



A Postcolonial Reading of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

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Note

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Many critics have tried to understand, or deconstruct Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) since its publication.¹ There are more than three hundred books, articles, and essays that have been devoted to his book in the last forty years (Teahan 349). Although it seems true that James himself wrote this book as “essentially a pot-boiler and a *jeu d'esprit*” (Beidler 178), or maybe because of this, *The Turn of the Screw* can be thought about in various ways. In this essay, I will consider this text, not so much as a ghost story but as a class allegory, and I will argue that the readers can reach to the center of the story's reflections on social hierarchy in the light of postcolonial criticism².

Henry James was an American writer, and an American expatriate. He left America in 1874, though he often returned there, and became a British citizen in 1915. He spent most of his time in England living in Rye in Sussex, and he wrote *Turn of the Screw* in 1898. In this sense, his national identity was complicated, and this is partly because he wrote remarkable novels that refer to cultural differences between Europe and America, ‘the International Theme’ as some critics call it (Freedman 7).³

As for the postcolonial criticism, Homi Bhabha gives us the clue to it. He says, “Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural

¹ See Booth, Wayne C., “‘He began to read to our hushed little circle’: Are we blessed or cursed by our life with *The Turn of the screw*?”, or see Teahan, Sheila, “‘I caught him, yes, I held him’: The ghostly effects of reading (in) *The Turn of the screw* ” in Beidler, Peter G., *The Turn of the screw*; second edition, 2004

² The problem of the term ‘post-colonial’ has been argued by many postcolonial critics. See Loomba, Ania, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Routledge, 1998; Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial studies*, Routledge, 1998, and others.

³ Born a member of the rising nineteenth century middle class, Henry James escapes easy identification with Europe or America. Whichever of the two James would have identified himself with, it can be said, as one critic puts it, that James “speaks for an understanding of national identity...James depicts a world where national and cultural identity exists...in a world where new possibilities of identity-formation are being conjured forth by an internationalizing economy (Freedman 11) ”

representation involved in the contest for political and social authority” (Bhabha 171). We may easily find such unequal and uneven forces in James’s text. In Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, almost all the relationships between the governess and the Master in London, and between the governess and Mrs. Grose, or even between the governess and the two children, incorporate the ‘unequal’ social class hierarchy prevalent in the nineteenth century. Bruce Robbins is right to say that “The hierarchical microcosm that James displays in the *The Turn of the Screw* is therefore full of socially produced gaps, lapses, ambiguities” (Robbins 337). This perspective, of course, was not only James’s, but was common in the Victorian era. However, it would at least be appropriate to say that James could not but have been aware of it. Terry Eagleton would certainly contend that any intimations of class struggles in the story are consciously included: adapting Raymond William’s statement, he asserts that: “There are in fact no classes; there are only ways of seeing people as classes...Classes, like masses, seemed figments of a way of seeing; we were invited to replace one way of seeing with another” (Eagleton 29). Indeed, according to Jonathan Freedman, James “possessed more than the usual prejudices of his class and moment”, which clearly emerged from his text (Freedman 15). No writers can be free from the socio-economic circumstances in which they write. Texts are not generated from a social vacuum, and it is the very context of social and economic circumstance that enables writers to write their works. I will stress here the link between materialist and postcolonial criticism. Both are, in fact, correlated with Marxist theory and thus intertwine in many ways. Robert Young, a postcolonial critic, for instance, explains:

Postcolonial theory operates within the historical legacy of Marxist critique. It was Marxism alone which emphasized the effects of the imperialist system and the dominating power structure (Young 6)

I suggest, then, that by reading James’s *Turn of the Screw* in the light of materialist and historical critique, we can find echoes of the British Empire resonating in the text.

