

Anxieties at the End: Exploring the Figure of the Literary Ghost and Threatened Social Order at
the Victorian *fin de siècle*

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Abstract

The end of the century was a turbulent time for England. As Victoria's reign came to an end, England's foundation was undergoing a sort of renovation. This thesis considers the figure of the Victorian ghost in the social context of the *fin de siècle* as a response to the rising issues of women's rights, the forming middle-class, and changing understandings of colonial relations as they emerged in society. I consider how selected works by Vernon Lee, Henry James, and M.R. James grapple with the changing role of women, class structure, and imperial practises respectively, and how the literary ghost is utilized to narrate and construct this sense of instability at the end of the century. This thesis is invested in analyzing how Lee's "Oke of Okehurst, or, The Phantom Lover," Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," and M.R. James's "Mr. Humphreys and His Inheritance" essentially work to re-implement traditional power structures in a time when this power was ultimately being questioned. Overall, despite the potential for power and originality within the genre of the ghost story, I suggest that each text rebels against a liberalizing world to preserve Eurocentric, patriarchal authority, though in differing ways.

INTRODUCTION

"The subject wrought in fantasy"¹: An Introduction to Literary Ghostliness at the Victorian *fin de siècle*

In a letter to Vernon Lee, Henry James suggests that "the supernatural story" is "the subject wrought in fantasy," (James in Thurston 1) but in the confines of the ghost story, the ghost is itself much more than just a fantastic illusion. Instead, supernaturalism is often a stand-in for a much more complex social reality. Writers of supernatural stories often utilize the ghost's ability to exist in a space outside of our conceivable reality as a method of disrupting what we understand to be 'authentic' and 'tangible.' In this fashion, the literary spectre can act as a critical tool used to highlight social complexities that are not easily narratable otherwise. As Lowell Frye suggests, "the very nature of the ghost story authorizes the writer to explore marginal states and experiences" (Frye 168-169), making literary supernaturalism an appropriate genre for personal expression and social criticism. In some way, then, the ghost's ability to exist on the fringes of 'normalcy' and turn a critical eye to the powers that be makes it a worthwhile instrument for those seeking to incite change or generate awareness towards oft-unspoken social injustices and inequalities.

We can take, for example, Hilary Mantel's memoir titled *Giving up the Ghost*, which utilizes the figure of the ghost to express, and respond to, the inequalities imposed on her by Jack, her stepfather. In *Giving up the Ghost*, Mantel invokes a quiet supernatural subtext which is peculiarly imbued with ghostly figures that are often regarded with indifference in her narration. This ghostly subtext lurks in the background of the entire work, and these presences cause the reader to question the validity of her memory and her understanding of reality as these

¹ Henry James to Vernon Lee in a private letter discussing the writing of the supernatural genre, quoted in Thurston's *Literary Ghosts from the Victorians to Modernism* (Thurston 1).

supernatural presences haunt her own recollections as well. Mantel, however, manipulates these paranormal forces to impose her own expression of power within her memoir as she leaves the "baffled spirit" of her abusive stepfather "locked in the shell of the house" at the end of her book (Mantel 221). As a result, Mantel's memoir reduces the once-oppressive patriarchal authority to nothing but an immaterial presence confined to a home that she will never return to. The reversal of the order of power, and the transition of her stepfather's physical presence to a spiritual one, allows the author to assert her own authority by dematerializing forces of control, while also enabling her to empower herself through the act of writing. Mantel's 21st-century autobiography thereby exemplifies a seizing of power by way of language, but also through a manipulation of the ghostly figure. Though Mantel is free to "[Give] up the Ghost" in her contemporary memoir, earlier versions of the ghost story do not convey an outright seizing of power, nor do they always perform the feminist agenda that is indicated in Mantel's work. Instead, in the three selected texts for this thesis I will analyze how ghosts often do precisely what they are meant to do: that is, haunt and disturb the characters and their lives in both subtle and horrifying ways.

If we recall the King's ghostly presence in *Hamlet*, the haunting of young Hamlet himself is concerned with avenging his Father's death and restoring domestic, social, and political order in the state of Denmark. Mantel and Shakespeare's hauntings, then, despite their vastly differing genre and time period, similarly function to expose a greater concept or theme at work within their respective texts. In other words, we can see how the literary presence of ghosts speaks to more than just the strangeness of otherworldly phenomena, but also engages with broader social and cultural themes that concerns a society's current state of affairs or a lack of harmony within one's personal life. In Mantel's aforementioned work, the protagonist challenges patriarchal power by conquering a ghost; in *Hamlet*, the haunting stirs up questions of political power and

organization. This 'malcontent's' version of a ghost is a common one, but in this particular thesis, we look to the ghost story for something far different than its capacity for stealthy social criticism. Instead, this thesis will highlight three ghost stories which evidence the supernatural-story and the ghost figure's ability *not* as a rebel's tool for criticism, but as a site to communicate the anxieties of those in power when they are haunted by a spectre of change.

Contextualizing the *fin-de-siècle* Ghost Story

While one cannot confidently suggest that Victoria's reign was entirely peaceful and prosperous, during her rule British identity was both respected and asserted with its own power and confidence relatively unwavering. However, the country began to experience the unsettling dénouement of its own power at the end of the nineteenth century. As Britain's imperial power began to destabilize with mounting tensions in South Africa and loosening control over India's governance, the confidence and stability of British identity too began to falter. Not only did changing imperial relations contribute to the flux of British identity, but the growing desire for female liberation and social mobility also influenced the complexities of identity politics at the end of the century. While women were confined to spheres of domesticity and subject to patriarchal authority in the broadest sense, they began to challenge misogynist notions of femininity as the era of the New Woman, and increasing action toward gaining suffrage rights began to emerge (Grimes 1). England, then, was in a period of transition in the 1890s as part of its shift into a new era at the turn of the century. As such, while this thesis is primarily concerned with the construction of the anxieties of those in power as they are expressed through the ghost story, this thesis will consider historical and social contexts of *fin-de-siècle* England, not because the *fin de siècle* is essential to understanding the nature of conservative anxieties, but because the context it provides is useful. Indeed, as the previous structure of Victorian England began to

shift, the instability of particular structures of aristocracy, patriarchy, and imperialism were revealed, and selected works from this particular time engage with society's transition during that period. As these structures faced a torrent of change in England's move to a new century, supernatural narratives came to be just as important in not only registering criticism of those structures, but commenting on them. In particular, the hauntings in Vernon Lee's short story, "Oke of Okehurst, or, The Phantom Lover" (1886), Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" (1898) and "Mr. Humphreys and His Inheritance" (1904) by M.R. James all similarly respond to an upset power structure within the text. This thesis is interested, therefore, in the literary response to these ghostly disturbances and the relationship between haunter and haunted. The literary spectre, then, is the impetus for exploring significantly larger social structures at a time when traditional power was unstable.

In the texts in question, social structures such as dichotomous class hierarchies, patriarchal authority, and imperial power are marked by a sense of instability that is often, but not always, first caused by the presence of a ghost. In fact, the concept of a new arrival into a pre-existing domestic space is a central motif in all three of the selected works and, indeed, even before a haunting occurs, the arrival of an interloper marks the initial disruption within the homestead. Luke Thurston focuses on the "curious relation between host and guest" and states that "it is hard to find a ghost story that does not feature...the arrival of a guest or a strange act of hospitality" (Thurston 3). For Thurston, the relationship between guest and host parallel the uncanny exchanges between the "living and the undead" (3). While the depth of Thurston's analysis is fascinating, this thesis is primarily interested in establishing the genre's central concept of "the arrival," for it is in that exact occurrence where the first signs of a disturbance (or instability) are seen. After all, the arrival of a new master who inherits an ancient estate (as in

M.R. James' "Mr. Humphreys"), for example, is a representation of just such a disturbance to the domestic order that existed beforehand and sets the stage for a haunting to occur.

As we will soon see, each of the central characters or narrators in the selected ghost stories experience a haunting only *after* they arrive into a new structure or location. As unknowing interlopers, these individuals stoke the spirits contained within the homestead, and in doing so, the spectres provide a window into understanding that each of these texts deals with anxieties toward change on a larger scale. While it may be natural for most readers of the ghost story to point to the ghost itself as the primary source of disturbance, it is the initial arrival of a new guest that interrupts the stability of a domestic space that will be considered in this thesis. Moreover, there is tension and conflict that exists as a result of the newcomer entering an old space lorded over by spirits, and where the ghost, as a harbinger of the past, resolves to terrorize the interloper. When the prospect of change is implied by the arrival of a newcomer, the ghost itself is effectively summoned as a reactionary way of expressing what amounts to an anxiety about a change in social order. In the case of Vernon Lee, Henry James, and M.R. James, the ghosts themselves are not necessarily representatives of the specific historical structures of aristocratic power, patriarchy, and imperial dominance, but rather play a critical role in expressing the anxieties held by men in positions of power which exist in these social structures. For when the newcomers arrive, these structures are invaded, stirred up, and disturbed, and if the newcomers are agents of change, and the ghosts are representatives of the past, the ghosts' need to terrorize the interloper is both a message of attempted preservation of these historical structures, as well as anxieties about their potential to change. While Lee, James, and M.R. James all similarly evoke the dead as wardens of the past that they inhabit, it is their conflict with the interlopers that allows us to discuss the implications of change within the domestic sphere

and the anxieties that their conflict causes.

Additionally, these disruptions are worth considering in the context of the mid-nineteenth century which was an era similarly beset by volatile anxieties in the face of structural changes due to the breakdown of English superiority, as previously noted. In addition to the conflict over change that erupts within the haunted spaces of the selected stories, their status as tales written in the *fin de siècle* allows them to evoke the destabilization of an established and mostly unchallenged British identity. While we must be careful not to conflate the conflicts within the texts as purely analogous to the upheaval of the end of the century, the social context of the *fin de siècle* nonetheless provides one way to explore and compare the domestic and social orders in the text and the English nation itself. That is, when we come to understand the various possible anxieties held by the male characters in each text, the following analysis of those characters can, at the very least, benefit from a convergence between the disrupted social order in the selected texts and England in its state of social transition. When we equate the domestic disorder in each literary work to the larger changing social structure of Victorian England itself, the era of the *fin de siècle* essentially acts as a subtext within this discussion while the concept of threatened power and the anxieties of the male characters in the texts can be grounded in this specific historical context.

On the Supernatural Genre and its Ghostly Presences

Prior to the *fin de siècle*, not all audiences viewed the genre of supernatural fiction with favour. Beyond Henry James's warning of the perils of literary supernaturalism, and his disparagement of the genre as removed from close "observation" and believability, readers and reviewers themselves had reservations about the supernatural genre for "almost a century prior" to the 1890s (Thurston 1). According to Thurston, frequent readers and critics of the supernatural

genre were "consistently appalled by its fantastic 'extravagance and over-writing'" (1). However, as we will see, no structures remain the same forever, and "by the time of the *fin de siècle*" [there was a] resurgence of the literary gothic in the form of the ghost story" that appealed to the "rational skeptics" of the era due to its "aversion to stylistic extravagance" (1-2). While stylistic changes in the supernatural story allowed it to gain traction in writing circles, which led to the revival of a "*neo-gothic*" ghost story in literature, a growing interest in spirits and occultism took hold in English society itself at the end of the century. Emma Liggins notes that "the *fin de siècle*, with its radical discussions of psychology, sexology and aesthetics, was... characterised by an intensified and related focus on supernatural phenomena" (Liggins 37). Indeed, this period on the cusp of modernity was marked by technological, and intellectual growth, as well as by changing social dynamics that encouraged the Victorians to explore "the rich dimension of space... full of uncanny juxtapositions just waiting to be noticed" (Kontou & Willburn 2). While there have certainly been a multitude of attempts to synthesize and understand why the Victorians were so fiercely concerned with otherworldly phenomena, this thesis will not attempt to offer a reason for this fascination. Instead, the following analysis will work primarily on the axis of its own kind of "uncanny juxtapositions" of an historical social order and the shifting of this tradition to a modern era. In the case of Lee, James, and M.R. James, the juxtaposition that exists is between the arrivals of guests and the ancient spirits who are forced to host them. The tension caused by change and the conservative anxieties of those who are threatened by the ghost and the instability of social structures respectively, will be the major focus of this thesis. The conflict between the guest and the host, then, will be central to this analysis, and this conflict will open up a discussion of the embedded conservative anxieties within each ghost story.

To situate the framework of this analysis of ghostliness, I provide a background on the literary ghost as it appears in fantastical fiction. Scholarship concerning supernatural literature has often defined the genre as a space where the unconscious manifests and where history can haunt the present (see Peter Messent, Jennifer Bann, and Elaine Showalter, for example). One of the most prominent themes receiving critical attention is the ghost narrative's ability to interrupt the construction of a singular subjectivity. Though Freud's work was not published in English until 1900, his understanding of the subject has been useful for exploring the literary ghost. Contemporary scholars such as Elana Gomel and Jodey Castricano have built on notions of the "ghosts within us" (Stead) (that is, presumably Freud's "unconscious") to suggest that the ghost story became the locus for the divided self, in which we can see the repressed desires of the Victorian (and Gothic) subject. The idea of repression, and particularly Freud's definition of the uncanny, seem like fitting concepts to apply to the analysis of a ghost story since the figure of the ghost parallels the foggy knowledge of some traumatic aspects of our history that continually recurs in our subconscious. In other words, it is an inability to acquire knowledge that haunts the mind and torments us, the same way that ghosts are said to do.² And indeed, because the figure of the ghost is so charged with ambiguity, the supernatural genre has historically (and predominantly) been analyzed through a psychoanalytic lens. We might recall the popular reading of "The Turn of the Screw" by scholars who perpetually suggest that the unnamed governess at Bly is mad, hysterical, and of course, exhibiting symptoms of a sexually repressed female.³ While psychoanalysis certainly has its place in supernatural scholarship, this analysis will move away from the conception of the "divided self" and consider the construction of power and anxiety within the selected texts as they are conveyed by the figures of male authority.

² We might recall Cathy Caruth's argument in *Unclaimed Experience* and her notion that the psyche is shocked by trauma that it creates "[absences] from direct contact with the brutalizing event itself" (Caruth in Forter 260).

³ See pro-Freudian readings of the governess as hysterical by Edmund Wilson, Harold and John Silver, for example.

The threat to male power expressed in the ghost story, then, disturbs the linear progression of a Eurocentric narrative by allowing the elusive figures of the past to reverberate within the text and haunt the present. The ghost itself is an elusive character, one that is sly enough to evade the hierarchical dualisms that structure Eurocentric society. The value of the literary ghost and the genre as a whole is in its ability to voice experiences that are otherwise marginalized by dominant history which has been penned by those with the authority to write and legitimize the narrative, that is, those who are in a place of elevated power. Lowell Frye's assertion that "the genre not only permits but requires a blurring of conventional boundaries between living and dead, real and unreal, rational and non-rational, sane and insane" (Frye 168-169) indicates that the supernatural is a genre that permits a multitude of 'ghosts' to appear. In other words, the supernatural has the *potential* to challenge marginalization by oppressive social structures based not only on gender, but also race, class, and sexuality. However, this thesis will explore how, in works of Vernon Lee, Henry James, and M.R. James, this is not the case. Frye also purports that ghosts "[undermine] the authority of dualisms" (169) and the "socially constructed hierarchy they mask" (169), but in many ways, the ghost story becomes a platform for conservatively reinforcing these hierarchies as I suggest in the following chapters. As the supernatural genre summons the figure of the ghost and writes it into being, the ghost itself is able to provoke and haunt fictive characters and external audiences alike. In doing so, these particular ghost stories incite an anxious response from those who are being haunted and each text ultimately offers a resistance to empowering those who are subordinated. This is not to say that all the ghosts represent a subordinated other, but that the haunting itself effectively stages the conflict and power struggle. Whether this power imbalance is between the aristocracy and the degenerates in Vernon Lee's story, or men and women found in Henry James's novella, or the

colonizer and colonized in M.R. James text, what remains true in each case is that the juxtaposed presence of a haunting spirit and a new arrival lead to a clash that evokes a greater anxiety about change.

Masculine Power under Threat: Vernon Lee's transgressive woman and dying aristocracy

Chapter One of this thesis will consider Vernon Lee's 1882 work, "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover" and the intersection of class and gender that takes place as the story's protagonist effectively challenges patriarchal authority and the dominance of the English aristocracy. Emma Liggins and Vanessa Dickerson highlight one of the major cultural shifts in the era when they note that "the woman writer at [the *fin de siècle*] used the increasingly fashionable genre of the ghost story...to explore her potential 'inbetweenness' in patriarchal culture" (Liggins 37, Dickerson 150). For this thesis, it is incredibly significant that amidst the threat of female exploration and the changes it portends, Lee's "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover" graphically conveys the daunting consequences of stepping outside of the bounds of domesticity and patriarchal norms despite the female protagonist's initial challenge to these structures. In providing such a gruesome ending for the potentially progressive female protagonist, Alice Oke, Lee's text reiterates a central conflict between figures of masculine authority and the threat to this power by a transgressive, dangerous female character. In doing so, Lee's story contains expressions of conservative anxieties by the male characters and includes warnings about dangerous femininity and the potential for masculine aggression when panicked and threatened. Besides the wrath of her murderous and violent husband, the female protagonist is subordinated by the male narrator as well as he overtly expresses a sense of fear when confronted with Alice Oke's deviance. As such, Alice is subjected to male power and her own autonomy is ostensibly limited by a deliberate usage of colonial rhetoric, designed to effectively

"Other" the female protagonist. As I evaluate in Chapter One, Alice's "Otherness" is directly equated to her transgressive and degenerative nature, and in fact, this colonial rhetoric is actually a subtle response to the changing understandings of class structure in Victorian England as my analysis of the Oke's familial history suggests. This analysis of "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover" considers the dying position of the aristocracy and patriarchy within the text as the primary anxieties of the male characters as it is mediated through the figure of the ghost, and renders Alice Oke as both a threatening woman who cannot be contained by male power and a figure who refuses to legitimate the Oke lineage.

