

ang070 S/Ü "Introduction to the Critical and Scholarly Discussion of Literature"
Assignment 3: "Analysing Fiction"

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but you can receive feedback upon request. Additionally, a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki.

Upload your assignment on Stud.IP in one single file. Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. Present your results in complete sentences. You may write up to three pages (tasks 1-7). Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored. Then add the bibliography (see task 8) on a separate page and format it according to the specifications of our style sheet.

Analyse the following passage from chapter vii of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (NOTE: The text is specified according to the 1999 Norton edition, edited by Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren, p.29-30: "I got hold of Mrs. Grose as soon [...] – she'll lie!")

Formal and Media-specific Analysis: Narratology, Focalization, and Characterisation

(1) (a) Preliminary Contextualisation:

On the basis of your knowledge of **the entire text**, please identify the two main narrators in James's *The Turn of the Screw* and categorise each narrator according to narrative level and extent of participation.

"Nameless" Narrator

- Narrative Level: Extradiegetic narrator, narrating the diegetic level (Christmas Eve)
- Extent of Participation: Homodiegetic narrator, participating in the story as a character

Governess

- Narrative Level: Intradiegetic narrator, narrating the hypodiegetic level (Bly)
- Extent of Participation: Homodiegetic narrator, participating in the story as a character

Problematization

- Comment on the role of Douglas:
 - Douglas never functions as a narrator (no 1st person pronouns referring to Douglas, except in direct speech);
 - However, he reads the story of the governess and marks the link between the two diegetic levels
- Comment on convoluted narrative structure:
 - The hypodiegetic level (Bly) is embedded in the diegetic level (Christmas Eve) with the effect that both Douglas – and via Douglas – the nameless narrator warrant for the integrity of the governess, even as her own narrative appears severely unreliable (see below, reliability)

(b) Identify and categorize the narrator of **this passage** according to the typology of narrators and comment on the function of the narrative level.

Governess

- Degree of Perceptibility
 - Temporal summary ("as soon after this as I could"; "the interval"; "two hours ago")
 - Identifies characters (Mrs. Grose; Flora; Miss Jessel in hindsight)
 - Definition of characters (Mrs. Grose: "my friend"; "her incredulity"; "her distress"; Miss Jessel: "a woman in black, pale and dreadful"; Flora: "she'll lie")
 - Reports of what other characters did not think or say ("Flora saw!' [...] 'She has told you?' [...] 'Not a word – that's the horror. She kept it to herself!'")
 - Commentary (on Mrs. Grose: "with incredulity"; on herself: "I fairly threw myself"; on herself: "I was conscious as I spoke that I looked prodigious things"; "I caught myself up")

- Reliability: Strong Indications of Unreliability
 - Limited Knowledge: Divergence/discrepancy between conversation (direct speech) and commentary (narration) due to the narrator's tendency to deliberately or unintentionally misread other characters (cf. focalisation; characterisation of Mrs. Grose/Flora)
 - Personal involvement: preconceptions about Flora's uncanny relation to Miss Jessel and their alleged desire to deceive the narrator; desire to justify herself ("I can give no intelligible account")
 - Problematic value scheme: preconceptions about children's innocence; seeing the ghost of Miss Jessel
 - Self-monitoring ("But I had no sooner spoken than I caught myself up")
 - The narrator's allegedly extensive perceptibility turns out to be misleading as her limited knowledge, her personal involvement, her value scheme, her condition, and her tendency to make other people's ambivalent responses fit her own preconceived narrative severely compromise her reliability.

(2) Focalisation: Identify and comment on the use of focalization in the given passage.

- Focaliser: Governess ("I saw with my eyes", "I got the slow reflection")
 - First paragraph: shift between internal and external focalisation: ("I got hold of Mrs. Grose [...] I can give no intelligible account of how I fought out the interval. *Yet I still hear myself cry* [emphasis added] as I fairly threw myself into her [Mrs. Grose's] arms.")
 - After that: dominant mode of focalisation: internal focalisation ("as soon after this as I could"; "only now")
 - Avowed lack of memory here only serves to affirm the alleged accuracy and precision of the character-focaliser
 - Temporal distance between narrator-focaliser (i.e. narrating self) and character-focaliser (i.e. experiencing self) is evoked but, again, used only to affirm rather than revise the young governess's point of view

- Focalised: Mrs. Grose
 - Focalised from the outside ("Mrs. Grose took it as she might have taken a blow in the stomach"; "Mrs. Grose of course could only gape the wider"; "I got the slow reflection of them in my companion's face"; "My friend, with an odd impulse, fell back a step"; "She turned right and left in her distress")
 - Focalised from within ("I felt her incredulity")
 - The governess focalises Mrs. Grose from the outside only to infer and imply what the latter feels within, not (or hardly ever) admitting to the possibility of misreading her companion's body language and facial expressions