Let me explore first, before I consider James's text, the relationship between the British Empire and India. As is well known, the British Empire was at the height of its power in the nineteenth century, and India was a significant British possession. British conquest of India had begun in the middle of the eighteenth century with the occupation of Bengal following the Battle of Plassey in 1757⁴. In the nineteenth century, the colonization of India had been completed after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, in which thousands of Indians had fought against the British; at this time, the British, and *Raj* (British rule) had been challenged. This civil war had a great impact on the British Empire because it resulted in dissolution of the East India Company, and moved London to take greater control of India's affairs "by making the Governor-General directly accountable to the Secretary of State and parliament" (Cain and Hopkins 284). After the uprising of 1857, Britain became economically dependent on trade with India through an unequal market for British-manufactured goods and cotton ware (L. James 219). Thus, British society became wealthy because of the capitalistic and systematic colonization of India. Because of this, the British Empire was at its largest territorial extent by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, Charles Dilke, a radical liberal, for instance, after traveling around North America and other English-speaking colonies in this period, could speak of "England round the world" (Young 36).

In 1895, at about the time when Henry James began to write *The Turn of the Screw*, the Empire of India Exhibition was opened at Earl's Court in London. Considering this exhibition, Lawrence James, a modern historian, says "The overall theme was clear; modern India was the product of British patience and genius" (L. James 217). To return to my main argument, suffice it to say that there is a correspondence between the situation in the British colonies, especially India, and the social situation portrayed in the James's text if we read this text from a postcolonial viewpoint. Further to Bhabha's observation, Bill Ashcroft notes that a postcolonial reading is

(a) way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to

⁴ De Schweinitz, Karl. *The Rise and Fall of British India: Imperialism as Inequality*. London. Methuen, 1983. p.86.

draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production...It is a form of deconstructive reading most usually applied to works emanating from the colonizers... and reveals its (often unwitting) colonialist ideologies and processes(Ashcroft et al, 192).

As for the postcolonial criticism of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, I principally consider two essays: one is Graham McMaster's 'Henry James and India: A Historical Reading of *The Turn of the Screw*' (1988), and the other is Robert K. Martin's 'The Children Hour: A Postcolonial Turn of the Screw' (2001). Both critics consider the relationship between British Imperialism and India, and James's allusion to India in *The Turn of the Screw*. Firstly, I will consider McMaster's essay as well as James's text. McMaster suggests the new 'orphan' story in relation to one of James's revisions, saying that the children-Miles and Flora- are from India (McMaster 24).⁵ By considering McMaster's argument, I wish to consider McMaster's essay to uncover an inconsistent point in his argument and to suggest a new interpretation of James' allusion to India in the text. Secondly, by showing the relationship in James's text between the British Empire, centered in London, and India, its colony, and by considering the argument in Robert Martin's essay, I will suggest that it is possible to read aspects of the novel as alluding to the existence of a British colonialist system. Martin also considers James's allusion to India, and says "it is rich in implication for it links the Master's control of Bly and his orphaned nephew and niece to colonialism" (Martin 2001). Furthermore, Martin criticizes McMaster's suggestion, and proposes a postcolonial reading of *The Turn of the Screw*. I would like to go on to say, however, that Martin's postcolonial reading is not sufficient, and present my own postcolonial reading of the text. This is not to say that James was a typical British imperialist, or that he implicitly supports British imperialism. I will argue only about the content of *The Turn of the*

⁵ James revised many words in his texts for the New York Edition of 1907-09. The effect of these changes has been the subject of considerable debate. See Henry James.*The Art of the Novel*. New York. London. Charles Scribner's sons,1962.pp.159-179; Henry James. Lustig.TJ.,ed. *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*. Oxford. Oxford UP. 1992. pp.263-266, and Sheppard.E.A., *Henry James and The Turn of the Screw*. Auckland. Oxford. Auckland UP; Oxford UP., 1974.pp.252-261.

Screw, and show that there are several metaphoric symbols that indicate the influence of British Imperialism.

James mentions India only once in the text, a fact which Marxist/ Postcolonial analysts whom I will refer to later have pointed out. The narrator in the story explains the relationship between the master and the two children. "He [the Master] had been left, by the death of his parents in India, guardian to a small nephew and a small niece, children of a younger, military brother, whom he had lost two years before" (27). The master is a very wealthy gentleman who lives in a big house in Harley Street in London, which is "filled with the spoils of travel and the trophies of the chase" (27). Although it is not clearly stated in the text where the master obtained these spoils of travel and trophies of the chase, it can be noted that these things might not be from England, but from other British colonies, such as Africa, Australia or India. As for the quotation above, we should note that the sentence, "He had been left, by the death of his parents in India" had been revised by James from the *Collier's Weekly* edition, which originally had "the death of their parents in India"(27). Considering James's revision, Peter Beidler argues that

India...was an important part of the British Empire and the reference may have suggested...the imperialism of the ruling class. One effect of the change is that in the new version we are no longer explicitly told that the mother of the children dies" (27).