Gender and the Spectre in Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw"

Henry James's depiction of a conservative anxiety in "The Turn of the Screw" is perhaps more difficult to discern, but then, the work as a whole has been notoriously baffling critics for over a century. Indeed, the highly ambiguous nature of this novella has generated a multiplicity of diverse and contrasting readings ranging from those with a focus on psychoanalysis to post-colonial understandings of its content. My analysis is simultaneously interested in the framework of gendered power dynamics, as well as competing notions of class structure in order to explicate a sense of subtle conservative, patriarchal anxiety that lingers in the text. As such, the second chapter of this thesis focuses on "The Turn of the Screw" and the portrayal of masculine power under threat and the subtle reimplementation of patriarchal order within the text. Additionally, I will explore how the text is firmly invested in reiterating structures of male power through the figures of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. Through their haunting, these spirits represent masculine dominance and female passivity respectively. I also offer the suggestion that the story's obscure timeline – that is, the retelling of an old tale in the present – is significant to James's overall commentary on shifting gender dynamics: the silent Governess is a disempowered protagonist

with very little agency or autonomy who comes to be central in a narrative produced in a time when the liberation of women in society was in question and actively being pursued. In these ways, James's novella centralizes a narrative of patriarchal power and female subordination in an era of change and instability when these gendered dynamics were shifting and female autonomy was becoming a reality.

The 'Other' Strikes Back: Empire and Ghostliness in M.R. James

It is no surprise that, as a Medieval scholar and antiquarian, many of M.R. James's ghost stories are particularly invested in historical artefacts and narratives. In fact, James's first published collection of ghost stories, titled *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, points to his rich background in historical scholarship. I draw attention to the term 'antiquary' to highlight the intense focus on historical (as well as imperial) structures within his work. Jacqueline Simpson highlights M.R. James's interest in "the development and persistence of local legends and historical memories [as well as]...traditional beliefs" (Simpson 9). This personal predisposition to traditions and history comes to the foreground in much of James's work, which focuses on "medieval manuscripts, biblical Apocrypha, library catalogues, church iconography and the like" (9). In this sense, while Vernon Lee and Henry James certainly have much to say about history and its transition from the past to the present, few supernatural writers centralize history's power as M.R. James does. Indeed, there are a number of James's stories that express interest in this power, but "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" is of particular interest to this thesis as it takes antiquarian symbols, images, places and ideas, and evokes the narrative of European imperial conquest and the subjection of the foreign Other by English interlopers.

In the case of "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," the central characters investigate an old Yew maze on Humphreys's newly inherited property. In Chapter Three, I suggest that James

is cultivating a kind of imperial conquest as his protagonist ventures into a mysterious space and is confronted with a horrifying spectre that disturbs the quaint estate. James's characters encounter the threat of meeting the exoticized Other and facing its terrifying wrath, suggesting that colonialism and imperialism are prominent themes within the narrative. Moreover, I will consider how the text also conservatively works to conceal, and eventually dismantle, the symbols of conquest and imperial interloping so that the present can imagine itself to be liberated from the dark and horrifying past that preceded it.

For each author, the ghost, then, becomes a harbinger of discontentment, and its presence opens up a larger discussion of constructions of social and political upheaval analogous to the social unrest of the late nineteenth century. As I consider themes of class hierarchies, gendered power, and empire in an exploration of a disturbed social order, it becomes clear that the hauntings themselves stir up the anxieties of the central characters and produce a sense of resistance surrounding this changed social order. The ghosts employed in James, Lee, and M.R. James's work respectively evidence the looming threat of shifting class structures, the changing roles of women, as well as the pressing reality of imperial threats in a time when England was responding to social change. Moreover, each text constructs a sense of instability of the *fin de siècle* and writes it into being.

CHAPTER ONE

Dying in her Arms: Aristocratic Ends and the Threatening Woman in Vernon Lee's "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover"

That is the thing –the Past, the more or less remote Past, of which the prose is clean obliterated by distance –that is the place to get our ghosts from. Indeed we live ourselves, we educated folk of modern times, on the borderland of the Past, in houses looking down on its troubadours' orchards and Greek folks' pillared courtyards; and a legion of ghosts, very vague and changeful, are perpetually to and fro, fetching and carrying for us between it and the Present.

(Lee 3)

In a semi-epistolary fashion, Vernon Lee's "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover" opens with a short letter addressed to Count Peter Boutourline in which Lee remarks upon the power of writing. She notes that "to write is to exorcise, to dispel the charm; and that printers' ink chases away the ghosts that may pleasantly haunt us, as efficaciously as gallons of holy water" (54). Just as holy water is used to exorcise demons, writing is the mode by which the pressure of past experiences and present tensions can be explored. In the form of a ghost story, the intersection of the past and the present is initiated by the conflict of a newcomer entering an historical space that subsequently disrupts the traditional order of this space. This thesis is interested in the ways that this disruption consequently induces anxieties about a change in traditionally acceptable practises of class organization, gendered power, and understandings of imperialism. In many ways, the ghost story is a useful vessel for exploring the anxieties of those in power when this power is placed in question or threatened by the changing structure of a modernizing world. In the case of Vernon Lee's "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover," I

suggest that the aforementioned anxieties are those which extend from shifting stations of social class, and moreover, that the threat to aristocratic order is very much caused by the transgressive female protagonist who is central to this narrative. As such, this story grapples with the demise of the English aristocracy and the anxieties about this dismantling structure as expressed by the central male figures within the text.

Lee's story, like many ghost stories, takes place in the English countryside where the narrating artist has gone to paint a portrait for William Oke and his wife, Alice. Alice Oke, the "awfully strange" (Lee 56) female protagonist of the narrative is deeply invested in the tale of Nicholas Oke and his wife, Alice Pomfret, who, in the late 17th century, were accused of murdering a poet (and their neighbour), Christopher Lovelock. Despite speculations about an affair between Lovelock and Alice Pomfret, she was also implicated as an assailant involved in the crime. In Lee's tale, the narrating artist is simultaneously drawn to and threatened by Alice Oke and her bizarre obsession with the seedy narrative that haunts Okehurst manor. The Lovelock story and the threat of his lingering spirit also causes tension between Alice and her husband, William. The ghost in this story is elusive and only clearly emerges in the climax of the text when William Oke attempts to attack the apparition, and instead, kills his wife. While the presence of the ghost is always lurking in the form of the Lovelock tale itself, it is this historical narrative at the heart of Okehurst that invites our discussion of Alice's transgressive behaviour and its relation to the dissipation of the aristocracy as depicted in Lee's work. I suggest that the text's engagement with the past (that is, the Lovelock narrative) moves beyond expressing Alice Oke's dangerous femininity and works to convey the unravelling structure of the English aristocracy as well. As Alice Oke, and her predecessor before her, are evocative figures, subversive in nature, and inclined to forward progression (or degenerative deviation), they pose a

threat to the established order of patriarchal convention that previously structured Victorian England and also to Oke's futile attempts to cling to his lineage.

Lee's work is set within an era of social change at the *fin de siècle* in which the enigmatic New Woman emerged as a modern force of liberty, pining for economic and social dependence. The New Woman, indeed, was a figure who seemingly transgressed traditional roles of femininity in the midst of the rising consciousness of gender inequality. While the narrating artist notes one key asset held in common between Mrs. Oke and the progressive women of the *fin de siècle* when he remarks that (the beauty) of Mrs. Oke was "altogether a question of movement" (Lee 55), Alice Oke is far more linked to the past despite her liberal and transgressive behaviour. That Lee's male artist remarks first on the physical form of Mrs. Oke, and then attributes it to a valued sense of movement speaks to the tensions that reside within Vernon Lee's "Phantom Lover" as Alice Oke herself has one foot in the past with her close affinity to her predecessor. However, like the New Woman, she challenges the confines of marriage by exercising control over her husband and changing the dynamics of gendered power within her marital relationship. But Alice Oke is not a clear prototype of the New Woman, since the text paints her with direct linkages to a degenerative and unfavourable past, in contrast with William's investment in the aristocratic ends of the Okes at Okehurst before him. As this chapter will explore, the construction of Alice's transgressive character causes her to consistently undermine her husband's own linkage to a historical past related to the English aristocracy. Moreover, Alice's characterization as a dissident, self-serving, decadent woman directly conflicts with the ideals of her aristocratic husband and evidences the tension between their two contrasting backgrounds, as she is constructed as a degenerative deviant of low social standing. The dichotomous nature of Alice and her husband exemplifies the ways in which Lee's "Phantom Lover" is, in some ways, a

commentary on trepidations surfacing in an era where class structure was changing in Victorian England and the story conservatively responds to this change by reinforcing the power of traditional aristocratic order. With a shift to industrialism and the broadening spectrum of a newly formed middle-class, William Oke is anxious about the death of the aristocracy, and Alice Oke is the figure that threatens this security with her degenerative sensibility.

Alice Oke: The Other

Alice Oke is confined to the Okehurst estate and is portrayed as a figure with a rather blasé attitude toward life, as noted by the male artist who is hired to paint the portraits of the couple. Though Alice is not actively seeking retribution and pursuing feminist ideals in the public eye, the female protagonist of "The Phantom Lover" is, in some ways, placed as a figure of a liberated (new) woman literature because she transgresses against her domesticated ideals and engages in anti-normative behaviours throughout the text. Liggins notes that "rather than fulfilling her duties as wife and hostess, [Alice] spends hours and hours in her yellow drawing room, with its 'scent of heady flowers'" (Lee 142), a space of decadence and other-worldliness designed to combat the "'intense boredom' of her married life" (Liggins 43). She goes on to note that the "arranged marriage between cousins, [is] devoid of any sexual spark" and is "soured by its lack of children and the husband's barely controlled jealousy" (43) as she makes a compelling case for Alice's desire to escape the monotonous convention of the marriage. Liggins attributes Alice's engagement with both Lovelock and her name-sake to an obsession motivated by long-withheld sexual desires. However, I think we can consider Alice's transgressive position further, particularly in relation to the male narrator and Mr. Oke, and the sense of anxiety her threatening femininity causes.

While the notion that Alice is transgressing dominant patriarchal social structures in a variety of ways is both insightful and accurate, to equate these actions to an experimental and flourishing sexual liberation is only one possible interpretation of the gendered dynamics at work in "The Phantom Lover." Lee's text is certainly interested in manipulating patriarchal power as she casts Alice Oke as a self-centred, decadent type of woman with little regard for her husband, her marriage, or the domestic realm of Okehurst altogether. Moreover, Alice's male counterparts are threatened by her subversive disposition. In particular, the male narrator expresses his ambivalent feelings about Alice Oke, noting that "[she] was...to the highest degree exquisite and strange" (Lee 66) and juxtaposing her "wonderful elegance" with her "perverse sort of grace" (55). These descriptions of Mrs. Oke highlight not only a tension within her character, but also in the narrator's conception of her. By suggesting that Alice is both "exquisite" and "strange," the narrator's language is imbued with a kind of colonial rhetoric, as his words suggest that a mild sense of trepidation accompanies his fascination with Alice Oke. In this way, she is both desired, but also unfamiliar to him. The strangeness of Alice Oke, I suggest, incites a sense of fear in the narration that becomes more prevalent as the narrative turns to her obsession with Lovelock and the previous female inhabitant at Okehurst.

Since this thesis is interested in the presence of male anxiety within the ghost story, "The Phantom Lover" is a reasonable starting point for just such a consideration. If we recall the moment in the text when the narrating artist first learns of Alice's obsession with Lovelock, he notes her "contemptuous indifference" (76) at the mention of her husband's knowledge of all of her possessions and historical artefacts attributed to the Lovelock story. This "contemptuous indifference," alongside Alice's exhilaration for the tale, provokes the narrator to feel "something heady and oppressive in this beautiful room; something, [he] thought, almost repulsive in this

exquisite woman" (76), who had become "suddenly, perverse and dangerous" (76). Lee evokes a colonial lexicon to express the anxiety of the male narrator who finds Mrs. Oke so foreign that his disapproval of her can only be narrated with a rhetoric that expresses a simultaneous desire for, and fear of, Alice Oke herself. Alice's "otherness" is emphasized when she is referred to as a "bizarre creature" (70), both "exotic" (78) and "awfully strange" (56) and said to have "manners of certain foreign women...beyond English ones" (63). It is a language that simultaneously indicates a desire for, but also a fear of, the "other." But what, precisely, makes Alice Oke "perverse and dangerous" (76)? Why does the narrator suddenly feel threatened by Alice, so much so that she becomes "repulsive" and "exquisite," "heady and oppressive" all at once? The moments leading up to his repulsion chronicle Alice's obsession with the previous Alice of Okehurst, Nicholas Oke, and Lovelock. In the "yellow room" with a "large bundle of papers...brown with age" (74) and a looming strangeness, Mrs. Oke reads Lovelock's poetry with "a curious sobbing cadence...[and] her eyes...fixed with that distant smile in them, with which harmonised a constant tremulous little smile in her lips" (75). The story of Lovelock and Oke is the object of her fixation, and this is precisely what becomes threatening to the narrator as she grapples with a history that has disrupted the smooth progression of patriarchal tradition.

Recalling the Lovelock tale in greater detail, we know that there is an unfavourable history attached to the Oke family in which a poet named Christopher Lovelock had "too great a friendship, apparently, with the wife [Alice, daughter of Virgil Pomfret]" (69). As a result of that relationship, "Nicholas Oke, accompanied by his wife dressed as a groom...attacked and murdered [Lovelock]" (69). With no evidence to prosecute the rumoured perpetrators, Nicholas and his wife lived on, but the tale of the murder continues to haunt William Oke and the contemporary Okehurst estate. This story is a dishonourable transgression that plagues the

lineage and family history of the Okes, and of course, disrupts what is otherwise a history of an "honourable, modest stock, which had quietly done [their] duty, for a family fortune" (68). Alice Oke's obsession with a tumultuous narrative embedded within the family history causes the trepidation of the narrating artist, and likewise Mr. Oke of Okehurst himself. I think it fair to assert that Alice's husband and, to an extent, the masculine narrator are unsettled by Alice's "contemptuous indifference" paired with her desire to engage with a scandalous history that has disrupted an otherwise "honourable" family, despite being intrigued by her initial disposition.

Because Alice is exhilarated by a story that involves the dissolution of a respectable family structure, and moreover, an instance that sees the married woman exploring other sexual partners outside of the convention of matrimonial structure, she is most certainly represented as a figure attracted to that transgression. As a result, she threatens the sanctity of her marriage and betrays her socially acceptable position as a domesticated female. Moreover, from the perspective of the narrating artist, Alice is represented with a threatening duality that evidences the tension between the past and the present. The ambivalence embedded within her characterization reminds us that Alice Oke is a woman (character) directly placed within in a transitional period for Victorian England. At the end of the century, where the traumatic history of womanhood is in question (and in many ways experiencing political advancements), Alice clings firmly to a historical narrative of transgression that threatens patriarchal structure in which monogamy and marital institutions are undermined by lusty passion and flourishing sexual desire. It is through her desire for and affinity to the Lovelock story that she becomes an example of the New Woman within "The Phantom Lover," with one proverbial foot in the past and one stepping into the present. The liberated New Woman is one who threatens the socially sanctioned

mores of marriage and patriarchy to exist in a political space beyond domesticity much in the same way that Alice Oke, and Alice Oke, daughter of Virgil Pomfret of the past, both do.

The Degenerative Woman

And who better to narrate this female identity than a well-respected, male artist? It is the narrative of the artist, whose fears and anxieties are nuanced by colonial language, that renders Alice as an unknown, mysterious enigma who is both hedonistic, yet desirable, much like a landscape of untouched terrain. Indeed, the artist's initial description of Alice Oke suggests that her body is, in some ways, similar to an unknown, untamed, landscape. The artist remarks that Alice's "exquisiteness and grace...had nothing to do with any preconceived notion or previous experience of what goes by these names," and equates her being to a "combination of lines, a system of movements, an outline, a gesture, which is new, unprecedented, and yet hits off exactly our desires for beauty and rareness" (62). Far from conventional beauty that the artist knows and is familiar with, Alice is comprised of an unprecedented and rare "combination of lines" and "system of movements" that transcend conventionality. From this, we get a sense of Alice's raw naturalness as a figure with "not one item of what makes up our notion of a well-built woman" (62). In addition, Alice is described as an "exotic creature" with a "bamboo" figure and "her charm" is compared to a "newly discovered tropical flower" (62), all of which render her as a natural landscape, desired for its "beauty and rareness" (62). This rhetoric subjugates and harnesses her resistance to patriarchy by rendering her "difference" as a site of fear. As Alice Oke's 'Otherness' causes the narrator's fears of a threatening and transgressive woman, the language he uses to express this fear is also indicative of degenerative discourses that were present in Victorian fiction at the *fin de siècle*.

As Stephen Arata summarizes, "degeneration theory" was a concept introduced in the middle of the century, whereby social and biological sciences sought to explore "morbid deviations from an original thus normative type" (Arata 14, 15). In many ways, Alice Oke is representative of this deviation. The text pathologizes Alice: her husband notes that she has "a nervous constitution...[she] mustn't be worried or excited, the doctors say" (Lee 58). In this way, the text imbues Alice with degenerative qualities as a result of her mental instability, hysteria, and the illness it suggests. Moreover, her listlessness and inability to engage with her external surroundings, as described by the narrator who recalls that she "simply passed over his existence" (63), portray her as an individual incapable of forming social relationships, consequently positing her in a space of deviance or instability. Arata notes that degeneration theory "was an effective means of 'othering' large groups of people by marking them as deviant, criminal, psychotic, defective, simple, hysterical, diseased, primitive, regressive, or just dangerous" (Arata 16), but this notion can be applied to Alice as an individual because she herself is "perverse" (89) and "dangerous" (76), as the narrating artist remarks.

Alice's social deviance, however, is more than a deviation from gendered norms. In fact this initial subversive femininity she portrays, opens up a larger discussion of class – and perhaps, lurking in the background, the question of race – that simultaneously threatens both the narrating artist and William Oke. It is precisely because Alice Oke and her namesake share a close affinity that we must interrogate how she is both an outcast and a threat to the socially sanctioned domestic order at Okehurst. In some ways, these two elusive figures are both submerged in the discourse of the degenerate subject that not only threatens patriarchy, but the aristocracy that is on the verge of dissolution as well. Indeed "invocations of degenerative paradigms are invariably tied up with concerns about the decline and the fall of

bourgeoisie...[and] though degeneration theory is overtly concerned with the Other, it covertly expresses the anxieties of a middle class worried about its own present status and future prospects" (Arata 32). Though the aristocracy and bourgeoisie are two vastly different groups, they share a history of elevated social status and economic power. As such, Alice's Oke's degenerative nature directly threatens the power of the aristocracy, much like the degenerative subjects of the *fin de siècle* would threaten the sanctity and succession of the bourgeoisie. Lee's story directly engages with the threat of the "degenerative" human and isolates the anxieties over a shifting class structure embedded within the text. As Alice herself is not reproductive, and is not able to legitimate aristocratic power by way of extending the Oke lineage, we can see how the anxieties of the male characters do not only stem from her dangerous femininity but as a result of unfavourable degenerate nature.

