

Deconstruction applied

Literature



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Binaries Found in Henry James Novel - The Turn of the Screw The Turn of the Screw by Henry James presents a lot of examples of liminality thus making it an excellent form of a meditation of binaries. The author may have intentionally used that approach to thinking of himself as writing his work from a liminal view. Since he lived in the United States as well as Europe and consequently wanting his Novel to become a living work that inspires debate for countless generations afterward. The paper, therefore, considers a list of binaries used by Henry James and how he complicates and eventually work towards deconstructing some of the binaries.

In his major sophisticated use of binaries, one and most likely the simplest binary refers to him using changes in light. Almost the whole story as well as almost all the ghost sighting appear at dusk or dawn. These transitions are occurring either from daylight to darkness or night to daylight presents liminal periods within the story. Through setting important events in the novel at these transitional times, the author conveys a liminal nature of the story. He continues to use these transitional qualities possessed by the degree of daylight while using descriptive language in a lot of sightings of Miss Jessel, as well as Quint. Henry James uses the first number of pages to construct and deconstruct the changes in light binary and consequently starts to deconstruct. For example, during the first sighting, he uses many pages while referencing to “transitional quality of the light” but during the second sighting, Henry refers to words that “the afternoon light still lingered” (Henry93).

The second example of liminality used relates to the process of changing lives or existence of majority of the characters. The Uncle transition takes happens from a bachelor to where he becomes a guardian to two young
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children named Miles and Flora (James 153). The Governess acts in transition from London life that is simple to a complex and demanding responsibility at Bly that is a large country estate. The life of the binary aspect of the governess life in London is different from the one in the country estate as she used to daydream in London while she starts to see real things in Bly. Consequently, the two kids are still adapting to the life under their uncle's guardianship from the earlier life when they were under their parents. At first Henry presents the governess as a daydreamer and even provides the governess admission that she dreamt quickly about her employer. After the governess starts seeing ghosts, the author begins to deconstruct her daydreaming attitude by confirming that what the governess is seeing is really true as Miss Groves confirms to her

The last example of liminality refers to Miss Jessel and Quint ghosts. The ghost themselves in actual life present liminal beings of transition between the ordinary life in the world and the next phase of life after death. Henry stresses the liminality quality of ghosts by making Miss Jessel and Quint reappear in locations related to transition from one state to another. For example, the ghosts appear in the hallway and the staircase and these two places serve as transitions from one location to another (James 211). Initially, the author presents the liminality binary of the two ghost characters as hard to understand but eventually starts to reconstruct them when the governess becomes curious of the ghosts. The governess develops an attitude that makes her believe that the ghosts are known to her employers and the two kinds that eventually turn out to become true.

Work Cited

James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. New York: Modern Library, 2010. Print.
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