This interpretation made by Beidler seems appropriate. But Graham McMaster goes further, and tries to decode this revision from a historical perspective in his *Henry James and India: A Historical Reading of The Turn of the Screw*". By suggesting that "the uncle himself is an orphan", McMaster explains the later story in terms of James's revision:

A certain man lived in India with his wife and two sons. One....was sent back

to England to live the life of a gentleman...while the parents continued their Indian mission...The second son...married and had two children. He died, leaving his children in the care of his parents, still in India; the children stayed with their grandparents for only a short time, because they too died. Thus the children were sent back to be looked after by their only surviving relative (McMaster 24).

This assumption that the children were the orphans and were looked after by the master appears to have some validity. But, several points can be questioned here: first, how do we know that 'a certain man' lived in India with his wife *before* the master goes back to England? There is, at least, a possibility that his parents could go to India from Bly, leaving their sons there, because James only writes 'the death of his parents in India.' Robert Martin also uncovers a further inconsistent point in his 'The Children hour: A Postcolonial Turn of the Screw' (2001), by asking "how do we know that the (two) children are the product of marriage?" (Martin 401-7). This is quite reasonable, since the two children are not necessarily the younger brother's children. In addition, according to Martin's theory, there is a powerful link between the events at Bly and British Imperialism, and "Flora and Miles, the tale's children are 'Indian orphans'" (McMaster 23). Although it seems true that, as McMaster claims, the 'Indian orphan' is a common motif in nineteenth-century narratives, there are no ultimate reasons in James's text that support McMaster's supposition; they may be from India in a metaphoric sense at least. However, Flora and Miles did not necessarily grow up in India, and they do not necessarily have to be taken care of by the Master's parents. As long as James doesn't mention their mother, there is always a possibility that she had been taking care of them until their father's death, who also might have sent money to her for his children.

However, it is perhaps not McMaster who has to be criticized but Henry James himself for the ambiguity of his revision, notwithstanding that James's ambiguity might have been a strategy he wanted to use in his text.⁶ Although it is uncertain why James

⁶ As regards to James's revisions, E.A. Sheppard, for example, insists critically, considering James's

revised this phrase from the original version, he seems to do so “as if”, says McMaster, “some constraint had caused James to strike out the ‘his’ (*sic*) he had first of all written in 1897...without...altering the rest of the passage to fit the substitution” (McMaster 25, my emphasis).⁷ McMaster, by critically examining the ‘tense grammar’ of the two phrases, “the uncle ‘had lost’ the military brother two years before” and “he had been left”, concludes that “the military brother had died two years before the death of ‘their parents,’ which is clearly nonsense” (McMaster 24). This seems quite reasonable. Perhaps James revised the words without considering it very much. If McMaster’s suggestion is true, however, why does he argue and deduce the long ‘orphan story’? Since his argument of the ‘orphan story’ very much relies on his deduction that is based on James’s ‘nonsense’ revision, his argument, although he makes other significant observations in relation to the text, appears paradoxical, and negates itself.

How, then, do we understand James’s revision? I will suggest a simpler reading of James’s ambiguous text. In my view, the alteration of ‘their(children’s) parents’ to ‘his(master’s) parents’, by pushing back the start of the story from the children’s parents’ era to that of their father’s parents, emphasizes the period of British imperialism that preceded India’s formal incorporation into Empire. It seems obvious that “his parents” must have been in India before their deaths. This seems the only interpretation that can be supported by the text. To test my suggestion, then, we may enquire in what year they were in India. In my view, the story suggests that they had died in India some time before India became British India in 1858, that is to say, after the Indian ‘Mutiny’ of 1857. To prove that ‘his parents’ died before this revolt, I will first examine the story of the text, and show the time order of the story.