The aforementioned exoticism with which Alice Oke is described is a characteristic also attributed to her predecessor. While William Oke recalls the historical narrative that "haunts" Okehurst, he expresses his aversion to the Pomfret family when the narrator remarks that "it was clear that William Oke had no feeling of having any Pomfret blood in his veins; he spoke of these people with an evident family dislike" (Lee 68). William Oke also notes that "the Pomfrets were quite different sort of people—restless, self-seeking" (68), repugnantly expressing his loathing of them, and also subtly pointing to their "difference," which is noted with a gradation of contempt. So, when the narrator remarks "the very singular resemblance that existed between [Alice Oke] and the portrait of a lady that hung in the hall" (65), the exotic "otherness" of the contemporary Alice Oke is similarly extended to her predecessor, Alice Oke (Pomfret). If the previous Alice belonged to a family marked by their stark difference to William Oke's nature and values, and the contemporary Alice Oke herself is compared to them, then it stands that we must

apply William's trepidations and loathing of their otherness to Alice Oke (his wife), as well. She is, in effect, the very exotic, degenerative, self-interested dissident that exacerbates male anxieties, and is therefore very much representative of that contemporary self-interested 'other type' of female emerging at the *fin de siècle*.

The Dying Aristocracy

There are, however, more facets of the tale that are necessarily invoked by Alice Pomfret's "self-seeking" exoticism that William Oke detests. Lee overtly contrasts William and his wife, and the Okes and Pomfrets, in a way that defines a class dichotomy and subtly posits a racialized difference between both of the respective characters. In many ways, William Oke and the portrayal of the Okehurst manor itself speaks to the purity of the aristocracy to which he desperately clings. The aristocracy, of course, was under direct threat as the modes of imperialism began to shift, and industrialism prompted the development of a middle class in Victorian England. As "fears that the human condition was declining permeated *fin-de siècle* culture" (Vorachek 197), Lee's narrative directly engages with the theme of a lost, or threatened aristocratic lineage as the respectable patriarch, the Kentish squireen, known as William Oke, outwardly refuses to accept the potential threat to his power. The sanctity of the aristocracy — or at least, a class structure that came far before the *fin de siècle* — is also weaved into the description of the "old English manor-house" (Lee 59). Simon Hay comments on the symbolic importance of the aristocratic home within the ghost genre, noting that "typically, these ghost stories center around some haunted *property*: some aged, aristocratic, and rural building, the physical embodiment of the way of life of the landed gentry" (Hay 228). Indeed, this is the case with the Okehurst manor and its occupants. As William Oke, too, is representative of the "the last remnants of the dying aristocracy" (228), Lee details the historicity of the homestead and

William's quiet attachment to it as he notes that it is a "nice old place...but too large" (59) for the childless couple. As I will consider in the pages that follow, William has a quiet yearning to procreate and his fears of a lost-blood line emerge when discussing Okehurst manor with the artist.

The narrator admits that the house "was not at all what [he] had pictured...[as] the home of Mr. Oke, of Okehurst" (58) as he anticipated a "modern Gothic country-house" (57). His surprise, notably stated in the previous passages, indicates that Okehurst is itself a piece of history that marks the era of "James I" with its "rounded gables and high chimney-stacks" (57) that exists outside of the modernizing world. The era of James I, of course, recalls a moment in time when the English monarchy was harmoniously preserved by its bonded relationship to Scotland, consequently securing the fate of the aristocracy. The Okehurst manor, however, is a "forlorn, vast place" (58-59), marking not only the immensity of the home, which is likened to the "palace of Sleeping Beauty" (59), but also a sense of abandonment and reclusiveness attached to it. All of these characteristics subtly point to the immenseness of the previous order of England, but also the shift *away* from practises and parliamentary structure of the monarchy embedded within the location of the Okehurst estate. Similar facets of a rich and noble family history are evocatively placed inside the Okehurst manor. The narrating artist remarks that the inside of the home was

the most admirably preserved...with its immense fireplace of delicately carved and inlaid gray and black stone...and its rows of family portraits, reaching from the wainscoting to the oaken ceiling...[the] flat-stepped staircase, the parapet surmounted at intervals by heraldic monsters, the wall covered with oak carvings of coats-of-arms, leafage, and little mythological scenes...The beautifully

damascened suits of court armour looked, without being all rust, as if no modern hand had ever touched them; the very rugs under foot were sixteenth-century Persian make; the only things of today were the big bunches of flowers and ferns, arranged in majolica dishes upon the landings. (59)

What is portrayed in the above passage is an intimate connection to the noble past of the family. With emphasis on the "carvings of coats-of-arms" and "suits of court armour" that "[look]...as if no modern had had ever touched them," the text centralizes William Oke's dedication to the long-standing, respectable nature of the family. More than that is the "admirably preserved" nature of these heirlooms, which suggest a distinct desire to defend and maintain the values and artefacts that have previously structured the Oke family. William's resistance to modernization is evident in the fact that "the only things of to-day were the big bunches of flowers and ferns," suggesting his desire to uphold his antique estate and resist deviation from this tradition because we know that his wife is little concerned with the dwelling and the interior workings of the homestead.

While the physical attributes of the Okehurst manor, and the relics therein, reveal the highborn nature of the Okes, William Oke himself also possesses a similar kinship to his family history and the preceding class structure that valued noble blood above all else. In stark contrast to the "strange" (56) exoticism of his wife, William Oke is characterized with a genteel whiteness that is emphasized throughout the narrative. Early in the text he is defined by an almost classic normalcy, noting his "beautiful fair complexion...[that was] absolutely like a hundred other young men...and absolutely uninteresting from the crown of his head to the tip of his boots" (56). Besides the colour of his skin, the artist recalls "blond conventionality" (64) as the most "fair" representation of William Oke. The characteristics of his physical body, then,

conform to the very picture of aristocratic nobility to which he belongs. The most telling feature of his aristocratic elitism is defined by his membership as "a lieutenant in the Blues before his marriage" (56).⁴ Oke's physical attributes contribute to our understanding of his character as an embodiment of the very structure of patriarchal European power. His relationship to a dominant power structure is also punctuated by his military service, his inherited fortune, and his maleness. With such "conventionality," William Oke could never be mistaken as a "degenerative" sort, or placed within the "degenerate" discourse by any means.

"Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover," however, places this conventional lineage under threat by evoking the tainted spectre of the past, that is, Lovelock's murder. No force offers greater contamination to a respectable family history than the transgressions of Nicholas and his wife. After the death of Lovelock, it is the words of Nicholas Oke that herald the dissolution of masculine power and point to the eventual breakdown of the aristocracy. After Alice Oke recalls the tragic demise of Christopher Lovelock, she speaks to the fate of Nicholas Oke as well. She states that "shortly before his death, he told the whole story of the murder, and made a prophecy that when the head of his house and master of Okehurst should marry another Alice Oke, descended from himself and his wife, there should be an end of the Okes of Okehurst" (82). In short, Nicholas's promise of the demise of the Okes is the most pointed example of a lineage under threat and one that instils a subtle fear in William Oke as he falters when discussing the topic with the narrator.

While the weight of Nicholas's promise of an end to the Oke bloodline haunts the potential future of the Okes at Okehurst, William himself carries a quiet doubt about the continuation of his empowered paternalism. In a conversation with the narrator, William Oke

⁴Oke's regiment is the second most senior squad in the British Army and was often utilized as an impromptu police force charged with maintaining public order.

attempts to suggest that he cares little for having children: "I don't care for children one jackstraw, you know, myself; can't understand how anyone can, for my part" (60). The statement, however, is quickly discarded as a falsity by the artist, who recounts that "if ever a man went out of his way to tell a lie, I said to myself, Mr. Oke of Okehurst was doing so at the present moment" (60). Indeed it is not surprising that William Oke is accused of the act of deception, for the quotation itself displays his lack of conviction through a multitude of pauses and short utterances punctuated by excessive commas. As well, William's words carry an uncomfortable tendency toward self-referencing, as he struggles to convince himself that he truly believes his own lie. William's deception regarding his desire for children actually works to confirm that the demise of his lineage is a very real threat indeed and no mere prophecy. As he feels the need to cast off this fear and the notion of having children all together, William appears to deploy a defence mechanism to evade the vulnerability of his impossible desire.⁵ But the reader, like the artist, is not fooled: William Oke of Okehurst is terrified at the prospect of a childless future which would consequently mark the utter breakdown of the continuation of his aristocratic legacy.

Utilizing the actions of the Okes from 1626, Lee's story necessarily calls upon the spectre of the past to expose the trepidations of the *fin-de-siècle* present. As Simon Hay rightly notes, "modern ghost stories are concerned with historical trauma, its remembrance and its lingering consequences" and it is the lingering traumatic history of Lovelock's affair and murder that ensures the ultimate consequence for the Okes at Okehurst. Indeed, Simon Hay notes that in ghost stories, the ghost itself is "something that returns from the past, something that irrupts into the present, disrupting both the present's presumed separateness from the past, as well as its

⁵ While William notes that he and his wife are unable to have children due to her poor health, the end of the tale reveals that she is the one who has "never wished for them" (Lee 82).

stable inheritance of that past" (227). In this case, the historical "trauma" of Lovelock's murder is the event that disrupts the linear progression of the Oke family and interrupts the "stable inheritance" that has previously been bestowed upon them, whether that 'inheritance' is defined by the certainty of their power or the continuation of their progeny. Due to Lovelock's haunting, neither structure remains stable. As such, just as Lovelock was "shot through the back" (82) by an unexpected assailant, the spectre of the poet returns to remind William Oke that the quiet death of the Okehurst tradition is looming.

The dark history of William's ancestors comes back to haunt the Okehurst manor at the time when Britain's traditional class structure was put into question. As we have previously seen, the *fin de siècle* itself represents a time of recounting the historical "trauma" attached to a period of confidence in which the monarchy governed and class division was evident but "naturalized" by English society. The *fin-de-siècle* ghost story, with its invocation of the past and the tension incited by the changing role of women and empire, thus narrates a schismatic quality to English life at the time. As a result of this schism, the ghost story presents a great division to which there is scarcely an opportunity to turn back from. In the case of Lee's text, there is an evident movement away from "feudalism to capitalism" (Hay 227), but also a shift in gendered power as the New Woman sought to spring free from patriarchal power and, in essence, abandon the same past that her forerunners inherited. The dynamic figure of the New Woman both engages with the present and seeks to drastically alter it, and in that way presents its own sort of interruption of the 'stable inheritance' imposed on women prior to the end of the century.

If we allow the notion that the *fin de siècle* is schismatic in nature, and we further allow both Alice Oke and William Oke to be cast as representatives of both aristocratic and degenerative sensibilities respectively, then "The Phantom Lover" offers a commentary on a

society haunted by social turbulence of the late 1880s and 1890s, particularly in terms of shifting class structure. Recalling too, that this work exists in a nation whose historical narrative is tainted by a deviation from the Christian values it once upheld, it is no surprise that the transitions threatened by the *fin de siècle* might have caused elite aristocrats (like William Oke) to feel fearful for the longevity of their waning power, as a "conscientious young Englishman, the sort of...Christian soldier kind of thing; devout, pure-minded, brave" (Lee 64). Much like the traditional ghost story which presents the anxiety of "both...the bourgeoisie, [who are] anxious to legitimate their inheritance of the social spaces of aristocratic power, and that of the aristocracy anxious to sustain their own legitimacy" (Hay 228), "The Phantom Lover" is much more than a story of lust and murder.

While Hay's analysis of empire and feudalism has its place in the scholarship of supernatural literature, the new feminist discourse emerging at the *fin de siècle* cannot be overlooked as a feature of the ghostly genre. I suggest that Lee's narrative is one that expresses not only the fears and anxieties indicative of a changing class structure, but also the trepidations of the masculine characters. These characters who, in essence, cling to the patriarchal structure firmly rooted in the past are ultimately terrified that their *power* might itself be a murder victim, laid low by the hand of the then-cutting-edge transgressive woman and changing stations of social class simultaneously. In this way, it would seem then, that Lee's story offers a critique of gender and class power respectively and offers a criticism of men who attempt to confine and control the female protagonist. However, the ending of the text complicates this reading of "The Phantom Lover."

On Disbanding Structures

In the closing pages of the story, we witness Alice's untimely demise by the hand of her own husband. In the moments leading up to the murder, William Oke leads the narrating artist through the "vaulted hall, hung round with ancestral pictures" (Lee 100). This decisive movement through the passage of historical and ancestral memory is both evocative and curious, because the climax of the text invites a blurred distinction between the past and present, coercively brought about by the threat of Lovelock's ghost in the yellow drawing room. William, in a physical altercation with the phantom, remarks that "the damned rascal has given me the slip again!" (101) as he unsuccessfully leaps at the apparition and, instead, kills his wife. Recalling Nicholas Oke's initially unsuccessful attempt at murdering Lovelock in the seventeenth century, these two figures merge together, emphasizing the intimate connection between the past and the present and their direct relationship to each other. Moreover, this relationship emphasizes that historical "trauma" that comes back to disturb the Okes at Okehurst.

The narrator also comments on these blurred moments, stating: "I know nothing of time. It all seemed to be one second, but a second that lasted hours" (101), suggesting an even more prominent collapse of the past and the present. It is precisely this dissolution of time that nuances the persistence of conventional social structures that reinforce male European power. As Alice Oke lays dead on the floor with "a pool of red forming in her white dress" and with "her mouth...convulsed, as if in that automatic shriek" (101), we experience the death of her transgressions and forward movement toward liberation as well. I have suggested that there is an evident tension between William Oke and his wife and it is a tension that depicts a constant power struggle between the male and female figures in the text. As Alice casts off all sense of patriarchal convention, and William Oke clings so firmly to the tradition of his family before

him, their dichotomy and continual conflict for power ultimately becomes fatal for the Okes at Okehurst and the discourses they represent. But the end of this text names no "winner" in this battle for power and dominance. Shortly after the death of Alice, William commits suicide and both patriarchy and the struggle for feminine liberation are laid to rest at once. With the death of the power struggle and the demise of the gendered binary at the end of "The Phantom Lover," Lee's narrative questions the validity of a dichotomous structure itself. Lee's ghost story, then, enacts a limited critique of the violent reality of hierarchical binaries that structure class and gender and, in this way, responds to the social upheaval of the end of the century with a kind of ambivalence. While this *fin-de-siècle* ghost story is one that quietly articulates a time of social uncertainty when Victorian England was on the brink of radical shifting in the social realities of patriarchy and the aristocracy, it subtly challenges the dominant structures of male and aristocratic power, but ultimately reinforces them.

Final Thoughts

Lee's short story expresses explicit trepidations about changing class structures in England and conservatively reinforces their authority by violently killing off the figure of potential female liberation. Lee effectively "locate[s] the presence of ghosts in the minds of the living and their imaginative relationships to the past" to expose the tensions of a transitional era (Vrettos 202), and, like we will see in the next chapter, reinforces an expression of male power at the end of her text. It is through the text's obsession with history and spectrality that we are privy to themes of threatened masculinity, a growing consciousness of the horrors of changing class structure, and the intersection of the two. This particular narrative moves beyond simply defining and reaffirming patriarchal discourses, and outlines the problematic intersection of classism and masculine power as it leaves the spectacle of feminine power dead on the floor of Okehurst

manor. This chapter has examined how a text utilizes the figure of the ghost to evoke a long-dead historical consciousness at the cusp of shifting power dynamics in England and, in some respects, I have also sought to locate the vulnerability of these structures and how the ghost story emphasizes the danger of relying on the past to structure the present. By remarking on the wavering and shifting nature of ideological structures altogether, and exploring how the past ultimately comes back to "haunt," challenge, and trouble the present, I have explored how the ghost story evocatively grapples with the volatility of the *fin-de-siècle* society and all of its uncertainties. Curiously, though the text seems to firmly, and predominantly, uphold notions of dangerous femininity, that William Oke succumbs to his own self-induced demise when he commits suicide at the end of the story complicates this reading of the text as a conservative reinforcement of patriarchal power. As William's suicide, after all, suggests that the tale itself may hold the potential to critique the self-destructive nature of aggressive masculinity, despite its ultimate support for it.

CHAPTER TWO

"In old, faded ink, and in the most beautiful hand": Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" and its ghostly response to shifting feminine identity in Victorian England

While Lee's primary female character is cast with the agency to disrupt the workings of hetero-normative marriage and patriarchal authority, while also threatening the aristocratic lineage that her husband is linked to, Henry James's female protagonist in "The Turn of the Screw" has a much less clearly defined kind of power. Indeed, it is possible, though not simple, to say that the Governess is in a position of power, for while she is granted domestic authority based on her job as a caregiver and teacher, her contracted arrival to the scene at Bly places her in a less than powerful position. Her initial arrival as the Governess of the manor, we should note, is only made possible because she is appointed to that position by an elusive male power-figure called simply "the Master." In fact, the position of governess at Bly brings with it a type of power itself, as confirmed when the narrator tells us that the position was previously occupied temporarily by Mrs. Grose, and that Grose had been "placed at the head" of the manor and had helped make it "healthy and secure" (James 9). For that work, the narrator calls Mrs. Grose "an excellent woman" but noted that once the temporary position had been filled, this new "young lady who should go down as governess would be in supreme authority" (9). The position of the governess, however, is not without its difficulties and limitations, as evidenced in Douglas's words on the previous governess, Miss Jessel, who he confirms had died during her duties (9). When the audience learns of Jessel's death, they ask if the position carried any "necessary danger to life" and further question what compelled the Governess to take the position at Bly in the first place. Indeed, there are questions about whether the Governess had succumbed to the "seduction" of the Master himself (10), and this initial discussion of her motives suggests that the

female employee is vulnerable to manipulation and willing to meekly agree to take the position. Moreover, for a position of supposed "supreme authority," it is odd that the Master's stipulations upon hiring the unnamed Governess are that she should "never trouble him" and "never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything," and instead remain essentially silenced and quietly efficient (11). While I delve into this passage later, for now, it is an apt way to understand the ambivalent position of Governess in the tale. That is, in short, it is one in which a person might be supremely empowered in task and title, but in practice at Bly, it is also a position founded upon an expectation of complete obedience.