- Focalised: Miss Jessel
 - Focalised from the outside ("a figure of quite as unmistakeable horror and evil [as Quint]: a woman in black, pale and dreadful")
 - Remember: Compromised perceptibility/reliability; the governess sees, identifies and defines a ghost here

- Focalised: the Governess herself
 - Focalised from the outside ("I fairly threw myself into her arms")
 - Focalised from within ("Unutterable still for me"; "I was conscious as I spoke that I looked prodigious things"; "But I had no sooner spoken than I caught myself up")
 - The governess is emotionally stirred up by the alleged sighting of Miss Jessel's ghosts and seeks to confide in Mrs. Grose, even as she senses that it may in fact be her own behaviour that causes Mrs. Grose's "incredulity", her "distress" and the "slow reflections" on her companion's face; consequently, she becomes gradually more self-conscious and tries to keep herself in check.

(3) Characterization: Who is characterized by whom and with what techniques?

It is important to point out that all characterisations, even the indirect presentations, are given by a narrator, i.e. the governess, whose narration has been shown to be severely unreliable.

- Miss Jessel
 - Uncanny, creepy, frightening, eerie, scary, disturbing:
direct definition ("a figure of quite as unmistakeable horror and evil [as Quint]: a woman in black, pale and dreadful")

- Flora
 - Silent, unresponsive, not reacting:
indirect presentation through action ("Not a word [...]. She kept it to herself.")
 - Complicit, manipulative, deceitful, secretive, wicked, evil:
direct definition ("she's sure"; "she was perfectly aware");
indirect presentation through action ("Flora saw!");
indirect presentation through characteristics of speech ("She kept it to herself"; "she'll lie")

- Mrs. Grose
 - Shocked (by the governess), disbelieving, unconvinced:
 - Direct definition* ("her incredulity")
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("Mrs. Grose took it as she might have taken a blow in the stomach"; "Mrs. Grose of course could only gape the wider"; "I got the slow reflection of them in my companion's face"; "My friend, with an odd impulse, fell back a step"; "She turned right and left in her distress");
 - Indirect presentation through characteristics of speech, here questions* ("And what on earth-?"; "She has told you?"; "Do you mean aware of him?"; "Came how – from where?"; "And without coming nearer?"; "Miss Jessel?")
 - Increasingly uncomfortable, uneasy:
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("My friend, with an odd impulse, fell back a step"; "She turned right and left in her distress")

- Governess
 - Agitated, frantic, shaken:
 - Direct definition* ("in the state of my nerves")
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("I still her myself cry");
 - Indirect Presentation through characteristics of speech* (italics/exclamation marks: they know; all that we know; Flora saw; that child!)
 - Bonding, forming an alliance, fraternising:
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("I got hold of Mrs. Grose"; "I fairly through myself into her arms"; "I made it out to her")
 - Indirect presentation through characteristics of speech* ("all that we know")
 - Indirect presentation through human environment* ("my companion's face")
 - Inarticulate, stupefied, flabbergasted:
 - Indirect presentation through characteristics of speech* ("I can give no intelligible account"; "I could scarce articulate"; "Unutterable still for me") [AND YET]
 - Consistent, intelligible, coherent:
 - Direct definition* ("with full coherency")
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("made it out perhaps only now with full coherency even to myself")
 - Convinced:
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("I was there – I saw with my eyes")
 - Increasingly self-conscious, doubtful, insecure:
 - Direct definition* ("I was conscious as I spoke");
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("I looked prodigious things"; "But I had no sooner spoken than I caught myself up")
 - Adamant, short-tempered, insistent, coercive:
 - Direct definition* ("a flash of impatience");
 - Indirect presentation through action* ("I pressed")

- Reinforcement of characterisation by analogy
 - Contrast: Mrs. Grose vs. the Governess

Functional Analysis: Toward a Problem-oriented Sample Analysis

Build your functional analysis on the data generated through your formal analysis and suggest a possible problem orientation:

- (4) Formulate a research problem on the basis of your formal analysis and
- (5) Produce a close reading of the passage that is sensitive to relevant contexts and references suitable secondary material.

Comparison: Correspondence and/or Contrast

- (6) Suggest one other passage from the novel that corresponds and/or contrasts with the given passage in an aspect relevant to the research problem you have specified.
- (7) Briefly discuss how both passages relate to this problem. Address potential differences in representation and their possible functions.

Lecture: Session II

- (8) Use the MLA to compile a bibliography of six scholarly sources including journal articles, book chapters and monographs on "ghosts" in James's *The Turn of the Screw*. Format the sources according to our style sheet and attach the bibliography to your three-page assignment.