It is not clearly stated in the story what year the twenty-year-old governess, sees the advertisement in the newspaper and meets the ‘gentleman’ who lives in Harley Street in

revisions of *The Turn of the Screw* for the New York Edition, that “James’s revisions...not only were stylistic, and merely stylistic,...but also,...effect no change whatever in the impression conveyed to the reader....indeed there is no question that many of James’s alterations are unnecessary”.(Sheppard.E.A., *Henry James and The Turn of the Screw*. Auckland. Oxford. Auckland UP; Oxford UP., 1974. p.253, p.260)

⁷ Obviously, McMaster seems to have made a mistake here, and ‘his’ should have been ‘their’.

London. But, considering carefully other factors that show the exact period, it is possible to trace the time when she goes to see him, and how old he is.

The 'Ghost story' is presented by Douglas in an old house in London, where some visitors sit around the fire and listen to his story. Douglas met the governess when he was a student at Trinity. She had been his sister's governess. The governess was ten years older than Douglas, and he had kept the ghost story which he had heard from the governess for forty years (25). We can assume that Douglas was about twenty years old when he first met the governess at his home as he was a college student. The narrator made an exact transcript of the story which Douglas gave to him before his death. From these points emerges the chronological order below:

1890s - Douglas tells the story.

The narrator writes the story and perhaps publishes it as 'The Turn of the Screw'.

1870s - the Governess dies. Before she dies, she sends the letter to Douglas.

1850s - The governess tells her experience at Bly to Douglas when he was about twenty. The governess is around thirty years old.

1840s - the governess starts working at Bly.

Miles dies.

The time the governess starts working at Bly corresponds to the time when the Brontë sisters wrote their novels and when Anna Jameson, a nineteenth-century novelist, wrote "The occupation of governess is sought merely through necessity" (1846)⁸. At this time, women of a higher class in society who did not marry and had to leave their families, became governesses to wealthier or higher-class families. This also correlates with the descriptions James writes in the text. For example, the presumed sexual relationship between the two apparitions, Peter Quint, a servant, and Ms. Jessel,

⁸ See Jameson, Anna. 'The occupation of governess is sought merely through necessity.' *The Turn of the Screw. Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*. 2nd ed. Ed. Peter Beidler. NY: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2004.128-129.

a previous governess, both of whom had died before the governess came to the house in Bly, is not clearly explained in the text. This is because James knew that in the Victorian era, people could not talk openly about sexual topics.

How old, then, was the master when the governess found her job in London and met him? This is not clearly stated either, but Helen Killoran shows in her 'The Governess, Mrs. Grose and "The Poison of an Influence" in *The Turn of the Screw*' (1993) that, considering Mrs. Grose's illiteracy and her experience as a personal maid to the master's mother, "Mrs. Grose might be as young as thirty", and was "probably not much older than the master, certainly within ten years of him" (Killoran 14). This leads us to conclude that when the governess of twenty visits the Master's house in London, the master is probably between twenty and thirty. I would suggest this supposition is not far from James' intention, since James writes about the master in such a way that "this prospective patron proved a gentleman, a bachelor in the prime of life" (26). If this is true, his parents, in the 1840s, if they were alive, would be around 40 to 45, and from James's explanation, they died in India before the Indian Mutiny in 1857. James incidentally refers to India before 1858, just as Jane Austen, one of the authors who most influenced him, refers to West Indian Plantations in her novel *Mansfield Park* (1814), and implicitly emphasizes the length of time British imperialism was exercised in India, even before India formally became part of the Empire. Suffice to say, in conclusion, that James, intentionally or unintentionally, refers to the important part of the British Empire when he wrote this book at the end of the nineteenth century, at the time when the territories of the British Empire were larger than ever before.

The aspects of the colonization of India can be represented in the story by the description of the house and its conditions at Bly. The house, in which two children, the governess, and other servants live together, is the master's country home, an old family place in Essex, called Bly (27). There are many servants in the house, namely, as James puts it, "a cook, a housemaid, a dairywoman, an old pony, and old groom and old gardener, all likewise thoroughly respectable" (28). As we can see from the order