In these ways then, we can come to understand both the potential power of the position, and its contradictorily embedded expectations of a kind of voiceless fealty. From that understanding, we can note the awkward empowerment potential of the Governess as a character herself who takes over for the deceased Miss Jessel, and the temporary, but excellent Mrs. Grose, and exactly how her potential supreme authority creates anxiety among those still in power and who reign over her. It is important to recall, then, that the Governess is a new arrival on the scene at Bly, and that she at least has the *potential* for 'supreme authority' in the space within the Estate. From here, I will begin an explication of how the Governess's assigned domestic power is met with resistance by the spectre of Peter Quint, and the looming presence of the Master. Moreover, the latter part of this chapter will consider the implications of Douglas's retelling of the Governess's tale as he acts as a harbinger of its pro-patriarchal discourse found within the Governess's recollections and thrusts it onto his audience of the present. Indeed, "The Turn of the Screw" explicates a wider anxiety about females in positions of power, and ultimately ensures they *do not* remain powerful.

The longstanding debate about the ghosts within "The Turn of the Screw" has largely concerned itself with the question of their 'reality.' Many previous criticisms of the text have offered two competing understandings of the ghosts, and have been predominantly interested in whether the ghosts were 'real' manifestations, or simply the hallucinations of the Governess at Bly. Those who err on the side of female psychosis ostensibly limit the possibility of feminine power within the text by reducing the Governess's account to unreliable narrative induced by psychosis or mental illness. My intention here is not to debate whether the ghosts are real or not; they are real enough in that they were written into the text at all, and it is their literary existence in the late Victorian Era that is of interest to this section. I will consider the Governess's interactions with the two central ghosts within the short story, but I will extend my analysis beyond the encounters with Peter Quint and Miss Jessel to examine the ways in which the Master of Bly is but a phantom himself. The interactions with these apparitions actually evidence the ways in which the Governess is denied social mobility, first and foremost because of her gender, and secondly because of her social position as the daughter of a "poor country parson" (James 7). The relationship between the unnamed Governess and the Master of the estate is representative of the constrictiveness of class and gender, and the hauntings of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel reinforce the limited position of the lower middle-class female. Moreover, in an unspoken way, I believe that the literary work is both a cautionary tale and an act of resistance against the modernizing world in which conceptions of both class and gender had slowly begun to shift, evidencing the subtle fears and anxieties, as well as a resistance to this change.

On the Confines of Patriarchy: The Governess and the Ghosts

So how, then, does the *Governess's* tale articulate the discourse of feminine confinement and how does James's text work consistently to reinforce a patriarchal social order? It is precisely

in the way that the narrative firmly places the male characters in positions of power while continuously working to disempower the Governess as well. Critics such as Peter Beidler and Alexander Jones defend the governess's sanity and attempt to liberate her from the long-standing conceptions of madness and mental instability as they "judiciously [dismiss] the views of scholars who think Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not really ghosts but the wild imaginings of a sexually repressed neurotic or a pathological liar...[and assert] that the Governess is...good, sane, devoted, modest, sensitive, and reliable" (Beidler, Jones 96). In spite of this attempt and (others like it) to validate the "innately good" conception of the Governess, she is clearly caught within the ideological conception of female weakness and psychological instability, both in the criticism of the text, and in the text itself. We know that the Governess is confined by her role within the domestic sphere at the estate of Bly. Overseen by the uncle of her young charges, we also know that working at Bly means she is working within the confines of social and economic male power without a hope of forward social progression. The Governess is immediately constructed as naïve and vulnerable, being the "youngest of several daughters of a poor country parson" who comes to her "first time in the schoolroom" with "trepidation," while at the mercy of the Master for employment and subsistence (James 7-8). Furthermore, the Governess's first two interactions with the ghost of Peter Quint reinforce her subordinated position as a female subjected to the limitations of domesticity and masculine authority.

In his article "Henry James's 'General Vision of Evil' in 'The Turn of the Screw'," Thomas Bontly speaks to the notions of gendered power within the text, and recalls each confrontation between Peter Quint and the Governess. Bontly notes the overarching phallic imagery of the tower where the ghostly Quint emerges as a symbol which "suggests the dominance and power of the male set in station above the female" (Bontly 729). He goes on to state that "the

Governess's fear and hatred of Quint seems based not so much on his ghostliness as on his masculinity" (Bontly 729). Bontly supports this claim by revisiting the second encounter between the Governess and Quint when he peers into the dining room from "the other side of the window," noting Quint's "fixed stare," "aggressiveness," and the masculine invasion of the "feminine domestic circle" through his penetrative gaze (James 31, Bontly 730). Following this observation, Bontly argues that the relationship between Quint and the Governess is "inherently sexual," and notes that the threat of masculinity is one fixed on "sexual animosity" (731). While Bontly's reading of the relationship between the Governess and Quint is reasonable as far as the "masculine invasion of the domestic sphere" goes, I am less convinced by his conclusion that their encounters can be interpreted as sexual tension. Rather, their initial interaction demonstrates that Quint is a gatekeeper of patriarchal ideology: an overseer of its continuation at Bly, policing the domestic realm of the estate. While I certainly suggest that Quint's piercing male gaze is a reminder of the limits of female authority, a form of surveillance, and a lingering presence of masculine control, the first encounter between Quint and the Governess indicates a more complex and subtle indication of feminine subordination that emerges as a result of her reaction to Peter Quint in a moment of terror.

Peter Quint is very often the primary enforcer of the Governess's powerlessness throughout the work, but a major catalyst for the expression of her limitations comes initially in James's own decision to render the Governess's first fearful encounter with the spirit in a disembodied fashion. This detached expression of her fear works to render the Governess as disempowered, in turn, because it essentially suggests that the female subject (and whatever power she may be imagined to hold) is inaccessible to James himself. Recalling their first encounter, the Governess notes that:

[A stranger] did stand there!...and the figure that faced me...I had not seen it in Harley Street – I had not seen it anywhere. The place moreover...had on the instant and by the very fact of its appearance became a solitude...the whole feeling of this moment returns. It was as if...all the rest of the scene had been stricken with death. I can hear, as I write, the intense hush in which the sounds of evening dropped...the friendly hour lost for the unspeakable minute all its voice... We were confronted across our distance quite long enough for me to ask myself with intensity who then he was and to feel, as an effect of my inability to say, a wonder that in a few more seconds more became intense. (James 25-26)

The above passage notes that the "*whole* feeling of [the] moment returns," yet, during this encounter (and all the ones that follow), the Governess is entirely detached from her own bodily responses to trepidation. This strangely detached narration of the ghostly encounters is entirely devoid of a corporeal reaction to terror, despite the Governess's evocation of fear and horror when she notes that she was "afraid of *him*" and when she describes the ghost as a "figure of unmistakable horror and evil" later on (35, 47, original emphasis). While James does remark on her fundamental sensory responses to the apparition, the lack of her own bodily response to fear seems worthy of specific discussion. In a moment of pure fear, why would James neglect to describe her physical reaction at the sight of terror? In fact, that James does not utilize the Governess's body as a vehicle to convey her fear is itself a refusal to articulate the depth of the Governess's experience. While there is an internalized linguistic expression of her fear, it seems vague, unconvincing, and even displaced. As the Governess calls attention to her subject position as a writer, she is further distanced from the firsthand account of her encounter with Peter Quint and assumes an inactive role in their interaction. As she notes: "I saw him as I see the letters I

form on this page" (27); the Governess is distanced from the immediate sensation of fear, and in some ways, is portrayed as a disembodied stream of consciousness. The fragmented representation of the Governess emphasizes that masculine authority is not just present within the actual interactions between the ghosts and characters, but exercised in James's characterization and authorship of the Governess as well.

Furthermore, when the Governess recalls that "the man who looked at [her]...was as definite as a picture in a frame" (26), James's text emphasizes Quint's masculine power by making him the focal point of a metaphorical picture. But alternatively, the Governess, too, is trapped within this framework as the subordinated subject left only to look up at him. The metaphorical frame, here, represents the focus on male power, and symbolically cuts off (or excludes) anything outside of this ideology. The focal point of the Governess's picture is a ghost of patriarchal control that haunts her and rejects any potential for deviation from this norm. It is interesting then, that in the time of the mobile New Woman, James's text steadfastly resists the rise of feminine power by refusing to give his Governess a voice (or a body) when directly confronted with Quint. As a result, this unsettling lack of physicality, alongside the namelessness of our Governess, and moreover, the profound concentration of her voicelessness and the atmosphere of "intense hush" in the presence of the intruding male figure represents the powerlessness of the female protagonist. It is as if the silent, bodiless Governess herself begins to resemble a ghostly shell that is repressed, oppressed, and ultimately denied a potent expression of fear. And with that, the feminine subjectivity she represents must be similarly limited, again, emphasizing the ways in which James's text is essentially a commentary on a lack of female power. While Quint's ghost is representative of the historical confines of patriarchal power, James's employment of the supernatural genre and the necessary evocation of fear exposes an

oppressive disembodiment of the female subject for the audience to consider. Patriarchy, then, haunts not only the Governess by way of Quint's ominous presence, but transcends the events of the plot and manifests as a spectre that informs James's fiction in such a way that confines the female to a structure of omnipotent patriarchy.

Indeed, this omnipotent patriarchy is reinforced by Peter Quint's pervasive presence and is notable in the second encounter between Quint and the Governess, which takes place in the dining hall. The Governess states that "he appeared...with a nearness that represented a forward stride in our intercourse...to show me how intense the former [encounter] had been" (33). As he peers in with "his face...close to the glass" and "his stare...deep and hard," the Governess feels as though she "had been looking at him for years and had known him always" (32). This last quotation subtly indicates a history of confinement to patriarchal authority and her familiarity with these limitations, as well as the intensity of its imposing boundaries at present. In other words, Quint's "fixing" of the Governess, isolates the truth that she has *always* been marginalized by her gender, and is always already (and always will be) locked under the oppression of patriarchy. Certainly, there can be very little doubt about Quint's role as an oppressor or agent of masculine authority when we realize that in this encounter, Quint is actually seen wearing the clothes of the Master himself. This fact is revealed in a later conversation between the Governess and Mrs. Grose, where she explicates her terror of having seen the apparition of Peter Quint. Pushing the aggressive phallic imagery of Quint aside, (whereby the Governess recalls Quint's ghost as "tall, active, erect"), Quint's masculine presence is cast within the Governess's space of 'supreme authority': that is, the dining hall and domestic realm of Bly itself (38). Moreover, that the spirit mimics the Master's authority and that he remains safely distant from the home itself,

but continues to oversee it, suggests that the Governess's authority is ostensibly limited and controlled by the male figures around her.

The Governess and Mrs. Grose discuss the nature of the ghostly figure, beginning here with Mrs. Grose:

“A gentleman?” she gasped, confounded, stupefied: “a gentleman he?”

“You know him then?” [asks the Governess]

She visibly tried to hold herself. “But he is handsome?”

I saw the way to help her. “Remarkably!”

“And dressed—?”

“In somebody’s clothes. “They’re smart, but they’re not his own.”

She broke into a breathless affirmative groan: “They’re

the master’s!” (37).

Following this descriptive exchange, Mrs. Grose invokes the name and duty of Peter Quint for the first time, naming the apparition: “Peter Quint— [the Master's] own man, his valet” (37).

This effectively reiterates that Quint is an agent of the dominant patriarchal structure at Bly, for he is a servant and direct assistant of the Master, and moreover, in the very garb of a man who bears the very nickname and implied authority of male dominance. Certainly, Quint himself is *not* the Master, as a disgraced servant cannot rightly be, but, he is at least doing the Master's work in reigning over the nameless Governess while she stands within her domestic territory.

And when we take this posing as an elite representation of patriarchy in addition to the Governess's previous sensation that his gaze eternally subjects her to his power, then there can be very little question as to just how driven the authorities at Bly are to deny female power in the form of the Governess's agency. Moreover, I believe it necessary for us to recognize that this

dining room scene, and the visitation of Quint before it, both contain intense acts of mimicry that speaks to the construct of Bly and how it essentially obliterates one's autonomy and stifles the forward progression of the Governess and, in some ways, Peter Quint, as they both essentially mimic positions of power that they do not belong in.

In the same scene, the Governess herself replicates the actions of Peter Quint. As noted previously, once the ghost disappears, the Governess relates a sudden compulsion to chase him down and she finds herself having been "instinctively" compelled to go "to the window" where Quint had previously been (32). In fact, without a clear sense as to why she does so, the Governess "place[s] [her]self where he had stood" and, in an act of mimicry derived from a "confusedly present" notion that she "ought" to, the governess goes on to "[apply her] face to the pane and look, as he had looked, into the room" (33). While this scene at Bly's dining room suggests the possibility of movement and personal fluidity with Quint wearing the Master's clothes, and the Governess replicating the movements of Quint himself, none of this 'fluidity' of identity lasts. Instead, at most, these scenes of mimicry act as a reminder of the inevitable survival of Bly and its hierarchal social order. That Quint and the Governess imitate their superiors is simply a reminder of the absoluteness of their positions and the impossibility of upward social progression and is evidenced by placing them in clothes or positions representative of authorities they will never occupy. The Governess, we know, will never be in the empowered position of her oppressor, even if she replicates his actions, anymore than Quint can actually take on the position of the Master for wearing his clothes. There is then, only the allowance of temporary fluidity and a compulsion to mimic the forces that dominate both Quint and the Governess respectively for the purpose of providing a reminder that these characters can never hope to achieve such power. This imitation, I think, provides a tranquilizing sensation that

the conservative nature of Bly cannot be overcome and indeed, that Bly (as a patriarchal space in practice) induces doubt in one's identity, as carried out by the Governess's and Peter Quint's attempts to assume someone else's position, simply in the service of preserving the Master's desired hierarchy.

When Mrs. Grose is confronted with the Governess in the window pane, her startled reaction is not dissimilar to that of the Governess when she sees Quint. And when she "passe[s] out" the Governess can note "only one" thought worth mentioning as she asks herself "why [Mrs. Grose] should be scared?" (36). This question is, I think, significant to understanding the structure at Bly and the various anxieties over identity and socio-political power at work in the text. Why, indeed, *should* Mrs. Grose be so terrified upon seeing the Governess? And why is her fainting the final action after two separate instances of mimicry-through-instinctive-compulsion? The answer to both of these questions, it would seem, is present within the scene itself and embedded in the very nature of Mrs. Grose's reactions and the effect of Quint upon the Governess that I explicated earlier. That is, when Mrs. Grose enters the room, she witnesses the Governess very much in the act of mimicking Quint, standing at the window, just as he had done. While Mrs. Grose did not ever see Quint herself, she reacts in a manner that replicates the Governess's own reactions to seeing a ghost, and even passes out in sheer terror at the sight. In this, James offers a perplexing moment for the reader to consider, for what possible reason must there be for Mrs. Grose to be *so afraid* of the Governess, that she faints so violently? In view of the previous ideas of mimicry though, perhaps we can suggest that the Governess's mimicking of Quint's actions effectively casts her in the ghostly and oppressive mode of Quint. In re-enacting Quint's authority, the Governess comes to represent the exact same oppressive structure that haunts her. And so, that the Governess is actually *caught* in the act of that re-enactment, and that

the result inexplicably renders Mrs. Grose terrified and unconscious actually works to express just how dependent Bly's oppressive power is on the pressure applied by symbolic gestures like external gazing and watching.

Indeed, it would seem that Mrs. Grose fainting indicates that whether it be a ghost in the form of Quint, or the image of the Governess, what is *truly* horrifying in Bly is the sense of being watched over and dominated by an external authority. Mrs. Grose's unconsciousness and the Governess's querying of it, is then, an attempt to unearth the larger truth about Bly that even in a place rife with hauntings and ghosts, perhaps the most terrifying feature of the space is its insistence on the continuance and potency of a dominant and watchful hierarchy. We know, after all, that there is a hierarchy in place at Bly that ensures the Master is at the head, Quint is his man (and an oppressor), and the Governess is the supreme domestic authority, and third in the order is Mrs. Grose as a servant of the manor. As such, within that organization of power that is designed to keep each member static, Quint continues to be the portent of patriarchal authority, and the Governess's own 'authority' is continually in question and consistently undermined by authoritative, ghostly men.

"The Turn of the Screw" utilizes the figure of the ghost in more than one way, however. If Peter Quint acts as the warden of the Governess's imprisonment, Miss Jessel is an enigma within the text that is not so easily explainable. Quint's hard, penetrative, and "fix[ing]" (62) glances are almost direct reinforcements of masculine structures of control. Despite his immateriality, he reinforces an ideological patriarchal order by being both present and not, subtly threatening, but not physically threatening and utilizing features that are characteristic of the ghost (his non-presence) to reinforce his power. Quint's non-materiality, then, permits him to continue policing the Governess because he is not a tangible force to be reckoned with. Instead,

he is simply a representation of the invisible (ideological) workings of patriarchy in which the Governess is entrapped.

But of course, there is a gendered difference in the text's handling of a female ghost, particularly one who is conceived of as the "vile predecessor" (James 90). First and foremost, Miss Jessel is cast as a deviant and "infamous" (49) woman who was accused of having an illicit relationship with Peter Quint. As a result of her sexual 'impropriety' with a "base menial" (55) like Quint, Jessel is forced to leave Bly, presumably due to a pregnancy. Because of this inappropriate sexual relationship, Miss Jessel suffers "abasement" (50), and comes to be known as a worthless and wicked figure. Beyond Jessel's subjection to standards of female sexuality, the text confines her to spheres of patriarchy on an even deeper level. In the text's construction of her presence itself, Miss Jessel is actually subject to male power as she is restricted from the same type of authoritative gazing which Peter Quint is afforded. In fact, even her appearance strips her of individuality and depth as she is blotted out by her "black" attire, presenting a "pale and dreadful" demeanour (47). Moreover, and more importantly, as a ghost, "Miss Jessel's existence is predicated on the negation of her presence" (Nikolopoulou 7). One of the most evocative encounters between the Governess and Miss Jessel occurs in the schoolroom, which Nikolopoulou describes as "the memory of a memory of Miss Jessel's specter that reproduces that specter in the governess's text" (15). Nikolopoulou defines the trace, or the memory of the encounter with Jessel in his Freudian reading of "The Turn of the Screw," but I think this concept can be transferred to this discussion of the role of the female ghost, and how the text is oppressive in its very nature by creating a ghost without origin or contemporaneousness. Since the moment in the schoolroom is deferred by being displaced from the present and described as a

memory, Miss Jessel's ghost is actually a deferred trace, a negative space, and a negated space defined by non-existence.

