří o inspiraci Goethovou baladou *Erklönig*. Může být symbolické, že je Jamesův skutečný inspirační zdroj novely *Utažení šroubu* zahalen tajemstvím, stejně jako dílo samotné.

Novela začíná večerem zasvěceným duchařským povídkám, které byly v Anglii v devatenáctém století velmi oblíbené (jeden takový večer se například vyskytuje i v románu *Jana Eyrová*). Čtenář se v tomto Prologu doví základní informace o postavách a prostředí; od začátku je v příběhu řada neúplných informací, které mohou být vyloženy mnohoznačně. První kapitola začne vyprávěním mladé ženy (jejíž jméno se čtenář ani posluchač nedoví), která vzpomíná na to, jak se kdysi, jako chudá a nezkušená dívka ucházela o dobře placené místo na venkovském sídle Bly, kde měla vzdělávat osiřelé děti, Milese a Floru. Strýc žijící v Londýně, jejich jediný příbuzný, je velkorysý, neboť dá budoucí guvernance veškerou moc nad panstvím, má však neobvyklý požadavek – nechce být za žádných okolností rušen. Přestože dívka nejprve váhá, je mužem zcela evidentně okouzlena a místo přijme. Zprvu se zdá, že je vše v pořádku, nicméně brzy se jí začnou zjevovat postavy: mužská postava na věži, poté za oknem, na schodišti, což ji vyděsí o to víc, když hospodyně paní Groseová postavu identifikuje jako nedávno zemřelého zaměstnance Bly, Petera Quinta. Krátce na to se guvernance začne zjevovat i ženská postava, bývalá guvernanka dětí, slečna Jesselová. Guvernanka začne panikařit a představovat si, že tito duchové pronásledují děti a chtějí je zničit, proto se rozhodne, že je musí za jakýchkoli okolností ochránit. Příběh obsahuje řadu nevysvětlených epizod, například důvod Milesova vyloučení ze školy, co dělaly děti venku během noci, zda děti také vidí duchy, proč se duchové zjevují nebo jestli je guvernanka

skutečně šílená. Celý příběh eskaluje do momentu, kdy paní Groseová musí Floru odvézt z Bly, protože působí jako posedlá a guvernanka zůstane s Milesem sama. Během večera, kdy se zdá, že jí Miles poví, co se dělo před jejím příjezdem do Bly i proč byl vyloučen ze školy, chlapec v jejím náručí zemře po tom, co vykřikne „Peter Quint – ty d'áble!“

Operní libreto muselo řadu epizod zkrátit a zhutnit, proto je Miles v opeře již od začátku, na rozdíl od literárního originálu, v němž dorazí až po příjezdu guvernanky. Postava strýčka dětí je vynechána, stejně jako scény problematizující vztah guvernanky a paní Groseové; naopak se zvýznamnila existence duchů a jejich vztah k dětem, především pak vztah Milese a Petera Quinta. Jak již bylo výše naznačeno, opera svérázným způsobem vyjadřuje ambivalenci, která je nejdůležitějším rysem celého díla. V první řadě to je samotná postava Milese, vždy zpívaná chlapeckým sopránem, což je hlas stěží nerozeznatelný od ženského; proto se v opeře často mísí homo a heterosexuální vztahy. Nejasnost ohledně vyspělosti a vzdělání dětí, odkazující k sexualitě, jsou v opeře zachovány: například v prvním aktu zpívá Miles latinsky všechny významy slova *malo*, čímž může odkazovat na svou „zkaženost a špatnost.“ Scéna u jezera, kde se zjeví slečna Jesselová před guvernankou i Florou zůstává rovněž nejasněna, Flora nedá do konce opery najevo, zda duchy vidí, či nikoli.

