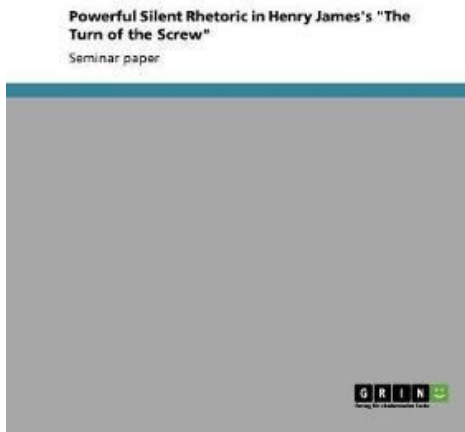


Powerful Silent Rhetoric in Henry James' the Turn of the Screw

Anonym



Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,0, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, language: English, abstract: Hardly any other story has provoked as many different readings as Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. The novella causes an extremely strong impact on its reader, dividing its interpreters in various camps: If the ghosts of *The Turn of the Screw* are not real, certainly the controversy over them is.¹ As Parkinson states, the history of the text's criticism is strongly dominated by the apparitionists/non-apparitionists, or ghost/non-ghost readers,² but even though critics have ambitiously tried to unite these different approaches, a final fusion could not be found. This effect is caused by the text's ambiguity, James's distinctive erotic stylistic, but also by the trick the author plays on his audience, since, while interpreting, the reader is simultaneously forced to participate in the story and thus in the scandal of the story itself. As Felman puts it, the reader cannot stay innocent.³ My approach is therefore not to find the ultimate solution why one reading must be considered superior to another one (since there is none), but rather to maintain this duality and to concentrate on the overall function of the text. By placing it within the historical context in which it was written and, thereby, focusing strongly on the aspects of sexuality in nineteenth-century American society, especially on the famous Oscar Wilde trials taking place shortly before James published his novella, I try to capture why the text causes so many different readings, how the seduction of the interpreter works, and, eventually, what this impossibility of an overall reading actually means, considering the historical context James was to witness. The question I am eager to answer is on what is said about the very act of decoding ambiguity, about the process of interpretation, which can literally be found in the

- [Practical Assessments in Advanced Chemistry](#)
- [Poverty: its Degrees, its Causes and its Relief : A Multidisciplinary Approach to an Urgent Problem](#)
- [Powerdown : A Schools' Climate Change Toolkit - Secondary](#)
- [The Power of the Smile : Humour in Spanish Culture](#)
- [Power Systems and Renewable Energy : Design, Operation, and Systems Analysis](#)
- [Power in Flight](#)
- [The Power of N](#)
- [Practical Drug Therapy](#)
- [Poverty Alleviation, Institutional Development and Needs Assessment](#)