As a result, "The Turn of the Screw" subjugates the female ghost by disallowing her to have any agency or authority in her exchanges with the Governess. Her ghostly characterization and her haunting itself is also passive in some ways as she lacks presence and effectiveness when she encounters the Governess. As the female protagonist recalls her confrontation with Miss Jessel in the schoolroom, she describes the female apparition as "she rose...with an indescribable grand melancholy of indifference and detachment" (90). The Governess's recollection of her "vile predecessor" (90) renders her as unobtrusive ghostly figure who scarcely engages the Governess with her "indifference and detachment." Jessel's presence, then, is far different from that of Peter Quint whose "hard and fixed" (31) stares exemplify a much more aggressive role in his policing of the Estate and the Governess in particular. We can briefly recall the Governess's early encounter with Miss Jessel in the garden and the female ghost's complacent avoidance of eye contact that also suggests her passivity. While it is the Governess that notes that she "began to take in with certitude and yet without direct vision the presence, a good way off, a third person," (45) Miss Jessel certainly does not assert her presence with much more potency than this. As Jessel remains "on the other side of the lake" (47), she is no interlocutor and essentially keeps to herself and while refusing to look at the Governess, or Flora for that matter. The spectre of Miss Jessel, then, is at best, a looming presence who does not actively engage with the Governess, and her passive haunting is a gendered representation of female submissiveness and disempowerment. In essence, both of the ghosts that torment the unnamed Governess at Bly serve the patriarchal undertones of the text as Peter Quint evinces the looming threat of masculine dominance, while Miss Jessel's haunting is both passive and submissive, as well as a

reminder of sexual transgression. The ghosts reiterate the appropriate Victorian social order by performing their gendered duties respectively. Arguably, then, the subordination of the feminine subject manifests in James's very attempt to write not only the female character, but the female ghost as well.

Ghostly Authority and Social Immobility

James, furthermore, introduces a third ghost that has since been overlooked in the scholarship concerning "The Turn of the Screw," but one that is an integral component to the analysis of the intersection of class and gender in the text. The opening of the novella provides our first insight into the Governess's relationship with the Master. Though there has been skepticism about Douglas's reliability as a narrator and his ability to recount his personal relationship with the Governess, he is the only character in the text that has access to the events at Bly and without him the story would cease to exist. As a result, his narration is the only one we have to utilize despite the biases within and ambiguity of his tale. Prior to the arrival of the manuscript, Douglas contextualizes the Governess's story by reflecting on his relationship with her and speaking to her past affections. These past affections become a key indicator of the Governess's stifled social mobility and how she is undeniably and irrevocably chasing a ghost. Following Simon Hay's suggestion that "the ghost story is thus concerned with articulating a middle-class identity...and in different ways the ghost story functions as marking the middle-class anxieties about its identity formation" (Hay 9), I assert here that the Master of Bly is, in fact, the third ghost that haunts the Governess as the text expresses her longing for the Master and her desire to escape from her own lower-middle class identity.

The Master is both a presence and an absence who has reigning authority over the unnamed Governess. He is also the ghostly figure who is charged with the narrative task of

defining the immobility of her social position through his absence and inaccessibility. While Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are the spectres that figure most prominently in the scholarship concerning "The Turn of the Screw," the Master himself is also imbued with a sense of ghostliness because he is simultaneously present and absent within the text. Hay observes that a fundamental aspect of "ghost stories is that they are a mode of narrating what has been unnarratable...of making narratively accessible historical events that remain in some fundamental sense inaccessible" (Hay 4), and as a result, "the figure of the ghost as a present-absence, there and not there both at once, visible and yet invisible, makes the ghost story singularly well-suited to such a narrative task" (4). Hay's suggestion, of course, can apply to the problem of social station within "The Turn of the Screw;" rather than simply narrating history, the Master's ghostly presence indicates the limits of female authority and class identity as his ghostliness represents a socio-economic space she will never obtain.

We know from Douglas's prelude that the Governess's interactions with the Master at Bly were infrequent; in fact, "she only saw him twice" (James 10). In spite of this, Douglas's recollection of the encounters between the Governess and the Master establishes a much more profound exchange between the pair. Although their interactions were brief and rare, the Governess's longing for the Master is established in the early pages of the story. Douglas recalls that "she was in love" (5) and the lingering passion in their initial meeting points to the Governess's desire for the Master who is described as a "handsome and bold and pleasant...gentleman...in the prime of his life" (8). More importantly, the young bachelor is "rich" and "fearfully extravagant" with his "high fashion" and "expensive habits" and his "big house filled with the spoils of travel," all of which indicate his superior social and economic status (8). This elevated social status, of course, renders him romantically unavailable to the lower middle-

class Governess. The inaccessibility of the ghost-Master represents the Governess's inability to rise above her social station. Furthermore, it is only through the figure of the present-absent Master that the Governess's social immobility is narrated.

The ambiguous and multilayered nature of the narrative framework of "The Turn of the Screw" makes it difficult to discern whose recollections are being conveyed. In spite of this, the text provides an intimate insight into the Governess's affections for the Master, as ambiguous as they may be. Douglas's prelude to the tale recalls the relationship between the Governess and her ghost-Master and I have suggested that their relationship is presented in a way that moves beyond the typical interactions of an employer/employee, and, for the Governess at least, their brief interaction indicates a longing and unspoken desire for the Master. Upon their "second interview," when the Master has stated the conditions of her employment – that is, "that she should never trouble him—but never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything" –the Master "held her hand, thanking her for the sacrifice, [and] she already felt rewarded" (James 10-11). The Governess's "reward," in this instance, goes far beyond monetary value of the salary that "much exceeded her modest measures" and she is rewarded by the affirmation of his gratitude and physical touch (10). This lingering moment of affection exemplifies the Governess's desire for the Master, and also defines the nature of the power imbalance between the two of them.

This is quite an odd exchange in the text, but one that is rather telling when we consider the theme of feminine identity and social mobility in "The Turn of the Screw." As always, it is difficult to discern what James means when he states that "she already felt rewarded" (11) and it has been suggested that the Governess is taking on a martyr-like role by selflessly agreeing to the conditions of employment. However, since the text goes out of its way to identify the social

position of both the Master and the Governess, this intimate physical exchange between the two arguably speaks to the powerful status of the rich bachelor, and the poor, modest nature of the Governess who sits beneath him, both economically and socially. Despite the troubling and suspicious nature of the conditions of her employment, which are at best undefined, if not threatening, the Governess agrees to his bizarre demands. Moreover, she feels "rewarded" for doing so (11). This reward is not one of financial compensation, and instead, her reward is the gratification of appeasing and serving her employer. Looking beyond the affection for the young bachelor, the Governess is made vulnerable by her own lower-class status, and smitten with the potential for social and political upward mobility attached to the solidified power of the Master. So, when he takes her hand, she willingly agrees to the threat of imminent danger at Bly and tosses aside all ideas of conservative self-preservation in exchange for what really amounts to a gamble, specifically, a social and monetary gamble with her own safety.

Indeed, the physical exchange between these characters of two vastly differing social scales has the subordinated female longing for more than just physicality; it also emphasizes the vulnerability of the lower class female in the presence of the rich bachelor. In light of this, I would like to now consider how the text articulates the Governess's actions based on the pursuit of the Master and how he remains as ghostly and as inaccessible as is the potential of progressing beyond her station. "The Turn of the Screw" steadfastly rejects any potential for the unnamed Governess to elevate her social and economic position because she closely abides by the Master's wishes, which renders her silent in the face of adversity while under strict authoritative orders. If we recall the moment in the text when young Miles is expelled from school, it is important to note that the Master ardently reiterates his wishes when he asks the Governess to "deal with him; but mind you don't report. Not a word" (16-17). Disregarding the severity of the situation, the

Governess silently abides by the demands of her employer, and remains committed to the task she has been charged with. Moreover, her loyalty to the Uncle is evident when, despite the threatening nature of the ghostly disturbances at Bly and the potential threat to the safety of the children, she *still* remains committed to her promise. All the while, the loyal Governess is working to appease (or please) an entirely absent Master who is unable to validate her efforts. Ultimately, the Governess is chasing a ghost. It is both the ghost of requited love and of prestigious social positioning, neither of which are obtainable for her. And of course, the absence of the Master is a compelling case of ghostliness within the text as we never see or hear from him again apart from the beginning of the text, emphasizing the inaccessibility of her forward progression. He is but a lingering trace of authority above her and one to which she is intensely committed. Unlike heroines such as Jane Eyre, who surpasses the confines of her social location to marry Mr. Rochester, the Governess is denied this same mobility, and yet remains committed to adhering to the patriarchal social order established by her superior.

The Governess's longing for the Master is also strangely carried out within her relationship to Miles as he, in some ways, represents the Master of Bly himself. Certainly the same charm of the Master that captures the Governess upon their initial meeting is suggested in the characterization of Miles. Before the Governess even meets "the little gentleman" (14), she resolves "to win the child into the sense of knowing me" as a measure of "her first duty" (15). In essence, the Governess launches into what seems like a pursuit to obtain Miles's affections. Upon their first meeting, the Governess recalls "the great glow of freshness, the...positive fragrance of purity" of the "incredibly beautiful child" and notes that there was "something divine that [she had] never found to the same degree in any child" (21). The Governess's impassioned affection for Miles also causes her to be put "under the spell [of his charm]" and she gives herself "up to

it" (30-31) much in the same way that she succumbs to the allure of the Master and agrees to take the position of Governess. It is notable too, that Miles, in some ways, is the acting Master of the Bly estate. When we consider that he is supposed to be off at school, distant and displaced from the domestic realm of the manor as the Master himself is, the Governess's decision to keep him at Bly indicates her longing for their closeness and her desire to be with him. In this way, the Governess's want of the Master is carried out in her relationship to Miles in a perverse and unsettling way. The Governess's longing for Miles is further suggested in the text when the pair are having dinner together. As the Governess looks on at Miles while eating dinner, she admires his "charming little 'table manner'" (122), and she compares their "silent" dinner to "some young couple, who on their wedding-journey, at the inn, feel shy in the presence of the waiter" (123). That the female protagonist compares her dinner with the child to a couple who has, presumably, consummated their marriage, speaks to her bizarre and perverse desire for the Miles himself as he comes to represent the Master-like authority at Bly and her longing for a relationship with him. Since the Governess cannot obtain the Master himself, she thrusts her affections onto Miles as an odd substitution for her own social climbing, and in doing so, the Governess becomes a figure of perversity whose inappropriate longings force us to question her integrity as a protector of the children and undermine her authority, morality, and sanity altogether.

Restoring Patriarchal Order at the End of the Century

Indeed, the patriarchal discourses present in "The Turn of the Screw" are impossible to overlook. But the story's prologue accentuates the text's support for reinforcing these discourses in a modern context. That is, the retelling of the Governess's tale of affliction is imposed on an audience who is gathered round the fire in the "present," which, for James's audience, is the end

of the nineteenth century. The *fin de siècle* heralded the beginning of a new era of feminine issues and activity that disrupted the traditional gender roles that previously structured Victorian society. In her exploration of identity politics at the end of the century, Michelle Tusan recounts that the New Woman was a 'new' kind of woman, who "suddenly appear[ed]" to the British of the late 1800s, cascading "on[to] the scene of man's activities, as a sort of new creation" (Tusan 169). To writers of the day, this new woman seemed to "demand a share in the struggles, the responsibilities and the honours of the world, in which, until now, she ha[d] been a cipher" (169) and in so doing seemed to irreverently challenge the patriarchal system. Indeed, it is remarkable to consider Tusan's recount of 1893's *The Woman's Herald*, and the manner in which it casts the new woman as a sudden, almost shocking, presence and one that had apparently remained elusive or disguised up to that point. It is as if the British woman was a societal phantom until her 'appearance' at the end of the century showed her capable of a heretofore unknown vigour. Tusan confirms the impact of the New Woman in a series of accounts that recognized her as having been "represented as a real or imagined threat to traditional social structures" because of her interests in events far beyond the expected domestic duties (169). In short, the seemingly sudden instantiation of this form of woman placed the issues of social mobility and female social elevation into a central spotlight at the very time of James's authorship of "The Turn of the Screw" and at the time of the narrative's setting itself. It would be remiss, then, to imagine that James's novella could avoid becoming embroiled in such a shift, and indeed it is further fascinating that James's tale casts a sense of resistance to female agency by crafting a tale about disempowered women in a time at which the threat of a powerful, engaged, and substantial woman was *real*.

To hazard a notion about James's feelings on the emergence of a more powerful woman is difficult; however, we are exposed to a kind of patriarchal resistance through the very nature of Douglas's prologue. That is, I believe the text's resistance to feminine power is implied by Douglas's position as a narrator and as the gatekeeper to the Governess's manuscript. It is precisely through the reiteration of feminine subordination some twenty years after the Governess's death, and longer since the hauntings occurred, that we are exposed to the text's resistance to changing feminine identity. If the ghostly presences within "The Turn of the Screw" reinforce the social order of the Victorian past, this order is then imposed on the present audience, as well as the narrator. And the Governess's tale, told by the arbiter of masculine authority, serves the mission of resituating patriarchal order by evoking the historical consciousness that caused the New Woman to form in the first place. His recollection of the tale is also paired with a significant amount of gazing that emphasizes not only the power dynamics that support male dominance and female subordination, and the power of the rich over the poor, but also the persistence of these hierarchies in a modern context. The meta-narrative at the forefront of James's work is what establishes the ambiguity of the text, and it also offers an intimate picture of a social structure that exists outside of the Governess's tale and one that is being reinforced by Douglas's narration itself. Douglas and the unnamed narrator are displaced from the fantastic happenings of the Governess's story, and yet, the power dynamic between them seems to re-establish the patriarchal social order at work in the Bly residence. Before we can turn to the implications of the meta-narrative, however, it is imperative that I establish the premise on which I am working when I offer the suggestion that there is an uncanny sensation derived from the similarities between the narrator and Douglas, and the Governess and the ghosts. This premise is simply that the unnamed narrator can be potentially constituted as female.

Some of the most sophisticated Jamesian scholars have engaged in critical debate about the ambiguous nature of the unnamed narrator. Juliet McMaster has suggested that the first narrator is "James" himself (McMaster 381), and others have put forward the idea that the relationship between Douglas and the narrator is implicitly homoerotic, therefore implicating the speaker as male (Mazzella 329). Critics such as Michael Taylor have also added to the discussion about the narrative frame of the novella, concluding that we should "be on our guard against making any positive identifications" about the sex of the narrator in a work that "has far too many checks and balances within it to be anything but equivocal" (Taylor 722, 721). Despite the wealth of analysis that has been added to this topic, the ambiguity of the initial narrative framework still opens up the possibility of reading the speaker as female. Without conclusive evidence to support the maleness of the speaker, I will follow Beth Newman's assertion that the narrator's "self-presentation...nearly approximates that of the Governess" and that "the text suggests that identity is always being constituted and reconstituted" (Newman 47). The subtle implications of a female narrator are established when Douglas contextualizes the Governess's story prior to receiving the manuscript. Newman, among others, have contemplated the narrator's ability to identify with the subject position of the Governess during Douglas's description of her affections for the Master. As he recounts their "strolls and talks in the garden," he vaguely speaks of her tale and how "she had never told anyone" and when Douglas gazes at the unnamed narrator and suggests that she[he] will "easily judge," the narrator indicates her ability to identify with the Governess as she says "I see. She was in love" (James 5). The narrator's ability to situate herself in the proverbial shoes of the Governess signifies the possibility of womanly solidarity that she carries with her.

This is, of course, not to suggest that a male narrator cannot identify or "read between the lines" of Douglas's preface to come to the same conclusion about the Governess's love for the Master, but the imposition of the subjective "I," alongside the use of diction that indicates clarity and the ability to "see," suggests a sense of female bonding between narrator and Governess. The femaleness of the narrator is relevant to the discussion of female identity in "The Turn of the Screw" and integral to discussing how James's ghost story expresses the longstanding conceptions of patriarchal dominance. There is a power dynamic brought to the foreground by the nuanced positioning of speaker and audience, and it is one that favours the masculine and seems to foreshadow (or emphasize) the difficulties that the Governess in "The Turn of the Screw" faces. In particular, the power of the male is bolstered by Douglas's standing position as he looms over the unnamed narrator, while she hangs on his every word as though his knowledge is infallible; this dynamic is strikingly similar to the affectionate Governess under the spell of the Bachelor.

When Douglas begins to speak to the crowd around the fire, the narrator describes that "he had got up to present his back, looking down at his interlocutor with his hands in his pockets" (James 4). In doing so, Douglas emphasizes not only his control over the room, but also subordinates the listeners in the audience, including the feminized narrator. Beyond Douglas's standing position and this symbolic representation of hierarchal power, what is particularly troubling about the meta-narrative presented in the opening pages of the novella is the way in which the narrator and the Governess become one and the same for Douglas. The narrator remarks that "he looked at me, but as if, instead of me, he saw what he spoke of" as though the "general uncanny ugliness and horror and pain" of the tale is embodied in the narrator herself (4). That Douglas equates the sitting narrator with the enigma of the afflicted Governess speaks to

the ways in which the reiteration of the Governess's tale and the evocation of her social position is imposed on the narrator as well— as if it is a tale that she herself cannot escape. The Governess's story itself is an instrument of immobility, both in its original content, and in how Douglas transmits its ideology to his partially female audience.

Furthermore, we know that the audience partially consists of women and, with that in mind, it is important to consider the fatuity of the crowd and how Douglas seems to focus on the narrator while his tale abounds. In some ways, Douglas's focus on the narrator is indicative of the threat of the female's intellectual capacity and his attempt to police and subdue it, while casting off those who disregard Douglas's tale and its content. While Douglas "fix[es]" the narrator, she responds by "[fixing] him too" (5). Rather than submitting to his gaze, she meets his glance directly, indicating a challenge to his fixed stare and demonstrating no signs of submission. As the (potentially) female narrator is engaged in Douglas's narrative, she is also set apart from the superficiality of the other female audience members. When the women in the audience goad Douglas for more details about the Governess's relationship to the Master, they are primarily interested in the 'love story' between them. At Douglas's dismissal of a "literal vulgar" expression of the Governess's affections for the Master and their relationship, one female spectator remarks "more's the pity then. That's the only way I ever understand" (James 6), suggesting her inept intelligence when met with a narrative that does not explicitly divulge information. The superficiality of the audience is also marked when "the departing ladies who had said they would stay didn't" as "they departed, in consequence of arrangements made" (7), and is further evidenced by gleeful "cries" for more of Douglas's tale (6). In this way, the narrator's ability to remain engaged during Douglas's prelude indicates her intellectual capacity, which is superior in comparison with the other female listeners. This intellectual capacity and the narrator's assertion

of power through the gaze poses a threat to Douglas's own power and position. As such, Douglas responds by singling out the narrator and asking her to "judge" the Governess's tale. As a result, the prologue effectively illustrates a sense of his threatened power and anxiety about her presence.