of humans and animals, “none of these servants”, as Robbins comments, “counts more than an animal. Servants, like ghosts, are something less than human beings” (Robbins 336). As I mentioned earlier, this was a common attitude in the Victorian era. In *Practical Education*, originally published at the end of the eighteenth century, a time when governesses generally had not been considered as servants, the negative effects of the language and sexual vices of servants were made clear. For instance, Maria Edgeworth, who was a well known novelist in this century, writes “Children’s rooms should not be passage rooms for servants; they should ... be so situated, that servants cannot easily have access to them, and cannot on any pretense of business get in the habit of frequenting them” (Edgeworth 125). This image of servants had not disappeared in the nineteenth century; rather, James makes use of this conventional prejudice toward servants, creating ‘Ghosts’. In James’s notebook, which was written in 1895 according to his friend’s ghost story – this was the original memo on which the story of *The Turn of the Screw* was mostly based – he writes, “The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children”(H. James, qtd. in Beidler 15).

The position of the governess, however, was ambiguous, since, although there was a certain degree of prejudice toward governesses, she was somehow “at the helm” of the old house, Bly, and she was in supreme authority⁹. The master, on the other hand, does nothing but pay money to her, as well as, possibly, to the other servants through his solicitor, and asks her to take the whole thing over and let him alone (28). At this point, the location in which the master lives and from which he exercises his dominant economic power over those servants, including the governess – the conditions of all servants are the same; if he or she does trouble the master, they have to say, in Mrs. Grose’s words, “I would leave, on the spot, both him and you” (78) – is of significance here. The servant/master relationship can be understood as a metaphor for the

⁹ With respect to the arguments considering the position of the governess, Bill Millicent underlines the ambiguity of her status. He notes that the governess “was a ‘lady’ in the nineteenth century sense of the term, yet anomalously earning her own living...She had to be a lady to carry out her role but was surely not ladylike in working for her living and no social equal of leisured ladies.”(Bell, Millicent. “Class, Sex, and the Victorian’s governess: James’s *The Turn of the Screw*”; in Pollak, Vivian R, ed. *New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw*. Cambridge.Cambridge UP. 1993. p.91,p.94)

colonization of India, which was ruled from Britain. Furthermore, it expresses the interrelationship between the two countries. As one critic says:

...it is not just that the personnel who governed Indian were British, but the projects of state building in both countries – documentation, legitimation, classification, and bounding ...often reflected theories, experiences, and practices worked out originally in India and then applied in Great Britain, as well as vice versa” (Cohn 3-4).

Around this era, the ultimate control of India was exercised from London by a Secretary of State for India. Note also that local knowledge of India was provided by the council of India, which was also located in London (Parry 11). In *Bly* too, knowledge is significant, as Robert Martin claims, “Throughout James’s tale, knowledge is power” (Martin 401-7). For instance, in the scene in which the governess passes the letter she received from the master to Mrs. Grose, the governess narrates;

...then I judged best simply to hand her my document – which ...had the effect of making her...simply put her hand behind her. She shook her head sadly. “Such things are not for me, Miss”. My counsellor could n’t (*sic*) read!(33-34)

For illiterate servants in *Bly*, the letter is not something to read, much less something that tells them precious information: it is *a thing*. This perspective correlates clearly with James’s depiction of the servants. They are all ‘ponies’ as regards knowledge. This is why the governess “laid it (a letter) on the great hall-table” (98), a letter which can be read only by the governess and the children, who have access to knowledge. James depicts the servants, as do other novelists in this era, in such a way that there is an unmistakable gap between the upper-class, though the position of the governess is arguable, and the servants. It is not for nothing that the governess speaks of “several of the members of the household, of the half-dozen maids and men

who were still of our small *colony*” (51, my emphasis). Thus, the role of the governess in Bly seems to correspond to the role of the British government officials who went India and worked there, and, though she might be considered as ‘lower-class’, she has to be faithful to the master whom she secretly yearns for, and try to “mark the high state I[*she*] cultivated” to other servants (111).

Furthermore, though some critics view her position and meaning differently, I perceive Mrs. Grose to be a symbolization of the colonized Indian people.¹⁰ As I pointed out earlier, the social distinction between the governess and Mrs. Grose is often made in the text; the governess never fails to show the status of her position to the readers. One example is that she considers Mrs. Grose to be “a magnificent monument of the blessing of a want of imagination” (72), and a person who “could see in our little charges nothing but their beauty and amiability” (72), and, “had I wished to mix a witch’s broth and proposed it with assurance, she would have held out a large clean saucepan” (73). Mrs. Grose, too, recognizes the governess’s superiority. We should note here that Mrs. Grose is the only servant in whom readers can find the general role of a ‘servant’ in the text because other servants, to use Miles’s words, “don’t much count” (113), and she is the symbol of the typical, obedient servant in the nineteenth century, which can be likened to the obedient colonized natives in India. This is exactly the way in which the British Empire wanted the people of India to behave, because during the British Raj, the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the peasant riots in the Deccan in 1876 and other revolts had been occurring intermittently.