Práce obsahuje rovněž analýzu Brittenovy interpretace opery, která je, jak již bylo zmíněno, založena na „nespolehlivé“ výpovědi guvernanky. Analýza se opírá o pojmový aparát freudovské analýzy, odhalující řadu sexuálních odkazů, které lze vystopovat především u Milese, Flory, slečny Jesselové a Petera Quinta. Klíčovými je zde několik scén: za první je to scéna na konci prvního aktu, interpretace guvernantčiny obavy, že se děti v noci setkaly s duchy, kteří je chtějí zahubit. V opeře je tato její představa uskutečněna: Peter Quint vzbudí Milese a melismatickým hlasem (který má erotické konotace) ho vyláká ven k věži, která na mnoha místech opery (i novely) funguje jako falický symbol. Ačkoli slečna Jesselová udělá totéž, Miles a Quint mají v této scéně více prostoru, a díky tomu posluchač pochopí, že Miles je Quintem zcela okouzlen (a navíc je i zdrojem jeho „vědomostí“). Dále je velmi důležitou scénou na začátku druhého aktu, v níž vystupují Peter Quint a slečna Jesselová; zde odkryjí své záměry, totiž zničit děti – což jsou právě obavy guvernanky z Jamesovy novely. Za vrcholný moment celé opery lze považovat poslední dvě scény, kdy se velmi sofistikovaně proplétají hlasy vyčerpané guvernanky, optimistická a nic netušící paní Groseové, dětí a duchů, kteří jim zákeřně našeptávají. Miles na konci opery zemře, což je stejně otevřené, jako je tomu i v novele.

Na základě všeho, co bylo zmíněno, je oprávněné se domnívat, že Benjamin Britten dílo pojal jako, zhmotnění svých homoerotických představ. Vzhledem k ilegalitě homosexuality zcela záměrně zvolil dílo velmi otevřené, v mnoha ohledech nejasné a diskutabilní, aby nevzbudil podezření. Aplikováním tří složek freudovské analýzy osobnosti je možné vystopovat Brittenovo nevědomí, v opěře vyjádřeno Milesovým sněním, které poukazuje na skladatelovu sexuální frustraci. Smrt Milese tak může být v tomto ohledu beznadějným vyjádřením skutečnosti, že skladatelova sexualita musí zůstat nevyřčená.

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Anotace

Autor: Miriam Hasíková

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Literární inspirace Brittenových oper - aspekt homosexuality v jeho dílech
(analýza libreta *Utažení šroubu*)

Vedoucí práce“ Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.

Počet znaků: 200 030

Počet stran: 92

Počet příloh: 0

Počet titulů: 45

Rok: 2018

Abstrakt:

Funkce opery v poválečné Anglii výstižně zobrazovala jak uměleckou, tak politicko-sociologickou situaci v celé zemi. Benjamin Britten je považován za zakladatele anglické operní tradice jehož práce zahrnující adaptace značného množství literárních prací (*The Borough, Gloriana, Billy Budd, Sen noci svatojánské, Utažení šroubu, Smrt v Benátkách, Zneuctění Lukrécie*) mu přinesla úspěch a popularitu. Ve všech těchto dílech hraje libretto důležitou roli, neboť se podílí na narativní i emocionální složce opery, a to s ohledem na specifické prvky prozódie anglického jazyka. Britten byl inspirován mnoha umělci, například W. H. Audenem, Aaronem Coplandem ale zejména Peterem Pearsem, jenž se stal interpretem většiny hlavních mužských operních postav a Brittenovým celoživotním partnerem a kolegou. Britten pod vlivem své sexuální orientace, transformoval literární předlohy, čímž vytvořil řadu svébytných uměleckých děl.

Klíčová slova:

Opera, novela, politika, homosexualita, libreto, analýza,

Annotation

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Title of the Thesis: The Literary Inspirations in Britten's Operas, With Focus on the Aspect of Homosexuality in His Work (the analysis of the libretto *The Turn of the Screw*)

Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D

Number of Characters: 200 030

Number of pages: 92

Number of Appendices: 0

Number of Sources: 45

Year: 2018

Abstract:

The function of the opera in post-war England mirrored artistic milieu as well as the current political and social situation in a very specific way. Benjamin Britten is seen as the establisher of English operatic tradition whose artistic stylization of a wide range of literary works (*The Borough, Gloriana, Billy Bud, A Midsummernight's Dream, The Turn of the Screw, Death in Venice, The Rape of Lucretia*) brought him success and popularity. In all these operas the librettos are the integral parts which were elaborated with the regard to both narrative and an emotional layer of the original work with the special focus on the accentuation and prosody of English language. Britten was inspired by a number of artists such as W. H. Auden, Aaron Copland and particularly by the singer Peter Pears, the interpreter of most of his male characters, who became his lifelong partner and collaborator. Britten's sexual orientation, which is visible in all his opuses, transformed the original literary works in a distinct way creating completely new pieces of art.

Key words:

Opera, novella, politics, homosexuality, libretto, analysis