The first-person narration of the "prologue" invites the reader to critique the intimate exchanges between the unnamed narrator and Douglas. The intensity of Douglas's visual and intellectual investment in the narrator prompts us to consider the depth of her characterization, ambiguous as it may be. There are a few key textual moments between Douglas and the narrator that support the notion that "The Turn of the Screw," particularly Douglas's wielding of the Governess's tale, expresses subtle anxieties about threatened patriarchal power at the end of the century and its attempt to reinforce this social structure. First and foremost, there is something authoritative about Douglas's piercing gaze toward the narrator and the way that he insists that she "will easily judge [the Governess's account]" (5) and as "he continued to fix [her]...he repeated: '*you* will'" (4, original emphasis). Douglas's repeated demand that asks the narrator to carefully "judge" a tale of stifled social mobility, and one that curtails social and economic advancement for the middle-class female, disturbingly situates the narrator within this subordinated position by asserting that she take heed to the tale that follows.

Moreover, the text expresses Douglas's anxieties at the moment when the audience is pressuring him to tell the Governess's tale. As Douglas notes,

"The story's written. It's in a locked drawer – it has not been out for years. I could write to my man and enclose the key; he could send down the packet as he finds it." It was to me in particular that he appeared to propound this – appeared almost to appeal for aid not to hesitate. He had broken a thickness of ice, the formation of

many a winter; had had his reasons for a long silence. The others resented postponement, but it was just his scruples that charmed me. (4)

Again, it is apparent that Douglas is intrigued by the narrator, and as he collects himself and determines a plan to obtain the manuscript, he "propounds" his plot directly toward her. There is, in this particular passage, evidence of his hesitation, and a moment that shows Douglas nearly faltering. His inability to speak without trepidation indicates a kind of uncertainty that causes him to stumble over his words, a peculiar act for a male in high standing with his audience. Douglas's hesitation, paired with his deep investment in the narrator, subtly suggests an uncertainty about her subject position. Beyond that, his faltering speech indicates a degree of uncertainty about *his own* position as well. However, while Douglas's brief hesitation appears to stall his authority for a moment, he ultimately resists "appealing for aid" (4) from the narrator. By refusing to seek aid, Douglas re-establishes control over his audience and restores his dominance in the process, thus allowing him to narrate the Governess's troubling tale.

Furthermore, Douglas's personal control of the tale is itself a reiteration or continued symbol of his hegemonic power. As Carrie Paechter writes, hegemonic male power "is about being able to construct the world for oneself and others so that one's power is unchallenged" (Paechter 256), and it is Douglas's tale that serves just such a constructive role. That is, Douglas's role as the sole living person who has access to the events at Bly gives him the supreme authority over that manuscript and control over the archive itself, thus ensuring his space as the unchallenged hegemon, at least in the eyes of his audience. In essence, Douglas's knowledge of this tale means that only he can construct the proverbial 'world' at Bly and filter the events of the Governess's manuscript as he sees fit. As such, Douglas's recollection of the Governess's tale consequently puts the unnamed narrator back in her proverbial "place" by emphasizing the

confines of the feminine subject and exercising his own narrative authority. I call attention to Douglas's telling of the Governess's tale because the narrator's later transcription of Douglas's words are almost mechanically reproduced in that, we know nothing about the narrator herself, but that she transmits both Douglas's power in her recollection of the prologue, and in her transmission of the Governess's manuscript itself. In some ways, then, the female narrator is simply a ghost-writer for the narrative of patriarchy forwarded by Douglas and written into the Governess's afflicted tale itself.

It is in this way that the Governess's manuscript is manipulated to function as a narrative which reinforces structures of male power and control, and, it is through the persistence of her tale that feminine identity is subordinated and continually reinforced in roles of submission and passivity. William Goetz speaks to "The 'Frame' of 'The Turn of the Screw'" and how the story situates the subject position of the reader through its narrative framework. Recalling how the ghostly Master is inaccessible to the Governess, Goetz speaks to the differing oral tradition of the audience in the prologue at the beginning of the story, succeeded by the confines of the literary text that follows as Douglas transmits her manuscript to the audience (Goetz 74). Goetz suggests that "the text becomes the prison within which [the Governess] is entrapped, along with the other characters" (74), but fails to explore how the narrator too is battling against the historical narrative of feminine subordination by way of Douglas's retelling (and hence reinforcing) of the Governess's ghastly experiences.

Although it is true that the Governess faces no physical harm or direct abuse by a male aggressor as a result of the events at Bly, she is made vulnerable to the patriarchal impulses that created her both within the text and as a literary figure facing academic scrutiny in the years that follow. And it is through the ghosts of Peter Quint, Miss Jessel, and the Master that her afflicted

social position is policed and reinforced, while she is also pathologized by external scholars simply because she is a woman. I assert that the persistence of the patriarchal discourse being circulated and reinforced at the *fin de siècle* in "The Turn of the Screw" causes us to question the need for this reinforcement. I have already suggested that the unnamed (potentially) female narrator with the proper intellect and capacity to surpass the social station of a middle-class feminine subject poses a threat to Douglas and the Master, and all others of "[this] type; [that] never, happily, dies out" (James 8). In the text's attempt to preserve rigid social expectations of male dominance in an era of changing English identity, Douglas "committed...the manuscript" to the narrator when his death "was in sight" as a way of insisting on the continuation of the discourses therein (7). In other words, Douglas insists on preserving the tale of the burdened female and fosters its longevity by leaving the Governess's tale with the unnamed narrator to linger and reinforce its masculinist discourses.

Final Thoughts

"The Turn of the Screw" provokes important questions about feminine identity at the end of the century and the instability of male power that seems to subtly be in question here. James's conjuring of the spirits of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel comes at a time when Victorian England was facing a shifting feminine identity that produced new potential for liberalizing women. In this, the ghosts become the vessels for explicating the patriarchal consciousness that previously ordered society and that the text firmly attempts to restore. This narrative, then, necessarily raises Quint and Jessel from their graves and situates the Master and Douglas as key figures in the restorative process. This analysis has sought to consider the ways in which James's meta-narrative defends and reaffirms problematic conceptions of male power, while chronicling the complexities of patriarchal authority within the Governess's account itself. It is precisely the

reiteration of masculine discourse on the cusp of social uncertainty that causes me to question the subtleties of the text and the power dynamics therein. More specifically, this section has grappled with both femininity and historicity, but it is also very much about the act of writing itself and how the persistence of the written word is capable of reinforcing dominant ideologies of masculine authority. And it is to the written word that we turn to allow these traces to prevail and "haunt." That the Governess's manuscript is written "in old, faded ink" (James 5) indicates the continuation of traditional male power that has historically informed the life of the Governess and women subjected to the control of men. Moreover, that the document is written "in the most beautiful hand" suggests the falsity of the Governess's narrative authority as it is ultimately given to her by James himself and consigned to supporting the persistence of male power. As the Governess, the (potentially female) narrator, and the female audience are haunted by a looming sense of masculine power, the female characters are cryptically reminded of the unrelenting patriarchy abounding at the end of the century and subjected to its dominance in the midst of social turbulence and a changing understanding feminine identity.

CHAPTER THREE

M.R. James's "Patriarchs of Evil"⁶: Imperialism and Otherness in "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance"

As in the previous two chapters, this analysis will consider the construction of horror at the Victorian *fin de siècle* and its relationship to changing constructions of English identity at the end of the 1890s as it emerges in the ghost story. In the case of M.R. James's short story, "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," there is anxiety spurred on by the imposing forces of imperialism and the threat of the foreign Other that quietly surfaces in the text. This chapter will necessarily invoke post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said to examine the representation of the colonized Other and imperial conquest so as to demonstrate how James's work details an emergence of colonial consciousness and concern for colonial relations in the late-Victorian Era. I will explore the trepidations and anxieties as well as the dangers that the imperial colonizer felt upon contact with the Other as it is represented in the figure of the ghost in James's narrative. The frameworks provided by Said's *Orientalism* and Victorian notions of "Darkest Africa" will inform our ability to understand how James's characters are imperialists who recoil from fear of 'contamination' by the mysterious figures they meet. These notions of deep and dark Africa also inspires this analysis to explore how the uncovering of spaces of the Other is a drive for the imperialist, and finally, how the colonizer in M.R. James's text comes to desire to "re-mystify" these foreign spaces due to the perceived dangers awoken by them as it becomes a threat to the quaint English countryside and its inhabitants.

Sequestering the Other

"Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" and other works by M.R. James are interested in a structure which Simon Hay calls "archival" (Hay 48). That is, many of James's tales feature

⁶"Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" in *Collected Ghost Stories* by M.R. James, p.213.

historical, mysterious, and ominous forces that are locked away from everyday society, only to be let loose by those who take an interest in them. In the case of "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," the central characters stumble into a dark place that has previously been concealed on the grounds of Humphreys's newly inherited estate. In this sense, James establishes a distinct divide between what lingers in those dark spaces and those who exist external to them, with his interlopers eager to see what is found in such unknown zones. Indeed, as per James's nature as an antiquarian, in "Mr Humphreys" the author follows his inclination toward the aforementioned archival structure but, instead, effectively archives mysterious artefacts and stores them in places foreign and unknown within his texts, just as they would be on distant continents and colonies. For James, the indications of Otherness, or mysteriousness, poses a threat even from such archived spaces, and yet despite (and perhaps because of) the act of sequestering them into these locked-away spaces, James's protagonists are very much caught by an allure of the unknown.

The characters in James's stories often find their curiosity peaked by an enticing and mysterious artefact, treasure, place or structure, and their desire to interact with these symbols leads to a transgressive passing into an 'Othered' realm. For example, in "A Warning to the Curious" (1904), the protagonist yearns to replace an old crown that he dredged up, an action which has invited a vengeful spirit to not only haunt but hunt the characters on their journey to putting the crown back in its rightful place. Similarly in "Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad" (1904), the Professor finds a whistle while exploring a Knights Templar cemetery on the East Anglian coast and the whistle, as the central artefact, unleashes a vindictive spirit that haunts and victimizes the protagonist. From the passing into a foreign and previously concealed space, or by disturbing various pieces of history, James unleashes the figure of the ghost to terrorize his imperial interlopers. In this way, the stories seem to suggest that James's characters

experience the consequences of their own imperial conquest. Moreover, I suggest that, in the larger narrative of the British Empire, the texts point to the destructive consequences of imperialism and illustrate the fears of English imperialists when faced with the exoticized Other, while also granting the Others a kind of conquering aggressiveness of their own once they are awoken from their mystified (concealed) spaces. While much of this thesis has been concerned with the shifting roles of men and women at the end of the century, the following analysis of M.R. James's short story will be primarily interested in exploring the discourses of imperialism and how they are employed at the *fin de siècle* in an era of social instability and change, as well as how the supernatural phenomena in "Mr Humphreys and his Inheritance" articulates the threat of this turmoil. Ultimately, James's work fiercely exposes the desire to re-conceal the Other after stumbling upon it via deeply-probing, imperial actions.

"Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" begins with the young bachelor's arrival at the estate of his deceased Uncle in the county of Wiltshire. The male protagonist has inherited the property known as "The Hall" after the death of his mysterious relative who we, in fact, never get to meet. Humphreys is immediately intrigued by the various historical sites on the grounds and the text focuses on his desire to obtain knowledge about the "handsome mansion" (James 204) and its premises. In particular, he becomes interested in the "old temple" and the "maze" in the "Hall garden" (200). As Humphreys settles into his new residence and converses with the neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, the three characters become increasingly interested in exploring the nature of the "yew maze" and eventually decide to enter it (204). While the maze is rightfully inherited and located in Humphrey's own domestic space, it is itself a sort of foreign and concealed enigma that the protagonist is compelled to discover. With its difficult-to-navigate qualities, such as the "impassable" walks (204), "the dankness and the darkness," alongside the

"crushed goosegrass and nettles," the maze "did not seem to be a very intricate specimen of its kind" (204), which is to say it was not kempt and neatly manicured as one would expect in the midst of an English homestead. Moreover, Humphreys remarks that "the hedges, [were] long untrimmed" and "had grown out and upwards to a most unorthodox breadth and height" (204), portraying the jungle-like qualities of the maze. The nature of the untamed maze itself is what drives my understanding of this natural space as one that is foreign and 'discoverable' to Humphreys and his counterparts, making it a space for conquest and exploration. Besides the intrigue of the maze, the plot of "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" is driven by two major symbolic catalysts: a "small quarto" (208) without a title found in the library of the estate and a "celestial globe" (205) found at the heart of the maze.

I refer to these two items as catalysts because they are central to Humphreys's quest for knowledge and his desire to uncover the secrets of these spaces and artefacts, but they are also of importance in terms of understanding M.R. James's interest in the mystification process of the Other and its unknown spaces. In the act of uncovering and mapping the maze, the protagonist engages in a kind of imperial plundering by transgressing into spaces where he does not belong, and seeking to control the objects within that space, and actually, the natural landscape of the space itself. Moreover, while Humphreys certainly acts like an imperial force, he also opens himself up to be conquered and challenged by the awoken and 'contaminating' foreign entity. In short, M.R. James utilizes the supernatural space of the maze and the otherworldly nature of the map to articulate the monstrous consequences of imperialism as it surfaces at the *fin de siècle*. In this, there is an interdependent structure of imperialism at work in "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" carried out by James's agents of the colonizing English and the colonized Other. This chapter will thereby explore the symbiotic imperial relationship present in James's work and

the implications and backlash toward England's imperial actions as it provides a commentary on the growing colonial consciousness present at the end of the century.

The Protagonist as Colonizer

To begin this analysis of the imperial impulses within "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," I will consider Humphreys himself as an embodiment of imperial power. While I previously noted that Humphreys takes a clear interest in all historical sites at the mansion, the library sets much of the oncoming tension in motion. More importantly, this initial scene in the library allows us to understand Humphreys's nature as an 'imperial colonizer' because of his continued desire for knowledge acquisition and, later, his obsession with mapping the geographical space of the maze. The narrator remarks that Humphreys is an individual with "all the predisposition to take interest in an old library" (208), pointing to his desire and ability to engage with knowledge and history. Moreover, this "predisposition" expresses more than just a passion for literature, but also his inclination for knowledge acquisition and his power to obtain this knowledge. I think we can fairly equate this library scene with the motivating drive of colonialism in which the conquest for knowledge of, and goods from, a strange land is given primacy. It is interesting, then, that Humphreys, as an affluent European male, is marked with a "predisposition to take interest" in this quest for knowledge, much like the English embarked on quests to discover otherwise unknown lands.

In addition to an elevated social and economic position, the library scene also tells us that Humphreys is an intellectual. Given these advantages, the protagonist is characterized as an empowered individual with the capacity to colonize spaces of interest and reject those he finds little value in. Take for instance, his quaint and subtle disdain for the ancient and well-known works that he observes in the library. He loosely approves of well known works such as Picart's

Religious Ceremonies and the *Harleian Miscellany* within the collection, but casts off "Tostatus Abulensis," and "Pineda on Job" as texts that are far too uninspiring (208). Humphreys's familiarity with the library's contents suggests that his knowledge of this particular literary landscape is nearly complete, and therefore un-stimulating to someone with such a vigorous drive to learn. His quest for knowledge, then, can be equated to a colonial impulse for the discovery of new lands as Humphreys's disinterested nature, perhaps, represents a similar impetus to the one that motivated England to leave its own shores and explore the New World. If colonialism was (and is) partly motivated by a drive to acquire information about a place (or people) and conquer the foreign landscape, a similar drive is located in the quest for literary knowledge carried out by the protagonist. So, when Humphreys discovers a title-less book that captures his interest, he is motivated by the task of unveiling the mystery of the quarto and essentially discovers his own "New World."

While "a great portion of the collection" of the library itself is described as having an "extreme unreadableness" (208), nothing is so intriguing as the book without a title, which can be recognized as a mystified enigma that incites the potential for discovery that he seeks. In all the collection, Humphreys chooses the "small quarto, loose in the binding, and from which the lettered label had fallen off" (208). Despite the "blank and forbidding" nature of the book, he is drawn to its allure and settles on a text that is completely unknown to him— a title-less work that "for all he knew might have been a collection of plays" (208). Indeed, of all potential areas of knowledge acquisition, it is the 'colonial' drive to discover new knowledge that defines Humphreys's first major transgression into unknown spaces. As he takes a seat with the work, Humphreys begins the process of delving for knowledge to demystify the unknown space, and thus, unleashes the ghosts of colonialism that will later haunt his own conquest.

The Enigmatic Book

Within the mysterious book, the protagonist finds various musings and "sermons" initially but eventually comes across a creative piece which discusses the dangers of entering a maze. This passage seems to titillate his sense of discovery and his own already-building need to engage with the maze at the mansion. Additionally, this section from the enigmatic book offers the first insight into the imperial symbolism underlying much of James's narrative. Indeed, when Humphreys "turn[s] over the pages and his eye...[catches] a marginal note: '*A Parable of this Unhappy Condition*'" (208, original emphasis), we simply cannot overlook that this "parable" is almost synonymous with Humphreys's quest to the centre of the maze. Imbued with primarily imperial rhetoric and content, the narrative of the "adventure...into a *Labyrinth* or *Maze*" is the starting point for considering the rising colonial consciousness and the anxieties expressed in James's work. The narrative within the mutilated quarto details the quest of "the Man [who] was set upon his Purpose" (209). The narrator notes that the sole "Purpose" of the Man's quest is to get at the "Heart and Centre of this *Labyrinth* [to]...a Jewel of such Price and Rarity that would enrich the Finder thereof for his life" (209). Essentially the pursuit is driven by extracting a resource from an unknown place and securing riches as a result, an endeavour in which England had historically been very successful.

This imperial conquest, however, is one that incites fear of the Other, and also has disastrous results for the colonizing power as "ill omened Inhabitants were commonly thought to lurk as could only be encountered at the Hazard of one's very life" (208). Though the Man successfully obtains the "Jewel...without any Difficulty," when "Night fell...he begun to be sensible of some Creature keeping Pace with him, as he thought, *peering and looking upon him*...[putting] him in some Disorder of his Spirits" (209-210, original emphasis). As the Man

runs from his "Pursuers," "he would cast himself flat on his Face," but in those moments they fail to "over-run him" and they would "make a Pause" at the same time he stopped moving. These forces, akin to ghosts with their present-absentness, are, in some ways, evocative of an internal struggle within the Man himself. As the "Creature" moves with him, pauses its strides with him, and baffles his "Spirits," the stalking force is narrated as though it is *a part of him* that he simply cannot escape. Indeed, the stalker of the Man is not really a beast at all, but a consciousness perturbed by his love of monetary riches and his conquest to obtain those treasures. The unknown author of this text-within-the-text also directly refers to imperial practices noting that "a more dreadful Night was never spent by Mortal Creature than that he had endur'd in that *Labyrinth*; and not that Jewel which he had in his Wallet, nor the richest that was every brought out of the *Indies*, could be a sufficient Recompense to him for the Pains he had suffered" (210, original emphasis). This narrative serves to subtly remind the reader that imperial conquest has severe and sufferable consequences and, moreover, reminds the audience that the story of the maze plunderer is a parable for the imperial and colonial endeavours of England.