At this point, it may be interesting to ask a question: what will those children, the heirs of the houses in Bly and, possibly of the Master’s house in London, become in the future? In my view, they will surely belong to the upper-class with the great help of the master and other servants (of course, if Miles is supposed to be alive), and perhaps

¹⁰ Eric Solomon, for instance, says in her well-known essay, that “The least obvious suspect, and the criminal, is the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose” (Solomon, Eric. “The Return of the Screw”, in *The Turn of the Screw: An authoritative text backgrounds and sources essays in criticism*, ed. Robert Kimbrough. New York, London: W.W.Norton, 1966. p.238), as other critics, on the other hand, consider Mrs. Grose as the “solid, kindly, housekeeper” (see Killoran, Helen. ‘The Governess, Mrs. Grose and ‘the Poison of an Influence’ in *The Turn of the Screw.*”).

work in India or in other British colonies, since it was not uncommon for young British people to work in British colonies at that time. For example, in the mid to late nineteenth century, the provinces in India were divided into districts, and the heads of each district were served by members of I.C.S, the Indian Civil Service (Parry 12). Recruitment to the I.C.S was by a highly competitive examination, and many graduates of British universities tried to seek careers in the Indian civil service. Thus, Miles, if alive, might try to take exams and become a high-status official. At least, it would not be wrong to say that whatever the two children do as their jobs and wherever they work, they will work in some way for the British Empire. From this colonial reading of James's text, considering the link between the British and India in the text, it is possible to suggest several points, as Robert Martin also points out: just as the imperial power of British India had its centre in London, so the master of Bly lives in London, "the seat of empire" (Martin 401-407), exercising his dominant power over the servants at Bly. For him, Bly is his Empire, and the governess, who takes on all the responsibilities in Bly, can be seen as a colonial administrator, or using Robert Martin's term, "the colonial governor" who watches the future workers of the British Empire, as well as the servants.

So, what can we say in relation to Ghosts? Ghosts are depicted in the text as infernal evils that exert a negative influence on the children. Many critics will agree with the statement that the ghosts in the *Turn of the Screw* are symbols of corruption, since James tried to write *The Turn of the Screw* "to give the impression of the communication to the children of the most infernal imaginable evil and danger" (H. James, "To Frederic W.H. Myeers", cited in Beidler 178). The two critics to whom I principally refer do not, however, explicitly frame their opinions toward the ghosts in a postcolonial framework. McMaster, for example, situates the ghosts in the hierarchical social orders, and only claims that "the ghosts at Bly represent an avenging, repressed class, taking advantage of moments of political crisis" (201).

According to the story, Quint and Jessel died for mysterious reasons, but it can be claimed that they died as a result of their forbidden sexual relationship, which was

strongly prohibited by society because it led to the corruption of social hierarchy. They died because they corrupted the social class order, and by their deaths the social hierarchy in Bly is reestablished. In fact, in British India, sexual contacts between British men and Indian women had been frequent in the eighteenth century, which was considered to be condoning an indigenous immorality. The Resident in Delhi, for instance, had a harem of thirteen concubines (L. James 222). For the British men who came to India to serve as detached administrators and commanders, frequent sexual intercourse could be seen as a form of 'corruption'. The reduction of sexual contacts between the two was one of the ways to maintain the status quo in British India, although, as Lawrence James comments, despite there being "plenty of busybodies who did what they could to stamp out such indulgences...old habits proved resilient" (L. James 222). This aspect of British India seems to correspond with James's story of the 'corruption' of two ghosts. By restraining and concealing human sexual desire and signs of corruption, the social order in Bly and in India is retained. In my view, the two ghosts are, from a postcolonial perspective, metaphors for the corruption of the status quo in both Bly and British India.