The end of this narrative closes with a direct reference to the reader in an effort to spell out the "*Parallel* I desire to draw"; that is, that "the *Labyrinth* [serves] for an Image of the World itself wherein such a Treasure (if we may believe the common Voice) is stored up" (210-211). Thus, in the voice of a mysterious narrator, James critiques the economic practice of Victorian Britain, which is founded upon obtaining materials from foreign nations and exploiting resources from far-away lands. Beyond the dark and shady notion of Britain's imperial history, the symbol of the labyrinth is a key representative of the foreign lands which Europeans sought to control and exploit. For the Man in Humphreys's title-less book, the labyrinth is analogous to a foreign landscape that he must learn about and survive in, in order to obtain the riches that the quest

promises. For Humphreys, his Uncle's concealed maze is representative of a sequestering of the consequences and results of imperial practice, in effect, by sequestering the Other that they have 'uncovered.' Humphreys himself is confronted with the challenge of penetrating this space and demystifying it and, as a result, the text explores a troubled notion of imperial consciousness as the modern characters probe unknown spaces and are left to interact with them.

Anxiety and Otherness

In his analysis of Joseph Conrad's colonial fiction, Andrew Libby suggests that English imperialism was driven by "Europe's 'acquisitive spirit'" (Libby 108). While Libby highlights Conrad's awareness of the "violence," "rapacious exploitation," and "cruelty" of the exploration process, for Conrad, such suffering was outweighed by the promise of knowledge gains and "justified in the name of progress and adventure" (108). This spirit of discovery and progress is the same as that which grasps the learned minds of Humphreys and Lady Wardrop the other interested party, and in this way James's two characters are seized by the "romance and excitement that accompanied European exploration" (108). The Coopers are similarly drawn to the maze, but are fearful of its enigmatic nature. As much as cruelty and violence are prominent themes in the narrative of exploration in European minds like Conrad's, the sense of threat derived from the colonial expedition and its contact with the unknown is just as central.

During England's initial and on-going explorations of Africa their conceptions of Africa's population began to develop in a manner similar to what Edward Said refers to in his seminal text, *Orientalism*. Similar to Said's conception of the marginalized and misrepresented Orient, Britain's rhetoric about Africa attempted to come to grips with the 'mysterious' land of Africa through a rhetorically charged imagination of the place, its people, (and conceptions of a 'faraway land' in general) that is often referred to as 'Darkest Africa.' Beyond marginalization and

misrepresentation, however, the literature and folklore that infused those tales of Darkest Africa was rife with aggressive and problematic conceptions of both the land and its people which cast them as sinister and threatening. Part of the sense of threat stems from real-world dangers reported by explorers of the continent who noted "long stretches of cataracts, dense forests, relentless tropical heat, unfriendly tribes, and the constant threat of malaria and other diseases" (Libby 109). However, much of the threatening nature of Darkest Africa comes from the perceptions of the land's sinister nature and that of its natives. Henry Morton Stanley, who was perhaps the most famous of the English explorers of Central Africa, described the 'dark' nature of Africa in the lexicon of the colonizer. As William Booth recounts, Stanley's vision of Africa gleaned from his travels saw both fallen humans and twisted landscapes, noting that "man beings [were] dwarfed into pygmies and brutalised into cannibals [who] lurk and live and die" (Booth 9). Indeed, according to Booth, "Mr Stanley vainly endeavours to bring home to us the full horror of that awful gloom" that *is* Africa, and in so doing, was a primary force in the understanding of Darkest Africa as a distant and maligned place, home to ungodly terrors, and laden with signs of savagery and degeneration (9). As we will explore, these are the kinds of threats disturbing English consciousness in "Mr. Humphreys."

When it comes to an exploration of Humphreys's own maze, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the labyrinth parable in the quarto is a symbol of imperial action that yields terrible and lasting results for the interloper. James's various characters express a divided consciousness about uncovering the secrets of Humphreys's maze which signifies a conflicted understanding of whether colonial exploration and imperial action is worth the risk for the colonizers in this text. Indeed, James's cast of characters portray both anxiety and excitement when it comes to penetrating the maze and reaching its center. A close consideration of the Coopers, Mr.

Humphreys, and Lady Wardrop reveals a consciousness divided by the pressure to embrace the changing social structures of the 1890s and examine the historical structures of imperialism as well as their actual results. Consider for example, the results foisted upon the seeker in the aforementioned parable, whose feverish search for a gem yielded treasure but lingering horror and suffering. Additionally, Mr. Humphreys himself suffers as a result of his probing (which we will discuss shortly). In this way, James's text exposes a crisis reflective of the transitional identity of the time. This crisis demands that the colonizers recall and interrogate the historical practises of England, and potentially cast off the problematic power dynamics of the imperial quest. The characters in "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," then, proceed from a position of initial ambivalence about the notion of the dangers of the unknown, until they enter the foreign landscape of the maze, and ultimately mark it as a site of both fear and exhilaration before shunning it entirely.

For some of the characters, the maze causes a great deal of anxiety, hesitancy and reluctance to explore its unknown landscape. We can certainly recall that Mr. Wilson, the previous owner of the maze, kept it gated and sealed for years (200). We can also take for example, Mrs. Cooper, who audibly fumbles her words when asked about the maze, utters a "No-o," before "drawing in her lips and shaking her head" and reporting that "old Mr. Wilson always kept it locked" (James 200). Her husband, Mr. Cooper, also reacts with similar trepidation after finding Mr. Humphreys in the maze when his friend fails to wait for his return from the Hall. Mr. Cooper exclaims: "I suppose it's a matter of thirty to forty years since any human foot has trod these precincts. Certain it is that I've never set foot in them before. Well, Well! what's the old proverb about angels fearing to tread? It's proved true once again in this case" (205). While the text goes out of its way to suggest that Mr. Humphreys sees nothing concerning or fearful,

Cooper's own hesitancy, coupled with his wife's uneasy countenance after Humphreys's inquiry about the maze, suggests a fear indeed. This anxiety, then, is not so much the fear of entering the maze itself, but the fear of engaging with the mysterious thing it represents and seems to contain. As an unexplored and concealed space, the maze inherently promises new knowledge different from, and external to, their everyday Englishness. But venturing to gather this new knowledge also poses a threat to their carefully manicured existence and risks contaminating this existence with the threat of the "Other" and their "Otherness."

Infectious and Contaminating Otherness

In an attempt to harness the threat of the "Other," James's text is decidedly interested in gardening and containing the natural space of the maze and garden at the estate altogether. The notion of a gardening motif is prevalent in rhetoric used to describe England's colonial practices, particularly in Africa. As Libby remarks, it was England's "duty to spread efficient" and proper structures of civilization, which included "government, Christianity, improved sanitation, common law, and [other] lofty ideals" (110). Additionally, "imperialist rhetoric and representation in these narratives tame unexplored landscapes and wild natives — in some cases converting the sublime to the beautiful" (111). Humphreys himself engages in a 'beautification' and taming process via his investment in gardening and contemplating the aesthetic of the landscape, both in the maze, and outside of it. As Humphreys refers to the overgrowth of the maze, he demands that the labyrinth "must" be "cleared out" if he's to show it off to his visitors (James 207). As the patriarch of the Hall, Humphreys has a certain expectation for the appearance and upkeep of the grounds that loosely recalls the imperial process of 'weeding out' the impure nature of Africa's Darkest jungle and altering it to meet English standards.

The extended gardening metaphor continues outside of the maze when Humphreys decides that "he *would* do away with" a "dark growth which had usurped a place against the house wall" (James 216, original emphasis). In stark contrast to the "Irish yew" (215) that Humphreys resolves not to remove, the "dark growth" is "threatening to obscure one of the lower range of windows (216), evoking a subtle contrast between the European-born tree and the "threatening" nature of the usurping "dark" shrub. In this way, I think the text grapples with late-Victorian anxieties about the increasing danger to the classic English homestead. As Grace Moore notes, where the home was once "a sanctuary to be preserved from imperial influences, by the century's close it had become a place under threat" (Moore 275). Of course, noting that the shrub is imposing its threat upon the wall of the manor, Humphreys elects to remove the plant altogether and its menacing presence. This "dark" shrub, we might also suggest, is a representation of an exoticized Other, whose creeping darkness poses a threat to the sanctity of the English countryside. With that in mind, it seems as though James's characters act as harbingers of Englishness that recall their duty to 'tend' "to the benighted regions of the world" (Libby 110) and work fiercely to curb the untamed threat from rooting itself within the England.

Colonial Mapping and Dominating Foreign Spaces

But what exactly lurks in the maze that is so frightening that it could make the Coopers and the late Mr. Wilson so anxious as never to have so much as visited in all their years and to lock it up so forcefully? This is the question that drives Mr. Humphreys's unchecked enthusiasm toward the mystery, even if he fails to recognize the anxiety of his peers. "We must have a look at it" (200), he exclaims when Mr. Cooper stumbles upon the subject of the maze inadvertently, as he is pressed by his desire to begin his journey. When the protagonist is goaded into creating a tracing of the labyrinth by Lady Wardrop, it becomes his "main occupation of this evening"

(218) and Humphreys's affinity to the space is seeded. As "the tracing of the plan...and the careful collation of it" (218) is assigned with central importance, Humphreys's desire to know the maze is pointedly evidenced. In contrast to his neighbours and his deceased uncle, Humphreys is a figure interested in divulging the secrets of the maze, marked by his incessant drive to map out the inner workings of the haunted enigma.

Moreover, Humphreys is not alone in his obsession to determine the route of the maze and the mystery of its contents, for it is Miss Cooper who (despite her fear) states that she and Miss Foster "always had a joke between us which should be the first to get into the maze" (200). Besides the interested neighbours, Lady Wardrop, who herself commissions the act of mapping the space, is also a character interested in penetrating the maze. Initially, Lady Wardrop's attachment to the maze is *so* complete that she states to Mr. Humphreys that she might be unable to forgive him if the maze was "grubbed up" and altered (216). Furthermore, her interest in the maze is solidified with the additional fact that Lady Wardrop was "about to publish a book of mazes" when Mr. Wilson still lived and "earnestly desired" to see the maze many years ago (215). Of course, she was denied entry during Mr. Wilson's lifetime as most had been, but once Humphreys came to inherit the property, she wrote again and "renewed" her hope that "Mr. Humphreys would let her see it" (215). In short, then, while we may say that Mr. Humphreys has a notable obsession with the maze and its mapping, he is certainly not alone, with Lady Wardrop completely committed to the same project, suggesting their coalition to dominate and learn its secrets and inner workings.

I have previously suggested that Mr. Humphreys carries out his own fashion of imperial domination. In addition to his thrust for knowledge acquisition and his "predisposition" to be found in a library, Humphreys's mounting interest in the maze launches and further confirms his

own imperial acquisition when it comes to discovering the labyrinth on his newly inherited property. Humphrey's quest to penetrate the space solidifies his personal drive to own, define, and know an unknown or foreign landscape, and being so defined, the protagonist effectively represents a microcosm of imperialism. Moreover, Humphreys's actions also represent an effort to demystify an otherwise concealed space that he has been forbidden to know. It is interesting, then, that, in a time in which social criticism about imperialism was circulating, and Victorian England was confronted with the problematic nature of its own power, Humphreys is ultimately on a quest to demystify the space of the Other.⁷

Humphreys himself, as we have stated, is not a force of transition or change so much as he is an example of imperial power. Indeed, the protagonist ensures the persistence of imperial power in two ways: his ultimate (if initially contested) victory over the foreign maze, and his commitment to the act of cartography. In fact, Felix Driver's article on the potency of England's "Imperial Map" provides a detailed account of "the enduring power of imperial cartography in the iconography of British imperialism" (Driver 147). In it, he notes that "advocates of empire used maps to project their view of the world" (148), which is precisely what Humphreys himself attempts to achieve in tracing a map of the maze. The protagonist surely has a *need* to find out what the maze leads to and why, and this obsession with mapping tells us that he is thoroughly entrenched in the power-laden affair of imperial conquest. Humphreys's imperial impulse, then, is marked by his "determination" to "make a plan of his own maze" (211), which recalls an established understanding of imperial mapping in the grand narrative of the British Empire. As M.R. James tends to demonstrate, however, it soon becomes clear that these kinds of imperial actions into the spaces of the unknown do not come without consequence.

⁷ See Moore on "Colonialism in Victorian Fiction: Recent Studies" which chronicles an extensive analysis of Charles Dickens and colonial consciousness, as well as mid-Victorians on class and race, and late-Victorian anxieties about a threatened home-space.

A Lurking Threat in the Maze

After constructing so much unspoken and undefined fear of the unknown maze, M.R. James finally introduces us to the consequence that awaits imperial interlopers who insert themselves into the foreign space of the maze. That first consequence comes when Humphreys and Lady Wardrop attempt to traverse the heart of the labyrinth together, but notice a striking feeling that they are not alone in their quest. Lady Wardrop states "'now, confess' she went on, turning and facing Humphreys, 'don't you feel—haven't you felt ever since you came in here—that a watch is being kept on us, and that if we overstepped the mark in any way there would be—well, a pounce? No? *I* do; and I don't care how soon we are outside the gate'" (James 217, original emphasis). Lady Wardrop's halting speech patterns betray a trepidation akin to the one we recognized in Mrs. Cooper earlier in the story. For the first time, Lady Wardrop is fearful of the maze that she so earnestly wished to visit. The source of her fear emanates from an undefined presence lurking near the pair. This sudden sense of haunting is, moreover, amorphous—both present and absent, felt but not seen. And it is a haunting that threatens retribution if the interlopers stray too far and plunge too deeply where they do not belong. In short, this is the threat of the Other, an Other who is particularly uncivilized in its methods, according to Lady Wardrop, who fears that this unknown assailant is likely to act as a beast and "pounce" (216).

In this, Lady Wardrop places herself undeniably in the space of white European empire, alongside Humphreys. That is, after penetrating the concealed and foreign space and feeling the presence of an undefined Other, she expresses the need to flee, but also to consign that space to re-mystification, abandoning her quest to learn the maze. It is her desired flight to get "outside the gate" and return to secure structures of familiar 'civilization' that confirms her abandonment of the imperial process in which she has previously participated. In fact, her alarm is so great that

when confronted with the threatening presence of an unknown Other, her earlier interest in unknown spaces is completely abolished. Undermining her previous drive to know the maze, Lady Wardrop retracts her earlier statement that any "injur[y] [to the] maze" would be unforgivable (216). Instead, she is willing to condemn this mystified space to oblivion, suggesting that she no longer desires to defend the labyrinth. She notes that "if [she] finds next spring that that maze has been grubbed up," she would not be offended and is, therefore, at peace with its dismantling as a result of her fear (217). The evocation of an ambiguous supernatural entity that can be understood only as a non-human Other works to convey not only the occurrence of an imperial action, but also provides a commentary on the consciousness of *fin-de-siècle* English society and its understanding of imperial relations. This understanding, of course, is that which is under scrutiny at the end of the century in a time in which the "British had mixed feelings about almost every aspect of their life, including their encounters with the non-white races of the world" (Jagpal 252).

In James's noted shifting of Lady Wardrop's willingness to explore the space of the unknown, and his casting of foreign spaces, we come to know that these "vulnerable" and penetrable spaces are not merely receptive and passive to interlopers. At work in "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" is the recognition of new understandings of England's age-old imperialism that were coming into consciousness at the turn of the century. These new understandings disrupted Victorian society and its once-solidified confidence in the certainty of conquest. That is, Britain began to learn that imperialism was a bloody business, and far from as simple as penetrating a foreign space, plundering its riches, and redefining a foreign people in

the Empire's desired image.⁸ Instead, like Lady Wardrop (and Humphreys, as we will get to shortly), England's turn of the century consciousness acknowledges the fear of the consequences of imperial action; namely, the consequence of unleashing the Other and the Other's potential for bringing forms of contamination to England. While I do not wish to digress too much into the density of English history, the fact remains that, like Lady Wardrop, *fin-de-siècle* England is mulling over "taking back" (217) their earlier beliefs: Imperialism and the encountering the Other is a frightening process, and moreover, their imperial designs will not be received without a kind of push-back or "pounce" from those they once wished to dominate. In this sense, Wardrop's fleeing from the maze represents a kind of rejection of Empire and its ideals *not* because the characters are cognisant of the violence that England impressed on other cultures, but because of the fear of the real and perceived 'violence' that the other might bring to them. Indeed, from the imperial perspective, their own traversal into the unknown space has 'awoken' the elusive other, and generated a real threat toward England, or, at least themselves in a less-abstract sense. As a representation of imperial consciousness at the *fin de siècle*, Wardrop's fleeing from the maze and her abandonment of the pursuit of its knowledge evokes the notion that England has come to realize a potential need to abandon the imperial project due to that same fear of the external Other and its looming threat. And this, perhaps, is what makes the ghost story such a fitting platform to discuss the unknown Other and Britain's presence in those spaces. Indeed, the only way to define something we do not know is to project it as a force that exists outside of what is familiar to us (Bown, Burdett, Thurschwell 9). In this text, (and other works like it), the Other becomes a ghost, a spectre, or a lingering monster who threatens the social order of Victorian reality (and its empires by extension) by haunting and carrying out an

⁸ The reality of imperialism began to become conscious in British society as changing relations with established colonies; including, but not limited to, loosening control over India's government, and unrest in Africa that triggered the Boer War (1899-1902) began to illustrate.

indefinable external threat to this established order. That sense of structural order is no more strongly represented than through the symbol of the imperial map, and it is precisely on-point, then, that the final conflict in the tale takes place during Humphreys's last attempt to play imperial cartographer and map the maze.

Haunting Otherness

In the penultimate scene of the story, Humphreys sits down to carry out the tracing of the maze and its celestial globe, as Lady Wardrop once requested. Foregoing her noted change of heart on the issue, Humphreys is determined to see the mapping completed stating "whether or no [the maze is grubbed up] you shall have the plan, Lady Wardrop. I have made one, and no later than to-night I can trace you a copy" (James 217). Like the traversal into the maze, this final mapping attempt carries the external threat of the monstrous and indefinable Other. In this scene, that 'other' comes in two forms. First, after "more than one grisly encounter with a bat" Humphreys finds that "the tail of his eye [was drawn] to the window" in which he thinks he sees "not a bat, but something more considerable— that had a mind to join him" (218). His imagination, in fact, compels him to imagine this external threat outside his window as a humanoid invader, a "someone," who might have "unpleasant[ly]" "slipped noiselessly over the sill and onto the floor" (218). The conception of the Other's external threat comes here as a disgusting and bothersome annoyance, similar to the "dark" bush sneaking beneath his window in earlier scenes. However, this presence reveals itself in a far more terrifying manner soon after he begins and completes the tracing process in earnest.

After a time lapse, we are told that "the tracing of the plan was done: it remained to compare it with the original, and to see whether any paths had been wrongly closed or left open" (218). Contemplating those various pathways, Humphreys "traced out the course that must be

followed from the entrance," and while he notes "one or two slight mistakes," his eyes are immediately drawn to something amiss: "an ugly black spot about the size of a shilling...It resembled a hole...a very odd hole [that] seemed to go not only through the paper but through the table...down and still down, even into infinite depths" (218-219). This supernatural crevasse strikes Humphreys with "utter bewilder[ment]" and consumes him to such a degree that he enters a "child[like]" state in which "[he] lost all thought of the true size of [himself] and it, so this hole seemed for the moment, the only thing in the world" (219). For a man involved in the act of cartography and empire, it is significant that this abyssal hole takes Humphreys's attentions to such a degree that it is the *only* thing in the world in that moment – no maze, no globe, no England or Lady Wardrop – only the darkness of the hole and the implied threat of a fall into its depths. The narrator notes that the "black spot...seemed to go not only through the paper, but through the table on which it lay...and through the floor below that, down, down, and still down, even into infinite depths" (218), marking Humphreys's "descent into the underworld" (Rangarajan 139) as a space of evil and savagery where the protagonist is met with the utmost horror.

At the climax of the text, we find more than the blackness of the hole as, for the first time, we cross into Humphreys's realm of fear and anxiety, when, after "he had gazed at [the hole] for some moments...[a feeling] of anxiety came upon him; stronger and stronger – a horror lest something might emerge from it and a really agonizing conviction that a terror was on its way, from the sight of which he would not be able to escape" (219). Indeed, like Lady Wardrop's trepidation that came upon her slowly, Humphreys is finally brought to his threshold, and for him, it is that same external threat of the Orient, but with even more defined intent and form. Like W.B. Yeats's "Second Coming," this rough beast seems to come round at last, slouching

toward him and threatening to be born from the blackness, providing the "agonizing conviction" (James 219) that a terror is on its way. Indeed, as the thing comes "Nearer and Nearer" to Humphreys, we find it placed in firm opposition to the White Englishness of the protagonist: "and it was of a blackish-ish grey colour with more than one dark hole. It took the shape as a face – a human face – a *burnt* human face: and with the odious writhings of a wasp creeping out of a rotten apple, there clambered forth an appearance of a form" (219). Of all descriptions possible, the focus again returns to colour, as he states that his assailant was "waving his black arms prepared to clasp [Humphreys's] head" (219). This confrontation, then, is one imbued with racial implications by way of its focus on colour and appearance.

A racial dichotomy is further emphasized in this climactic scene when we recall that James has likened the depth of the "black spot" to "a landscape with wooded hills, and perhaps even churches and houses" (219). This image subtly reminds us of a new settlement in an otherwise untamed (or wooded) space. And as Humphreys enters this landscape via the dark "hole" it is, at first, "hateful to him" (219) prior to becoming threatening, and before his confrontation with the dark face itself. This again points to the essence of his invasion and interloping, and also the larger narrative of colonialism whereby European settlement was at the heart of contention and confrontation. Beyond the darkness of the "burnt human face" and the descent into an imagined settler-type landscape, however, there are the "odious writhings" of the ghost that reiterate a colonizer's understanding of the "inarticulateness" of "African speech" and the European tendency to silence the Other altogether (Nichols 2, 3).

As Ashton Nichols suggests, embedded in "narratives of exploration" is the "tendency to evaluate Africans in terms of the incomprehensibility of their languages" and the consistent equation of foreign language to "mere howls," "utterances," and "noise" (2). This tendency occurs

in James's text when we recall the moment in the parable of the Maze, whereby the Man is being chased by his perceived "Band of Followers" (James 210). In these moments he hears only an indecipherable "Sound of Whispering," "Cries," and the "Echo" in the distance (210). The Man is himself hearing the far-off "utterances" of the foreign Other who never parlays a lucid and defined speech in all of the narrative, suggesting that the external Other is both ominous and unable to articulate such expressions and exchanges. In the midst of fear, however, the text is far more interested in silencing the Other entirely. When the emerging figure is "odious[ly] writhing" there is an implied sense of unheard pain, discomfort, or other such utterances as it surfaces toward Humphreys. In some ways, though the apparition itself is devoid of sound, and actually, not given any such language at all, the rhetoric utilized here suggests a subdued sound that is simultaneously present and absent.

In James's likening of this spectre to a "wasp creeping out of a rotten apple," he creates the vivid picture of an insect, which forces us to imagine a noise that is at once implied and yet also rejected. The sound of the wasp and its potential crawling limbs and beating wings, indeed, is stifled by the disturbing and grotesque image at the forefront of Humphreys's encounter, but lingers still in our understanding of the creature's nature. In this way, the African Other is quite literally silenced at the moment of confrontation, and the absence of decipherable language "becomes synonymous with disorganization, lack of control, and powerlessness" (Nichols 3), and moreover, replaced with horrific imagery to mystify the personhood of the enigmatic foreigner. In doing so, James's text seems to firmly uphold the colonizer's notion of obtaining linguistic and "cultural power" (2) over the silenced Other as a means of subjugating it to something less-than-human. Like the wasp, it has the potential for sound and speech, but to the

colonizer, it is a repulsive or odious utterance no more fit to engage with than a wasp or a rotting fruit.

In the dénouement of the text, Humphreys throws "himself back" in pure terror and strikes "his head against a hanging lamp and fell" (219). Now, two aspects here are of absolute significance; the first, is that the newly landed aristocrat and master of the Hall, Mr. Humphreys, defines the nature of his fear by its externality first, and its colour second, a blackness far different than his own Englishness, and on both counts, certainly Othered. The nature of the Other's attack and Humphreys's injury is the second issue of significance. As previously noted, Humphreys is a man with an obsession for demystifying the unknown and equipped with a 'predisposition' to pursuits of intellect. It seems, then, that such a direct injury on the seat of his intellect might be a warning against conceptions of his own (presumed) superior intelligence – a reminder not to think oneself so learned and certain as to have all solutions and no real concerns for loss of structural stability. That is, the thing he relies on most and the assumption he so often makes is that which is damaged by the confrontation with the Other. Indeed, throughout this thesis I have frequently referred *fin-de-siècle* society as one that was undergoing a coming-to-consciousness about a new, liberalizing world, and the vastness of it that stretches far beyond England and whatever patriarchal empire it once believed itself capable of running. That the 'demonic' Other's attack on Humphreys results in a concussion seems to represent a reminder to the imperial Englishman to reconsider his conquest, or at least a conservative effort to forget about its threat and its processes.

On Re-mystification

That reality, in fact, is something that Humphreys comes part of the way toward, for in waking from his injuries and returning to the fullness of his mind, he reaches the conclusion to

see to it that "the maze is gone" (220), perhaps electing to leave behind his will to interlope into foreign lands like Britain itself elected to abandon some rebellious colonies. However, while I would stop short of imagining Humphreys to abandon his imperial quest, and rather perhaps suggest that his abandonment is more a condemnation of the unknown others than anything, it is quite fascinating that the tale comes to a close in mentioning the title-less book. The last paragraph reads: "One of the oddest things in the whole series of transactions is that the book which contained the Parable has entirely disappeared" (James 220). We are further told that "Humphreys has never been able to find it since he copied out the passage to send to Lady Wardrop," and in *that* parting point, M.R. James seems to suggest that the imperial act of colonization, mapping, and so forth will not be without its assailants or tales of woe, but that it will remain, often heedless of the sufferings it wrought (like those of the jewel thief in the Parable). At the end of the century England remained faced with the very real truth that the nation was changing, and that the nature of its imperial actions were certainly not without consequence. As such, I close the door on this analysis with the troubling notion that James chooses to articulate a criticism of the imperial process in a conservative fashion that places the onus of the horror of empire upon the Other and not necessarily upon England or its violence and desire for dominance. In doing so, James emphasizes the persistence of imperial practice as something that may continue so long as the empire can remain safely operable, while the Other and its influences return to being mystified.

Closing Thoughts

I have discussed James's employment of an ambiguous supernatural figure as that which represents the Other, but the haunting in this particular short story extends beyond the brief terror we experience at the end of the narrative. For "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," it is the

Other that becomes the looming spectre for the characters and causes them to question their own safety and the worth of the imperial pursuit in a time of changing power relations among the colonies and within the Empire. As England turned toward the end of the century, the concept of its Empire soon also became constructed as a ghost— a phantom of a past idea of how the world should be ordered. And whether or not we assert that Humphreys comes to those same "mixed" feelings of the *fin de siècle* in his closure of the maze, it is certain that the text speaks to his fear. A fear marked by the reality of the world's vastness outside of Europe; of its different peoples, and the ultimate threat that is posed by the Others who have, in a sense, been brought to England.

CONCLUSION

Final Thoughts on Literary Ghostliness in the Late Victorian Era

In closing this thesis I will endeavour to provide some closure to the figure of the ghost in "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover," "The Turn of the Screw," and "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance," especially in regards to their respective endings. To begin, in Vernon Lee's, "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover," the ghost of Christopher Lovelock is relatively inactive and unseen throughout the text, until his most pronounced appearance occurs at the end of the story. Despite his absence, the ghost of Lovelock is a major site of conflict for Alice Oke, and her husband, William. Furthermore, the disdainful history of sexual transgression and disloyalty that Lovelock is tied to also becomes, in some ways, a spectre that haunts the Okes and ends up being an impetus for their demise. In fact, the transgressive history that Lovelock represents effectively stirs up the anxieties of the male narrator and male protagonist in such a way that it expresses the tension caused by a changing class power structure. At the end of the text, it is the climactic appearance of Lovelock's ghost that causes William Oke to lunge toward his wife, kill her, and later commit suicide. After the demise of both Alice Oke, and her husband, and after the threat of Alice's transgressive nature is violently laid to rest at the end of the text, the ghost never appears again. In this way, it is apparent that the ghost is only utilized to establish the central conflict between Alice and her husband, which is itself indicative of a gendered power struggle, as well as one provoked and implicated by Alice's degenerative and "Othered" nature.

While my closing thoughts on Lee's text suggest that there may be a potential for reading William Oke's suicide as a criticism of self-destructive, aggressive masculinity, this understanding of the text becomes problematic in light of the narrator's relatively unaffected life.

That the narrator finds himself recalling the story of the Okes at Okehurst from the comfort of his home confirms the persistence of the empowered male who is not threatened by the presence of a dangerous female, or the vulnerability of the aristocracy. In this way, the potential for a feminist reading of Lee's "Phantom Lover" is stifled not only by the bloody corpse of Alice Oke, but also by the transcendence of patriarchal dominance carried on by the male narrator himself. So, while the text certainly offers a disruption to the aristocratic order and patriarchal authority within the Okehurst manor, the story conservatively preserves the discourses of male dominance by suggesting that the male artist remains untouched, and unaffected by just such a threat. Meanwhile, Lee's narrative suggests that in the spaces in which the female *does* offer a threat, her threat is so potent and so disruptive that it necessitates obliteration. That is, the degenerative female must be killed for her transgressions, and her killer must then also face obliteration via suicide. In so doing, the very structures of the marriage and manor that they inhabited must also be consigned to oblivion. These are, in short, remarkably fatal responses to the issue of a dangerous femininity. It is as if Lee's tale casts the progressive woman as so intensely ruinous that the only acceptable method of resolution is complete and utter desolation of the places and structures she inhabits. And after that desolation, the most striking feature of the work is, again, that the well-to-do male artist who almost nonchalantly returns to his own structured existence in a fashion that is relatively unaffected by the terrible tragedy at Okehurst. In this case, much like the Master's estate at Bly that continues unabated after the events of James's "Turn of the Screw," it is as if the empowered male structure can continue on, otherwise unaffected or undaunted by such ruin, so long as he is distant enough from the shame and disruption of it.

Lee's "Phantom Lover" explicitly attends to masculine anxiety, but Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" is far more ambiguous in its representation of anxiety than his contemporary.

In many ways, "The Turn of the Screw" is an expression of an oppressive patriarchy that displays its authority, both in its representation of gender, as well as social class. While the ghosts certainly figure into, and carry out, the work of the Master (and the work of the white European male), the text extends its gendered oppression beyond the confrontation of the ghosts and the Governess. Indeed, while Peter Quint is an active representation of external masculine authority and the Master is himself the looming spectre over the Estate, the novella also forwards its patriarchal discourse by way of its circulation in the "present," and through Douglas's transmission of the tale to a female audience, and potentially female narrator.

In fact, even the potentially 'empowering' transition of the ownership of the Governess's tale is an example of a kind of backhanded preservation of patriarchal ideology. This is because the person charged with holding onto the Governess's tale is, in truth, given a burden or dubious 'gift' rather than a real source of empowerment or authorial authority. It is a false sense of ownership to be charged with possession of the manuscript, just as it is a false empowerment and an unwelcome gift, or say, the false authority of Bly's domestic space delegated to the Governess's herself. After all, as we have explored already, the Governess's tale is one of female oppression and rigidly imbalanced social structures. It is not, in the full sense of the word, a conceivable 'gift' to be charged with the task of transmitting and reproducing such a brutal and patriarchal manuscript. And if the narrator is female, as I suggest, then the fact that she is given the manuscript by Douglas suggests an almost perverse demand on his part that she not only engage with the very systems and terms that would seek to oppress her, but actually seek to transmit, reproduce, and replicate those expressions of female oppression in a modern context.

The final scene of the story generates just such a reading of the Governess, highlighting the limitations of her subject position and her authority. After the death of Miles, the Governess

is subject to the textual ambiguity that marks her as either insane (for seeing ghosts and subsequently murdering Miles) or incapable of completing her duties as the protector of the children. Indeed, despite the Governess's once potent arrival and potential for 'supreme authority,' she cannot possibly stand to improve her position or escape the criticisms levied against her because of the events at Bly. Depending on the readings, she either has failed at her ultimate job of protecting the children, or committed the ultimate crime and sin of murder, and there is no method by which she can be vindicated from either. To reproduce the manuscript then, is to reproduce not only the oppressive structure at Bly, but the very damning of the Governess as well. Moreover, the fact that Douglas retells the tale of the Governess's suggests a subtle fear and anxiety about women in places of power. In sheer inclination to transfer the tale to the present, there is a deep-rooted anxiety to see the masculine authority reign over the audience, as well as the female narrator. As a final point, the tale's own conclusion never returns to assess the narrator's life, nor does it discuss Douglas. In failing to exonerate the Governess or show concern for the fates of other characters, while prioritizing that the Governess's tragic story, we are given an indication of just how committed James's text is to preserving conservative and pre-existing power structures. Additionally, the lack of a concluding frame allows the Governess's afflicted to tale to resonate with the present audience, and offers no closure of refutation to the problematic representation of the oppressed female.

M.R. James's "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" offers more closure to his tale than Henry James affords. Indeed, like the works of Vernon Lee and Henry James, M.R. James's text deals directly with the a new and arrival in the domestic space having been appointed as the master of an estate by a late Uncle. Humphreys first expresses a desire for change in his unquenchable need to access a maze that has been long locked away. After being assaulted by a

ghost while engaged in the imperial act of mapping the maze, Humphreys deals with the exotic Otherness of the maze and its spirits by removing the untamed space entirely. This desolation of the space of the Other, and the ghostly figure itself, works on a symbolic level to confirm that Humphreys essentially undergoes imperial and English anxieties surrounding the proliferation of 'Others': if their space cannot be successfully mapped and their proliferation controlled, then the only solution is to preserve the purity of the English homestead from Othered invaders is by denying their spaces altogether. In this way, "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" effectively articulates the anxiety felt by imperialists who could not manage to control or enslave the different cultures of peoples they encountered. Indeed, because of that anxiety, Humphreys's obsession with mapping, and then, eliminating whatever Othered threats proved to be unknowable, functions as a re-articulation of the conservative desire to maintain the purity of the way things were in England, and particularly, in the English countryside. Whether that is in the purity of his estate, now unburdened by an unsightly and haunted maze, or the purity of the English homestead and nation itself on a symbolic level, Humphreys's nature is that of an imperial and conservative tenant, who acts out England's own hopes to achieve and maintain distance from the corruptive Other.

In the consideration of all three of these works what remains true is that each of these ghost stories postulates a space in which a structure of some kind is threatened by a potential change in power. Whether it is the arrival of a governess, an adulterous woman or, a newcomer in an inherited estate, each perceived interloper portends that, whatever structure previously existed, is not likely to remain the same. In response to that threat, each of these texts utilizes the ghost story in different ways to evoke a conservative response to those threats, and to show precisely how it is that these threats to order— these lingering hauntings— cannot generally

overcome the will of a staunchly defended (often patriarchal) structure. Indeed, these ghost stories help locate the unspoken anxieties of men in positions of power and men's efforts to act on and eliminate those anxieties when confronted with a threat to their power.

As we have seen, in "Oke of Okehurst; or, The Phantom Lover," "The Turn of the Screw" and "Mr. Humphreys and his Inheritance" the clash between the newcomer and a pre-established social order seems to always result in the victory of long-tenured structures over those entities seeking a change. As "The Phantom Lover" ends with the mutilated body of the transgressive female, and "The Turn of the Screw" rejects any potential for feminine liberation, and as Humphreys neatly dismantles the jungle-like maze to protect himself from the threat of the Other, these three works steadfastly commit to upholding the social and political values that serve the white European male, despite increasing attempts to challenge the persistence of these Eurocentric ideals at the end of the century. Though these texts uphold the patriarchal pillars of white European society they are, at the very least, shown to grapple with the disruption to the established social order of Victorian England in a time "fraught with...anxiety" (Jagpal 252). In dismantling their own anxieties about threatened power, then, each text ultimately does away with these threats as little more than phantoms themselves, briefly haunting the minds of an uncertain British nation. As such, the works of Vernon Lee, Henry James, and M.R. James imagine the inevitable maintenance of England itself into the next century through an anxious exorcizing of social phantoms to secure the persistence of the dominant social order despite acknowledging a fear of losing this power.

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