As I have argued, in considering Henry James's text as a class allegory, I insist that the readers can reach to the center of the story's reflections on social hierarchy and on the British Empire in light of postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial critics, in critically interrogating James's revision, have, I believe, offered insights in an area that has previously been neglected of critical attention. Whatever faults there may be in their argumentation, they nevertheless offer fruitful postcolonial readings of James's text. James's *The Turn of the Screw* can be variously interpreted, and so there can be many possible postcolonial interpretations.

It is not my purpose here to examine whether James was a supporter of British Imperialism, but I would like to pay attention to McMaster's claim that "he (Henry James) had some considerable emotional investment in empire, as well as in the leisure class" (McMaster 34). In his letter 'To Grace Norton', written in 1885, James wrote:

I find such a situation as this extremely interesting and it makes me feel how much I am attached to this country....I can imagine no spectacle more touching, more thrilling and even dramatic, than to see this great precarious, artificial empire(H. James. *Henry James: Letters 3 1883-1895*, p.67).

In a different letter to Grace Norton, James also says

I don't want to see the war, but I don't want my dear old England to have her face too crudely slapped. The slap in the present case will resound all over India. The truth is the British Empire isn't what it was, and will be still less so. I take refuge in the idea of the race – yours and mine, as well (H. James. *Letters 3*, p.83)

James wrote these letters at a time in which the military power of Russia had grown, which was exemplified by its attempt to cross the border of Afghanistan in 1886. Despite the fact that Britain was the dominant imperial power, the challenge from Russia was potentially a serious one (Cain and Hopkins 389). As McMaster claims, James seems to have had a particular fondness for England, and expressed an interest in British affairs; perhaps this explains both the sentiments expressed in the letters above and his decision to become a British citizen in 1915.¹¹ If McMaster's suggestion is true, it would not be too far from saying, as I have insisted, that the alteration of 'their(children's) parents' to 'his(master's) parents' emphasizes the period of British imperialism. In my view, the letter quoted above suggests that around the end of nineteenth century James was beginning to realize, if not foresee, the fall of the British Empire when he wrote *The Turn of the Screw*, as he says that "[t]he truth is the British Empire isn't what it was, and will be still less so". It can be claimed that what James

¹¹ The reasons given for why he became a British subject vary. One of the reasons seems the American attitude of neutrality with the Allies that had fought against German Army in the World War I (Kaplan, Fred. *Henry James: The Imagination of genius, a biography*, 557).

might have had to say about the British Empire is found in this text. James says, “The true knights we love to read about never push an advantage too far” (96). As James didn’t ‘want to see the war’, this sentence seems metonymic, and he probably wanted to say, by the end of nineteenth century, ‘the true British we love never push an advantage too far’.

McMaster points out that

Bly is the typical country estate of the southern counties of the late Victorian and Edwardian period....It is a prime marker of what the story is really about – the social system that depended...upon late nineteenth-century capitalist imperialism”(30).

By the same token, the old house in which Douglas narrates his ghost story in front of upper-class people who spend Christmas there, is dependent on the same capitalist imperialism that earned huge amounts of money for Britain through unequal economic relations with India and other British colonies, and so, of course, was James’s house in Rye.

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ポストコロニアル批評から見た

ヘンリー・ジェームズ『ねじの回転』

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要旨

私は本論文において、ヘンリー・ジェームズの著書『ねじの回転』におけるイギリス19世紀末の階級社会の表象と19世紀末のイギリス帝国と植民地インドの関係について着目し、ポストコロニアル批評の立場から考察をおこなった。

私は主に以下の2点を主張した。まずひとつは、この著書における、ヘンリー・ジェームズの訂正- 「子供たちの親」から「主人の親」- は、世代さかのぼることにより、古くより行われていたイギリス帝国によるインドの植民地支配を強調していること、そして第二点に、『ねじの回転』における登場人物の相互関係が当時の階級社会を反映していることは明白であるが、私はさらにそれらの関係が、イギリス帝国と印度の植民地のメタファー関係として理解できること、である。そして最後の結論においては、ジェームズの19世紀末における友人への手紙から、彼のイギリス帝国に対する気持ちの表れと考えられる文章を引用し、私の結論を補強した。